The Left-Right Dichotomy in Contemporary Democratic Theory

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Abstract

This thesis examines the phenomenon of Left-Right in political discourse from the perspective of political theories of radical democracy, discourse and representation. Extant research conceives of Left/Right as spatial metaphors, exploring their meaning and/or function in democratic politics. This thesis focuses on how Left-Right structure political identification in modernity and on the implications this has for theories and practices of radical democracy.

The thesis argues that Left/Right structure political space and constitute public subjects who identify themselves and others in relation to that space. Through a critical discussion of Jürgen Habermas, it shows how such subjects are constituted as dispassionate individuals defined by their opinions, arguments and beliefs which acknowledge their partiality to others and the whole. Through a critical reading of Ernesto Laclau, the thesis also argues that radical democratic demands cannot be channelled through 'the Left', because doing so entails a confinement within the Left/Right space of politics, divesting subjects of political passion and commitment. This space co-opts disparate demands into participating in public debate as if they were not excluded, disabling them from laying claim to a radical equality that is not yet instantiated.

Overall, the thesis aims to make a contribution to theories of radical democracy by showing that proponents of Laclauian populism should focus more on other spaces to effect a radical antagonism with the public subject and a dislocation of its relation to the state. Only this way can it reinstitute the *truly* radical dimensions of democracy that Left/Right tame.

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Acknowledgements

I first had the idea to write this thesis when I was finishing my MA degree in Australia in 2013. Since then my life has changed dramatically. I am now married, I live in England, I have made dozens of new, good, friends and I have come to see the world in entirely different terms. All of this because I thought writing a PhD about the political metaphors of Left and Right would be an interesting thing to do. This PhD, while certainly representing a number of arguments, then also represents a number of decisions that I have made and that have changed my life fundamentally.

The people I have met as a result of this decision have, in turn, had fundamental impacts on the arguments that I make in this PhD. None more so than my primary supervisor, Alan Finlayson. He introduced me to most of the scholars whose names appear in this PhD, and he has continued to challenge my thinking throughout this process. Whatever redeeming features this PhD might exhibit, they are there primarily thanks to him. I also owe a debt of gratitude to my secondary supervisor, Michael Frazer, especially for his help with my upgrade.

Especially in the first two years of my PhD, I was also very involved with the local post-graduate community. It was a cesspool of conversation and creativity, which, beyond teaching me ways to interact with texts and problematics, stimulated my thinking on Left/Right immensely. Michael Kyriacou was particularly instrumental in this and our two joint conference presentations have done much to shape my idea of how I want to continue to engage academia and democratic theory.

Finally, my parents have provided me with some of the financial means to pursue the PhD, and my wife, Judith, has not only been the sole breadwinner this past year and proofread the entire PhD, but she has also provided helpful and provocative comments that have helped shape this thesis. However, despite the efforts of all these people, I remain solely accountable for all faults and inadequacies.

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Introduction

1. The origins of Left/Right

The stage was set on 26 August 1789.[1] The members of the French Third Estate had spent months planning it. They had argued at length about the procedures for the new, radical National Assembly. It was only in May that year that they finally agreed that to speak one should not address the speaker of the house but stand on a podium and address all the deputies simultaneously. It was only in June that they had managed to persuade large sections of the clergy to join them, after which the nobles followed, and the National Constituent Assembly was officially formed. On 14 July the newly formed National Guard had stormed the Bastille.

It now fell to the deputies to institute democracy and draft a constitution. To accomplish this, they met to discuss the bill 'The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen'. On 26 August, in one specific place – the St. Louis Church in the Versailles – the deputies of the National Constituent Assembly were tasked with ushering in a new order around the concept of 'the people'. Members of all three estates were present, but they were openly hostile towards each other. Among the nobles and the clergy, there was ardent opposition to the new democratic order, while some of the former members of the Third Estate were opposed to the presence of the members of the first two estates. They were thus of one body, but it was a body that was divided. This division, however, had levelled the hierarchical structuring principles of the *ancien régime*. Now the different parts of the body were equal.

They were one body of equal parts that was gathered in one particular place, and they had to reach decisions. As such, they had to organise themselves in a manner that could signify their position in relation to the topics for discussion. One prominent deputy had suggested that they adopt the English system whereby two opposing sides would confront each other, but eventually, it was affirmed that the active speaker would address the entirety of the deputies from the podium. Insofar that it was one body, all the deputies were in the same place, but insofar that it was a divided body, the different parts also organised themselves. Specifically, on 26 August 1789, this meant that all the deputies who favoured "liberty and equality" had gathered in front of the speaker's podium and to the left, thus expelling

[1] I largely take this historical account from Gauchet, Marcel, 1996, 'Left and Right', in: Nora, Pierre & Kritzman, Lawrence (eds.), *Realms of Memory: Conflicts and Divisions v. 1: The Construction of the French Past*, translated by: Arthur Goldhammer, Columbia University Press: New York, pp.241-298.

deputies, who were not so disposed, to other parts of the confined space. That this was a historic gathering would hardly have been lost on the deputies that day. While the American Revolution had recently preceded this event, what was taking place in St. Louis Church was of a different magnitude. A major power was becoming a democracy. However, one doubts that the deputies would have known that the way in which they had gathered would carry such weight in the democratic revolution they were about to embark upon.

It is conceivable that the deputies might have decided on dividing themselves left to right in a drunken stupor the night before. This seems as likely an explanation as any. However, that this division, more so than others, favoured a recognition of equality is undoubtable. For example, an Up/Down division would have signified a dominance of the people sitting above and a Front/Back or Centre/Periphery division would have granted increased participatory opportunities to the people close to the speaker's podium. With Left/Right, all were on an equal level and had equal access to participation. In other words, all the deputies could be counted as equals and all deputies could give an account of their reasons in an equal manner. It was always likely that deputies would mingle mostly with those with whom they shared opinions and knew from their respective estates, so distinctive groups were always likely to form – rather than a chaotic whole, in which shouts and interventions would not be able to be made out and understood. Distinctions were thus always going to emerge. But who could have imagined that those simple distinctions could have left such a mark on history?

Left/Right are in this sense historical categories. In the beginning they enabled the deputies and the spectators to understand themselves and others in relation to the whole body. Today, however, Left/Right are not only for members of parliament and spectators of the deliberation that takes place within buildings such as the St. Louis Church. Left/Right have morphed into words that most of us use on a regular basis when we talk about politics. Something happened between then and now, and the available literature on the subject is, as we shall see, severely lacking. As such, it is the purpose of this thesis to shed some light on what made Left/Right not only endure but establish a hegemony over political discourse. I do this with a specific goal in mind: to develop an understanding of how radical politics should engage with Left/Right today.

2. Argument

This thesis is about the political metaphors Left and Right and their function in modernity. Inspired by Laclauian populism, I problematise our understanding of the relationship

between radical politics and the Left/Right spectrum and argue that radical politics should not engage Left/Right in any way.

The steps of the arguments are as follows. Firstly, drawing on Claude Lefort, I argue that modernity is conditioned by the absence of the markers of certainty. A public subject emerges within this openness to usher in an era of politics. Through a discussion of the work of Marcel Gauchet, I argue that Left/Right become the markers of public subjects and, through their constitutive openness to different issues, come to signify order in modernity, based on equality in difference, which furthermore ties them to certain conceptions of rationalism. With Gauchet, I outline the key concept of the citizen-voter, which is the particular, and historical, form that the public subject takes with the emergence of Left/Right. I argue that it is the citizen-voter that first grasped at Left/Right and that the identity of citizen-voter is tied up with a concept of rationalism that stresses ordered partiality. With Torben Dyrberg, I argue that Left/Right channel other spatial metaphors that beget modes of identification imbued with more affective investment, enabling John Rawls' public use of reason to be freestanding from comprehensive doctrines. With this, I further tie the citizen-voter and Left/Right together with a rationalism that stresses partiality – although this time it is a conceptual, rather than a historical, link – as I particularly highlight the anti-perfectionism in Rawls' public use of reason. I thus argue that the emergences of the citizen-voter and of Left/Right were conceptually dependent on and constitutive of a type of rationalism that stresses an ordered partiality.

Importantly, I argue that this move constitutes particular expressions as native to the subjectivity of the citizen-voter. These are arguments, beliefs, opinions and similar types of expressions that acknowledge difference. This move then simultaneously excludes types of expressions – most notably expressions that seek an acknowledgement of a truth or an absolute. Once expressions acknowledge ordered partiality, they also lose affective investment – or commitment to a cause. In partaking in Left/Right ordered political space, you then need to commit to a particular way of doing politics, foregoing your commitment to other types of politics, be that strikes, demonstrations, etc.

Through the work of theorists such as Chantal Mouffe and Jacques Rancière, I can then argue that something is excluded from Left/Right and the identity of the public subject, as the binary inscribes a relationality between public subjects that is *particular*. Rather than going back to Rawls, I qualify this particularity of the public through a critical reading of Jürgen Habermas, arguing that Left/Right come to order reason-giving arguments, *othering*

alternative modes of expression – especially modes of expression that are invested with more affect and commitment and seek an engagement with the category of truth and the absolute. Not only do these modes of expression cover religious and cultural expressions, but also expressions that seek a recognition of structural oppression and inequality. I criticise this Habermasian political space in a Laclauian fashion, arguing that it is a political, hegemonic project.

With Ernesto Laclau, I argue that radical politics constitutes the emergence of the excluded parts, articulated to a counter-hegemonic chain of equivalences, as 'the whole' through a radical antagonism. This relies on affectual investment in a popular identity, not in a public identity that defuses affectual investment, that can only be accessed through particular modes of expression and that effects a recognition of ordered partiality between parts qua the structuring effects of Left/Right. I thus centre my notion of radical politics around a particular reading of Laclau's book, On Populist Reason, that seeks to emphasise a break with the existing order. I conceptualise order as located at the intersection of the state and the citizen-voter. As such, I argue that radical politics must engage at the level of the state. In this sense, my arguments can also be read as a friendly critique of the notion of radical democracy by Laclau and Mouffe in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy and the notion of agonism championed by Mouffe.

Agonistic or radical democratic approaches to Left/Right have previously come to the defence of Left/Right and their ability to turn potential enemies into adversaries by allowing for a constitutive representation of difference. However, while I am sympathetic to these projects, they reaffirm Left/Right. Whereas I seek to critique Left/Right and question the ways in which Left/Right structure political life, these approaches take Left/Right for granted, thereby assuming that whatever structuring effects might be attributed to them are unimportant to radical politics. I argue that this lack of engagement restrains these projects themselves, as I show Left/Right to enable a way of governance, rather than to function to enable agonistic politics.

Notably, I argue that these approaches take the place of the in-common as their starting point. That is, while these projects are theorised through an emphasis on exclusion, by reaffirming Left/Right, they become political projects *for* the citizen-voter as the public subject, rather than political projects for the excluded. This is problematic for, in one sense, excluded parts do not share in the equality of the public subjects and rectifying this relies on evidencing this inequality. Yet, this depends on a mode of expression which establishes

an indisputable acknowledgement of inequality. As we are then dealing in terms of truth and the absolute, such a mode of expression is imbued with affectual investment and, as such, does not recognise the principle of partiality. However, there is no room for this in Left/Right hegemonic political space. This critique of agonistic and radical democratic politics is one of the key points to the contribution that I make to democratic theory in this thesis. I discuss it further later in the introduction.

In the main text, I further explore this through a variety of examples, and argue that radical politics must instead focus its attention on creating a counter-hegemonic chain of equivalences structured around an empty signifier – away from Left/Right, the markers of the hegemonic political space in modernity. As such, I conceptualise order as located at the intersection of the state and the space of the citizen-voter, which, I argue, dissolves the state into the space of the citizen-voter itself and thus claims for itself political being *tout court*. In other words, to effect a radical antagonism one must displace the relationship between the citizen-voter and the state, but this cannot be done through participation in the Left/Right deliberative practises of the citizen-voter.

To take Left/Right for granted thus amount to taking for granted the political practices native to the citizen-voter. However, these practices are inimical to the emergence of a break at between the citizen-voter and the state. For Laclauian populism, which seeks the radical antagonism, it prevents an impassionate representation of 'the people' as a whole. For all demands, which are the base units of Laclauian populism, are impassioned and filled with commitment, as they are forwarded from a place of real, material precarity. But even for radical democracy, which so stresses the importance of the emergence of radical difference, through its engagement with (or ignorance of) Left/Right, fails to problematise the intersection of the state and the citizen-voter and thus only really enables an emergence of difference as arguments, opinions, beliefs, etc. The emergence of the difference of the excluded is supposed to ameliorate their precarious existence, but when Left/Right circumscribe that difference, this amelioration is unrealisable. Left/Right, by forcing radical politics of equality into participating in these practices thus prevent the exposition of structural inequality. As such, if radical politics necessitates a break at the intersection of the state and the citizen-voter, Left/Right function to depoliticise its demands and drives.

3. Research questions

My principal research question is as follows:

- Research question 1: How should radical politics engage with Left/Right?

This question places the argument within the context of Laclauian political theory but also, more broadly, within democratic theory. In answering this question, I focus on representation and discourse, and on how these are particular, rather than universal – and aim to show how Left/Right structure these. Accordingly, a second research question is:

- Research question 2: How do Left/Right create a political space and what kinds of political expressions emerge from it?

In the early days of the French Revolution, Left/Right partitioned a physical space in order to generate a legitimate, equal, division within the body. However, a few things have happened since then. First, the body has grown to the point where most people now enjoy some kind of say over the management of society. Second, people no longer talk directly to each other in one confined space. Instead, deliberation about the management of society takes place across society in a variety of formats and settings. Yet Left/Right have adapted. Undoubtedly this has something to do with the notion of a legitimate division within a singular body, where different parts, at least ideally, are equal. I argue that this 'wild' body is a public body. It is an ensemble of people who come together as public subjects and who use Left/Right as a means to divide themselves politically. This leads onto a third specific and critical question:

- Research question 3: How are things excluded from the Left/Right political space in which the public subject is constituted, and on what grounds does this exclusion take place?

As we look at the period between the French Revolution and today, one thing that stands out is the development of universal suffrage. As more people have been granted the right to vote, more people have thus also been able to identify themselves as public subjects. However, it would be a mistake to think that, because we now have universal suffrage, the body is complete and the division that Left/Right accomplish is the end of the story. Instead, I argue that the body cannot be understood immanently, but only through representation. As such, Left/Right come to order a discursive space that is a representation of the body to itself as a political community. But that representation is meaningful only insofar as it can differentiate itself from something that it is not. Left/Right enable the body to represent itself as legitimately divided within itself but also play a role in that exclusion from the political community – by qualifying a discursive space of equals, Left/Right help set the parameters for exclusion from this space.

Radical politics is situated in relation to this constitutive exclusion. I argue that Laclauian populism should avoid engaging with Left/Right, because these have specific functions in modern politics that are inimical to the emergence of Laclauian populism. I argue that Left/Right enable a forgetting of the exclusion that constitutes all representations of the body. Furthermore, Left/Right constitute the ways in which the divided parts of the body relate to each other as public subjects. This relationality is in one sense structured around equality, in that the different parts have to recognise their own (equal) partiality to the system in which they are constituted (just as the deputies in the National Constituent Assembly had to). But being constituted in this way, they are also required to adopt a certain type of political expression in relating to each other – centred on the expression of opinions, arguments, beliefs, etc. I argue that this mode of expression is centred around a particular type of public subject: the citizen-voter (a term taken from Gauchet). According to Gauchet, the citizen-voter is partly immersed in politics and partly adrift from it, constituted as an onlooker – an observing analyst. I argue that the citizen-voter is deeply connected with the discursive practice of Left/Right, which constitute a space for modes of expression native to the citizen-voter.

Laclauian populism, which I conceive as a type of radical politics, centres around the representation of the populist movement as the whole and the incarnation of 'the people' counterposed to 'the system', 'the caste', 'the establishment' etc. It thus takes an expression that is *other* to that of the citizen-voter and denies the principles of partiality to construct the category of 'the people' and make power visible. As such, it makes no sense for radical politics to seek to channel itself through Left/Right. For doing so would only

translate the demands of radical politics into arguments, opinions, beliefs, etc. (categories of expression that do not engender affectual investment [which is needed to sustain a subjectivity]). The hegemonic Left/Right political space constitutes people making demands as citizen-voters and forces the translation of their articulation accordingly. In other words, Left/Right-ordered political space co-opts the radical potential of unmet demands by presenting claimants as already partaking in the equality of the public subjects. It makes power invisible and converts the expression of lived precarity and inequality into an 'opinion' inviting rebuttal. Radical politics works through the exposition of power but Left/Right forbid its evidencing. In this sense, Left/Right function to depoliticise demands.

4. Outline of the thesis

In developing these arguments, the thesis begins with a review of the existing literature on Left/Right and with an exposition of the founding theory of democratic theory. In Chapter One, I review political science research to show how Left/Right are used as a meta-space that can divide preferences and onto which issues can map. I then address some of the connotations that have been ascribed to Left and Right, while also noting how people disagree about the exact meaning of these terms. Left/Right thus open up a kind of space, but the meaning of that space is contested. I then turn to Lefort and his argument that modernity is founded on an empty place of power, and to his long-time collaborator and one of the most important scholars to have written on Left/Right: Gauchet. Gauchet, who is grossly underused in anglophone scholarship, provides us not only with a historical account of Left/Right, where we can see the different meanings that the words have borne over time, but also with an account of the emergence of the citizen-voter. These are contributions to the study of Left/Right that tie in with some of the key insights of Lefort and democratic theory. That is, Gauchet shows us that we should not look at essences to Left/Right but at how they designate a type of relationality between those who are constituted through their usage. This is what his concept of the citizen-voter accomplishes.

Having then situated myself and synthesized the existing literature on Left/Right with democratic theory, we start to look more closely at the function of Left/Right in modernity in Chapter Two. Here I critically consider Noberto Bobbio's influential book on Left/Right and his argument that equality is their central theme. He argues that equality is a historical question rather than a political one. As such, he does not focus on how some people are rendered *other* to the 'space of equals' that Left/Right create. To clarify this further I read Mouffe against Dyrberg, the latter of whom has written extensively on the function of

Left/Right in modernity. Following Dyrberg, I argue that Left/Right function as orientational metaphors to structure a democratic identity. They accomplish this by channelling other orientational metaphors (Up/Down, In/Out and Front/Back) that engender more affectual investment in identification and divesting the Left/Right identity of that passion. Dyrberg argues that Left/Right can function in tandem with Rawls' concept of the public use of reason. With Mouffe, I note however that one cannot subtract passion from identification and that exclusion is constitutive to it. As such, instead of Left/Right engendering a Left and a Right identity that is devoid of affectual investment, they structure different kinds of public identities; they constitute different kinds of public subjects. Finally, I bring in Rancière for an aesthetic account of political space. With him, I argue that space is constituted by a distribution of the sensible. In relation to political space, this entails a police (ac)count of subject positions and their relationality.

In Chapter Three I turn to Habermas, a particularly useful thinker for this thesis due to his significant influence within liberal theory and because he wrote the book on one particular kind of political space – the public sphere. His theory of communicative action erects regulative principles to bring about ideal speech situations designed to generate sincerity, inclusion, and the forceless force of the better argument – situations that can lead to rational consensuses. His ideal of the political public sphere, I then argue, is a discursive space for reason-giving arguments where Left/Right name the participants.

Chapter Four addresses Laclau. I argue that we need to focus on the creation of meaning and identity, rather than on the creation of consensus, and take account of the 'logic of lack'. Identity is never complete, only a partial fixation of particularities to a (false) universality. Laclau contends that identities are conceivable insofar as they belong to a system, but also insofar as they are different from other identities that also belong to the system. In his vocabulary, identities are articulated to a hegemonic system – which becomes synonymous with the category of space. As this is always only a partial fixation, identities can also be articulated to counter-hegemonic systems, which is most likely to happen when requests and demands are not met. Laclauian populism lies in the construction of such a counter-hegemonic system, whose structuring principle is the impossibility of an ultimate fixation of meaning. I use Laclau to argue that Habermas offers a hegemonic project that seeks to construct identities based around argumentation – a particular mode of expression native to the citizen-voter – and that this constitutes a political space that depoliticises demands by turning them into arguments ordered by Left/Right.

In the final chapter, I argue that Left/Right enable a subjectification where people come to identify with the public subject, and that this entails a relationality based on the modes of expressions native to the citizen-voter. I then argue for a theory of performance of political space, which is most often an extension of the performance of the identity of the figure of the journalist – the public subject par excellence. Here I introduce two case studies to show how Left/Right structure political space and the way in which excluded parts are not allowed to evidence their exclusion, as their expressions of lived experience are translated into partial arguments. Through these case studies I thus offer a friendly critique of the democratic theories that seek to engage these performances while bolstering my conclusion that radical politics should not engage the Left/Right spectrum.

5. Motivation and contribution

This thesis is situated within the field of democratic theory. It treats a number of theorists, such as Alain Badiou, Jacques Rancière, Laclau and Mouffe. I engage these theorists because I have sympathy for their overall political projects and because I, largely, agree with their theoretical insights. Normally, political projects are informed by theoretical insights. That is, we base the *ought* on a conception of what *is*. In reference to the *is*, Laclau has, on several occasions, referenced a certain logic, which he most often describes in terms of hegemony, as being universal.[2] While Laclau articulates this logic in terms of hegemony, I find variations of the same logic to be present in Badiou in terms of set theory, in Butler in terms of performativity and in Lacan in terms of psychoanalysis, etc. In this thesis, I call this logic 'the logic of lack'. This logic outlines a constant retreat of presence. In this sense, we are not dealing with a 'normal' ontology, although that will be made clearer in the main body of the text.

However, while I agree that this logic is universal, we cannot simply refer to it and then be done with the ontological question. For, as Laclau is often keen to point out, we cannot operate outside of the context in which we find ourselves – even if this context is never fixed. As such, I am saddened that so little concerted effort has been made to understand the structuring effects of the Left/Right spectrum. For, as structuring mechanisms, they function not to give expression to the logic of lack, but to ensure its concealment. I believe this spectrum to be largely hegemonic over political discourse, yet, most democratic theory

[2] Laclau, Ernesto, 2000a, 'Structure, History and the Political', in: Butler, Judith, Laclau, Ernesto & Žižek, Slavoj (eds.), *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*, Verso: London, pp.182-212, p.189. See also Laclau, Ernesto, 1999, 'Politics, Polemics and Academics: An Interview by Paul Bowman', *Parallax*, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp.93-107, p.101.

largely just accept them uncritically.[3] As such, political projects born from democratic theory might be said to be somewhat lacking, as they have no critical understanding of Left/Right, i.e. they lack a critical component of the context in which we find ourselves.

As mentioned, I argue that Left/Right belong to the public subject as the citizen-voter; that Left/Right signify an ordered difference expressible in the formats of beliefs, opinions, arguments, etc., and that they enable a conception of rationalism to flourish. I worry that a radical politics for the excluded parts of society, when not properly equipped with a critical understanding of the structuring effects of Left/Right, is fed into Left/Right's structuring mechanisms and essentially have their radicality negated.

I exemplify this problematic in the main text through numerous examples. One such example revolves around a disability activist in Denmark, Mette Lylloff. Lylloff, like so many other people in material precarity, seeks a recognition of the material precarity experienced by people in her situation. She seeks a recognition of a truth, in the hope that this can be acknowledged and her precarity ameliorated. However, the place where she might forward this request for recognition, the place I refer to as 'the public', is one in which the citizen-voter reigns supreme and Left/Right structure political expressions. As I, with Noberto Bobbio, argue that the Left is always the pole that seeks inclusion, Lylloff's politics becomes readable as leftist politics. But the two are different. For a leftist politics is one that acknowledge the validity of the citizen-voter and structures its being in the formats of beliefs, opinions, argument, etc., while Lylloff's politics does not acknowledge partiality but instead seeks a recognition of lived experience.

People who live in materially precarious situations, such as Mette Lylloff, are the subjects of radical politics. However, by ascribing her politics to a Leftist politics of inclusion, there exactly arises a misrecognition of radical politics with Leftist politics. For, in stressing inclusion into the public, people like Lylloff must either refrain from expressing themselves in terms that seek a recognition of lived experience, or accept that their expressions are translated into arguments, opinions, etc. In other words, her expressions will be made partial, taking the quest for recognition out of the frame entirely.

As I have already alluded to, I conceive of radical politics as either situated around inclusion into the existing order or a break with the existing order. I situate myself with the latter conception. And, while I do not specify this politics to that great an extent in the thesis –

[3] In the thesis I exemplify this uncritical stance mostly through the writings of Mouffe and Laclau.

beyond referring to my reading of Laclauian Populism – it should be noted that I think of this politics, not in terms of historical conjectures, but in a more Badiouian vein as a politics of truth – a reading I do not consider alien to the spirit of Laclau's work on populism. This is not an anarchist politics that seeks horizontal order, for it acknowledges that hierarchical order and exclusion are ineradicable features of society. Rather, it is a politics that, by positioning itself always on the side of the excluded, always seeks to challenge the existing order, no matter its relative degree of hierarchy and exclusivity. I conceive of it this way exactly because 'the logic of lack' is universal. It is not historically contingent but instead constitutive of all human societies that have ever existed.

This could be read together with a Mouffean[4] or Derridean notion of 'democracy to come'[5] – or a Laclauian and Mouffian radical democracy for that matter – but their primary focus on inclusion rather than the break; on groundless order rather than revolutionary politics, remains a politics for the public subject – not a politics for the excluded. In so being, they speak more to the self-understanding – or, ego-identification – of public subjects, than to the realisation of material demands made by excluded parts. Their politics acknowledges the universality of 'the logic of lack', but, in speaking primarily to the public subject, 'the logic of lack' becomes an obstacle and a problem that we have to live with. In so doing, they arrive at their politics from outside of this logic, as the establishment of the logic *as a problem* requires parameters for diagnosing phenomena that are arrived at from outside this logic itself. As such, it can only be considered as a logical fallacy as 'the logic of lack itself' is universal.

Instead, politics should be conceived as the exposition of this universality. As such, instead of being articulated in relation to historical conjectures through decrees to public subjects, it must be expressed in terms of breaks, marked by the emergence of the bodies of the excluded, which always exceed the police (ac)count performed through Left/Right. To be clear then, the exposition of this excess is what radical politics should be all about. Additionally, while 'the logic of lack' speaks to a logic of discourse, it also structures materiality.[6] As such, a politics that acknowledges 'the logic of lack' must be directed at the

[4] Although her recent book on populism can be read as emphasising the break over the inclusion. See Mouffe, Chantal, 2018, *For a Left Populism*, Verso: London.
[5] Mouffe, Chantal, 1993a, *The Return of The Political*, Verso: London, p. 8. Derrida discusses this at length in Derrida, Jacques, 1994, *Specters of Marx*, translated by: Peggy Kamuf, Routledge: New York.
[6] That discourse is material is nicely exemplified in Carpentier, Nico, 2017, *The Discursive-Material Knot: Cyprus in Conflict and Community Media Participation*, Peter Lang Inc: New York.

state (or their pre-modern equivalents), as parameters for material constellations (for example, the parameters for what kind of bodies can be assembled where) are exactly located at the level of the state – based on its monopoly on violence. This eternal politics is then an eternal revolutionary politics, always working to give 'the logic of lack' expression in the name of the excluded parts.

Finally, this thesis is intended as a contribution to both the study of Left/Right and democratic theory more broadly. There is currently a dearth of work on the democratic function of Left/Right. Despite their hegemony over public discourse, to which their popularity in political science attests, there are almost no historical accounts of their emergence – especially of their emergence outside France – and, considering the amount of people who muse over the degree of usefulness that the spectrum commands today, there are precious few engagements with the ideological effects of Left/Right in, and on, modernity. My hope is that I can here carve out new territory in which to engage with Left/Right and better understand the democratic functions they have in political modernity.

Chapter 1: Left/Right as spatial markers

1. Introduction

Despite their fundamental place in political modernity, and their continuing common usage, the scholarly literature analysing the terms “Left” and “Right” in politics is far from overwhelming. Complicating matters, what literature does exist is scattered across a myriad of fields, making it difficult to summarise neatly and succinctly. Nevertheless, that is what this chapter aims to accomplish. Moving from field to field, it reviews and critically assesses key texts engaging with the concepts of Left/Right, showing what we can learn from them but also their limits.

Overall, I look in each field to find out what we can learn and build on our understanding of Left/Right. As such, I treat it as a puzzle, and with each new piece that I put down, we see a little bit more of the whole picture. To accomplish this, I look to political science, anthropology and cognitive linguistics. I find that they allude to the spatial nature of Left/Right but that they lack a temporal dimension. This means that they can explain, to some extent, what Left and Right mean and how politics can be built up around them, but they cannot explain Left/Right themselves and the space the they open. To make up for this, I also engage the most prominent historical account of Left/Right, which ties it in with the fabric of modernity. The chapter shows that there is a gap in the Left/Right literature in that it has rarely been explicitly theorised in a spatial capacity. This has made us unable to theorise exclusion from this space that Left/Right create and, as such, has held back political approaches that seek to engage this place of exclusion. As I move forward in this thesis, I attempt to make up for this lack of theorisation.

First, I engage political science with Anthony Downs and William Riker. I position Downs as the first to equate Left/Right with a properly political space. He employs Left/Right as foundations for his theories on political behaviour and uses them to divide up individuals with tastes and preferences. These preferences, he posits, are employed in a rational way in order to accomplish a maximum amount of utility income. Left/Right thus form a linear space that account for the whole of the political community, defined as individuals with tastes and preferences. Riker speaks to Downs in his assertion that, yes, we need to think about space, but, no, space is not one-dimensional, but multi-dimensional and revolves around issues. Riker speaks of the ability of politicians to manipulate political discourse by invoking different issue spaces at different times. He calls this ability ‘heresthetics’. Yet, despite Riker reconceptualising space as multidimensional issue space, it remains the task

of the politicians to effect a relocation of individuals to different 'spatial neighbourhoods'. In that sense, he too relies on a meta-space of sorts, onto which issue spaces map. I end up appreciating the need to think spatially when thinking about Left/right but criticising Downs and Riker for failing to provide theory that can explain Left/Right themselves and the space they create.

Second, I engage the anthropological work of Jean Laponce, Chris McManus and others. As these scholars look at cultures far and wide and examine the meaning that these cultures have attached to Left/Right and, in particular, Up/Down, we see that Laponce posits that Left/Right are about religion and equality. To make this argument, he notes that Up is always associated with religion, hierarchy and, in general, 'the good' and Down vice-versa. Yet, according to Laponce, the French revolution secured a levelling of the existing political symbolic order, whereby Up was rotated onto Right and Down was rotated onto Left. The Left/Right distinction thus cannot escape the connotations attached to Up/Down, even though they allow for those meanings to be posed in a political form. Right retains the connotations of the holy, hierarchy and 'the good', and Left vice-versa. We see McManus largely agree with this, but then James Hall disputes it. We also encounter Lakoff and Johnson's account of the importance of metaphors in relation to the structuring of our thoughts. They too suggest that Up=good and Down=bad but say nothing of substance about Left/Right. Nevertheless, we start to see an account of space emerge that centres not only around Left/Right but also around their meanings. And, with Lakoff and Johnson, we reach the argument that we think in terms of spatial, orientation metaphors – the argument that allow us to stress the constitutive role that Left/Right play in the constitution of political space. Again, however, a temporal dimension is missing and, without it, our understanding of the nature of the political space that Left/Right enable remains incomplete.

I make up for this lack of a temporal dimension as I finally engage the most prominent account of the emergence of Left/Right in France, provided by Marcel Gauchet. I contextualise this with the theoretico-historical account of modernity provided by Claude Lefort and a theorisation of the emergence of a public subject, provided by Harold Mah. With them, I argue that modernity is constituted around the lack of markers of certainty which opens up a space for the contestation of power by 'the people'. With an institutionalisation of this new democratic regime a public emerged, insofar that we understand this public as made up of people who were different but who nevertheless shared in their concern for the in-common. With this development a public subject

emerged. To accompany this backdrop, Gauchet engages the introduction of Left/Right as seating arrangement in the national assembly where supporters of the *ancien régime* sat to the right, and supporters of the revolution sat to the left. He then engages the different meanings that they have taken on and shows us how they change through time. Most interesting, however, is his account of their popularisation in public discourse. He equates this occurrence with the emergence of the citizen-voter – a particular form of the public subject. This citizen-voter, having been once removed from the doing of politics through the introduction of political party machinery that made it impossible to represent politics as a matter of the transparent will of the people, becomes in need of a map of the political community that they can use to identify themselves and others in relation to the whole.

I, with Gauchet, argue that Left/Right accomplish this task of enabling the citizen-voter to identify with the whole because of certain qualities that they have. Notably, Left/Right are not caught up in signification to the same extent as Red/White or Up/Down. They also remain linked to politics and the early days of the revolution, as several political parties have Left and Right in their names. The point is that, despite retaining connotations of politics, the final meaning of Left/Right is impossible to ascertain. In this sense, they provide a map of the political community that is highly malleable. In a modernity that is defined by the lack of markers of certainty, perhaps 'better' maps could be found that would relate to certain periods, but as modernity is exactly marked by flux and uncertainty, the longevity of Left/Right is explained exactly through their link to the phenomenon of politics itself and nothing more. Left/Right, being fairly open to new meanings, have simply adapted as different issues have come to govern political discourse by subsuming those issues under their overarching space. I thus argue that Left/Right are tied together with a type of rationalism that stresses that individual parts are partial to other parts and to the space to which those parts belong. I.e. a type of rationalism that stresses the coming together of different people in, specifically, deliberation over the common good.

As I round off, we see, from the engagement with the temporal dimension, that Left/Right are linked with the institutionalisation of politics and the democratic revolution. Yet, we still know precious little about the nature of space, which is what Left/Right constitute, and identity, which is both constituted in the citizen-voter in the singular but also marks out the ways in which the citizen-voter can express themselves in relation to the public. In the next chapter, I thus move to an engagement with more explicitly post-structuralist accounts of space and identity as I try to effect an understanding of Left/Right and their function in modernity more thoroughly.

2. Left/Right in political science

2.1. Introduction

Left/Right are categories that exist in the world. To many people, they are the political categories *par excellence*. As such, it is only natural that we find political scientists using them in order to understand the world around us.

Here I engage Anthony Downs and William Riker, from whom we learn that politics is spatial. But they also present us with a vision of politics that lacks a temporal dimension. What this means is that they can perhaps describe the political world and its processes, but they cannot explain them.

2.2. Anthony Downs and Left/Right

Downs was an economist who sought to apply insights from that field to the study of politics.[7] He conceptualised the voter as a rational consumer who votes for their chosen political party based on which parties match their preference.[8] Downs conceptualised this idea of preference in terms of *utility income*:

> Each citizen in our model votes for the party he believes will provide him with a higher utility income than any other party during the coming election period.[9]

The political preference of the rational voter, Downs contends, is thus determined by the degree to which the voter can derive a perceived personal gain. As the voter is rational, they will weigh up the costs to acquiring information in relation to the perceived gain that might be extracted from expenditure of, primarily, time and energy. With many voters determining that such costs might be too expensive, Downs argues that political parties not only appeal to voters through advertising their policy proposals, but also through pitching themselves *ideologically*:

[7] His seminal text is Downs, Anthony, 1957a, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, Harper & Row Publishers: New York.
[8] Downs, 1957a, p.5.
[9] Ibid., p.38.

> Ideologies help him [the voter] focus attention on the differences between parties; therefore they can be used as samples of all the differentiating stands. With this short cut a voter can save himself the cost of being informed upon a wider range of issues.[10]

Downs here uses the word ideology to denote a form of group identification. In other words, by pitching themselves ideologically, political parties create a unified image of what they are, and, as Downs says, this image can then be used to differentiate one party from another. It is with this conceptualisation of ideology that a concept of space begins to emerge.

Insisting that there is uncertainty involved in the acquisition of information relating to voting,[11] Downs argues that it is not obvious which ideology will be favoured by voters. It is because of this that differentiation between ideologies become possible. In order to compare two ideologies that portray themselves as distinct from one another, we need one schema in which both can be placed so that we can understand them in relation to one another. To accomplish such a schema, or space, Downs enlists Left and Right:

> To make this politically meaningful, we assume that political preferences can be ordered from left to right in a manner agreed upon by all voters. They need not agree on which point they personally prefer, only on the ordering of parties from one extreme to the other.[12]

Relying on the work of Hotelling and Smithies,[13] Downs then conceptualises Left/Right as opening up a space that is conceived of as a "market".[14] As we see in the quotation above, this space is then foundational, which enables his theory to work in a politically meaningful

[10] Ibid., p.98.
[11] Ibid., pp.77-81.
[12] Ibid., p.115.
[13] Hotelling, Harold, 1929, 'Stability in Competition', *The Economic Journal*, Vol. 39, No. 153, pp.41-57; and Smithies, A., 1941, 'Optimum Location in Spatial Competition', *Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 49, No. 3, pp.423-439.
[14] Downs, Anthony, 1957b, 'An Economic Theory of Political Action in a Democracy', *The Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 65, No. 2, pp.135-150, p.142.

way. In other words, there can be uncertainty as to individual preferences, but there cannot be uncertainty as to the space that individual preferences refer to in order to locate themselves in relation to other preferences. Downs goes on to discuss that parties, at least in a two-party state such as the US, will drift to the centre as they can always rely on the voters who inhabit the relative edges of the space closest to them to still vote for them, as their rival party will be positioned even further away, spatially speaking. Downs popularised this theory – the Median Voter Theorem[15] – and with it,[16] he accomplished the first significant conceptualisation of Left/Right as spatial markers.

To reiterate, Left/Right enable Downs to conceptualise a political space in which voters, acting as consumers, can locate their preferences in relation to other preferences and understand ideologies in relation to other ideologies. In doing this, Downs makes at least two assumptions that are problematic. First, he assumes that the voter will always seek to act in accordance with their perceived personal gain,[17] which is plainly just not true. Second, he assumes that Left/Right can account for ideological politics *tout-court.* In other words, while preferences need to be expressed/represented and may change because of an uncertainty in relation to the acquisition of information, Left/Right are beyond the realm of expression/representation and instead exist as an empty formal distinction that acts as a bedrock for individual preferences to be expressed/represented to begin with. In Downs, there is then no room for any kind of political expression beyond preferences, which Left/Right function to signify.

2.3. William Riker and Left/Right

Downs' attempt to understand politics using the Left/Right spectrum sparked a cascade of work focused on politics more widely and the Left/Right spectrum in particular.[18] I engage Riker because he, unlike some of Downs' other critics, sought to question the use of space in relation to Downs' conception of politics.[19]

[15] This theory was first developed in Black, Duncan, 1948, 'On the Rationale of Group Decision-making', *Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 56, pp.23-34.
[16] Downs, 1957b.
[17] Which, to Downs, is to act rationally.
[18] Many sought to create models to properly understand politics. For two such models, see Wittman, Donald, 1973, 'Parties as utility maximizers', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 67, pp.490-498; and Robertson, David, 1976, *A Theory of Party Competition*, John Wiley & Sons: London.
[19] Riker, William H., 1980, *Liberalism against Populism: A Confrontation between the Theory of Democracy and the Theory of Social Choice*, W. H. Freeman: San Francisco; and Riker, William, H., 1986, *The Art of Political Manipulation*, Yale University Press: New Haven, Conn..

First, Riker asserts that the preferences and ideologies to which Downs refers must be conceptualised as "moving".[20] Upon reviewing work that has gone into the "spatial models of politics", Riker notes that:

> As far as I know, the candidates (or parties) and their platforms, or, alternatively, the motions, are all that anyone has proposed as moving parts. But nothing inherent in the model prevents other parts from moving. At the very minimum, the voters might also move. This means that they might change their tastes, that is, change the location of their ideal points.[21]

Riker also goes further, contending that "participants (either candidates or voters) might change the space itself".[22] This means that, to him, a simple two-dimensional space simply cannot provide a solid account of how politics takes place in real life.[23] To compensate for this, Riker introduces two different concepts: heresthetic and rhetoric. Heresthetic, a science invented by Riker,[24] concerns the ability of participants to change the spatial framework in which people locate their preferences in order to make other people join their "spatial neighbourhood".[25] Rhetoric concerns the ability of participants to persuade others to relocate to their spatial neighbourhood, i.e., it does not effect the space. To clarify, Riker gives the example of a US senator who fought to change the US port into which nerve gas would be repatriated and destroyed after a leak had occurred in Okinawa. The senator struggled to accomplish such a policy effect as he failed to rally enough senators to his side. Using rhetoric, he alluded to the terrible consequences of leaks and argued that Okinawans were not complaining anyway. However, it was not until he used heresthetic – until he changed the space – that he was successful in effecting a policy

[20] Riker, William H., 1990, 'Heresthetic and Rhetoric in the Spatial Model', in: Enelow, James M. & Hinich, Melvin J., (eds.), *Advances in the Spatial Theory of Voting*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, pp.46-65, p.46. Riker speaks to Downs on several occasions, perhaps most notably in Riker, William, H., 1962, *The Theory of Political Coalitions*, Yale University Press: London.
[21] Riker, 1990, p.46.
[22] Ibid., p.46.
[23] Ibid., p.47.
[24] Riker, William, H., 1984, 'The Heresthetics of Constitution-Making: The Presidency in 1787, with Comments on Determinism and Rational Choice', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 78, No. 1, pp.1-16.
[25] Riker, 1990, p.48.

change. To do so, he forwarded another argument relating to secret trade talks with Japan (in which repatriation of nerve gas was said to feature) and accused the President of not consulting the Senate to the extent to which he is constitutionally required. By collapsing the space in which the question of the port dominated into the space in which the question of the status of the legislative branch in relation to the executive branch dominated, he managed to win enough support from senators who did not care for his arguments in relation to terror and Okinawan acquiescence, but thought it important to be seen to stand up for senatorial independence. Through applying heresthetic techniques, the senator in question got his way: he won.[26] The implication is that while preferences might be fixed, issue spaces certainly are not.

What Rikerian heresthetic accomplishes is to focus space, the regular distribution of differences, around issues. In Riker, preferences are always related to issues and, as such, space is not one-dimensional, but multi-dimensional. Through this insight Riker can then account for how parts might "move". It is with this in mind that Iain McClean argues that:

> […] multidimensional issue space offers the potential to construct a new winning majority. Therefore, herestheticians have an incentive to increase or diminish the dimensionality of issue space, according to their perceived advantage.[27]

This complicates Riker's relationship to Downs as he not only – especially through the emphasis on rhetoric – starts to question some of the basic tenets of rational choice theory that informs Downs' rational voter, but also challenges the idea that party ideology is the most important factor in relation to the agency afforded participants in the political process. Additionally, as Riker's theory is only applied to liberal democracies where institutional norms and regulations supposedly inhibit the use of arbitrary power, it positions questions of winning and losing in relation to 'getting your way'. And, to Riker, as politicians attempt to get their way – to win – through the application of heresthetic techniques, they not only calculate appeal to voters' tastes and preferences but also seek a

[26] Ibid., pp.48-49.
[27] McClean, Iain, 2002, 'William H. Riker and the Invention of Heresthetic(s)', *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 32, No. 3, pp.535-558, pp.555-556.

realignment of preferences[28] – a phenomenon I could not account for through Downs alone.

However, certain unexplained assumptions still exist with Riker. First, while he does problematise the rational voter, he still only perceives political being at the level of preference and taste. In this sense, he remains tied to Downs in his conception of the voter as some sort of passive consumer, even if the degree of rationality is now questioned. Second, Riker understands space in terms of its dimensionality alone. This insight does expand on Downs' work, but, while it provides a better account of how politicians act to win votes, it does not fundamentally change the argument that Downs forwards: that political parties should be viewed as ideological vendors in a Left/Right space that pitch themselves in relation to one another in order to win votes.

2.4. What eludes Riker and Downs?

We learn from Riker and Downs that politics is related to the distribution of preferences that stand in relation to one another and that this distribution of preferences is spatial. To them, the concept of space is needed to account for the arena where people come together to make decisions that effect all. We learn from Downs that there is a Left/Right space in which different preferences are distributed, and we learn from Riker that politicians can manipulate issues to place people together in the same place who would not otherwise be together. One can read Riker, through his singular focus on issue spaces, as effecting a complete dislocation of the Left/Right spectrum. However, his theory relies upon an overarching space. For when he refers to the ability to manipulate issue space to relocate preferences in different 'spatial neighbourhoods', he relies upon another founding space to which issue spaces necessarily relate. If that was not the case, there would be no neighbourhood to begin with. Instead we would all be floating around in different issue spaces, unable to relate to one another unless we both had preferences in the same dimensions. Instead, while heresthetic accounts for the manoeuvring of politicians, the founding space is what makes that manoeuvring meaningful in the first instance. For, ultimately, the politician must win against other politicians who compete within a liberal democratic framework for temporary power. While this competition may centre around multiple issues, it is still singular: in the end, there can be only one winner. It is in relation

[28] Although Riker refers to these, new, tastes and preferences as "latent". See Riker, 1990, p.54.

to this *one* space that then opens in relation to this *one* competition, that the Left/Right spectrum once again manifests itself.[29]

Furthermore, while Downs – and by implication, Riker – rely on this space, they constitute it as empty, as a purely formal distinction that has no content. However, Riker shows us that, once issues enter the equation, Left/Right also lose their emptiness. Having lost their radical emptiness, Left/Right cannot be said to be a purely formal, conceptual space. Rather, they become embedded in the world and take on meaning, and to the extent that issues rely on the Left/Right spectrum to form, Left/Right then also become constitutive in the formation of issue spaces which in turn can function to change the meaning of Left/Right.

The biggest problem for both Riker and Downs, however, is that because they use this space as a foundation for their political science models that aim to explain politics, they cannot explain this Left/Right space itself.[30] The space becomes foundational to their work. As such, the Left/Right meta-space functions as an a priori to their theories. This is because their theories lack a temporal dimension. It is true that Riker concerns himself deeply with the changing of preferences and tastes, but this remains a spatial concern rather than a temporal concern as it does not deal with changes to the meta-space that supposedly founds our politics in tastes and preferences. Riker perhaps excuses this by arguing that he only seeks to apply the spatial model of politics to liberal democracies,[31] where he simply assumes that human beings are constituted through preferences and tastes alone. This is clearly problematic, but the fact remains that Left/Right, constituting a space in which some kind of difference between things is distributed, is a thing of this world. Downs and Riker make assumptions about Left/Right to forward spatial models of politics, but through Downs and Riker we will travel no further in our search for a better understanding of Left/Right and the space they constitute. Because of this, I now leave political science behind as I look to those who have sought to understand the meaning of Left and Right.

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[29] We see this in Riker also when he writes that, for revolutionaries, losing is "almost certain in liberal democratic governments […] because they minimize the number of extremists". See Riker, 1990, p.47. The positioning of extremist already suggests an identification of a space that goes beyond issues and instead, somehow, connects up with liberal democracy.

[30] This is problematic because they use this understanding of politics that this unexplained space has provided them with to make arguments for particular political institutions. See Riker, William H., 1988, *Liberalism Against Populism: A Confrontation Between a Theory of Democracy and the Theory of Social Choice*, Waveland Press: Long Grove, Illinois.

[31] Riker, 1990, p.47.

2.5. Conclusion

In this section I engaged Left/Right from some of the perspectives of political science. I used Downs and Riker to exemplify two such approaches. However, both Riker and Downs use Left/Right to found politics. As such, they do not explain Left/Right themselves. In this sense, their theory establishes the importance of a spatial dimension to politics but to the detriment of a temporal dimension.

3. Left/Right in sociology and anthropology

3.1. Introduction

Having argued above that we might think of Left/Right as constituting some sort of spatial framework, in this section I look at what this framework might *mean*. Through engaging various sociological and semiological approaches, I argue that Left/Right have no immutable or essential meanings. Instead, through looking at cognitive linguistics, we learn that they are orientational metaphors that enable an identification of subjects in relation to each other and the whole.

3.2. Left/Right in cultural symbolism

First, I look at people who have sought to study cultures (ancient as well as present) and the way in which Left and Right act as symbols within them. Jean Laponce is the most natural starting point. Laponce was a political scientist who, perhaps more than anyone, worked "to make the place of language an important subfield in political science".[32] Standing apart from the rational choice theorists, he sought to understand politics through understanding the language that people use in their political lives. To this end, he wrote his seminal book on Left/Right: *Left and Right: The Topography of a Political Distinction*.[33] The aim of the book was to better understand what Left and Right mean and do.[34] Acknowledging that "[w]e use space to give shapes to our thoughts, and in turn these shapes generate and constrain new ideas",[35] Laponce describes his book as "[taking] the

[32] Safran, William, 2018, 'The contributions of Jean A. Laponce to political theory', *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 39, No. 5, pp.690-701, p.690.
[33] Laponce, Jean, 1981, *Left and Right: The Topography of a Political Distinction*, University of Toronto Press: Toronto.
[34] He explicitly ties his research, not to Downs or Hotelling (whom Downs leaned upon), but rather to Lévi-Strauss and his structuralist tradition. See Laponce, 1981, p.9.
[35] Ibid., p.3

form of a series of observations, analyses, speculations, reflections and theories concerning one of the weakest of spatial dimensions – that of left and right."[36]

In this book, Laponce spends several chapters engaging with "rituals and […] beliefs of Southeast Asian primitives",[37] as well as other "old religious ideologies [… and] new political ones",[38] in order to find the pre-political meaning of Left and Right. He makes one conclusive finding:

> […] the overall semantic and social context within which the terms left and right have been used politically since the end of the eighteenth century is a context that favours the right side inasmuch as right is congruently related to the notion of what is located above, and inasmuch as right, like 'above', is located on the dominant side of the polarity.[39]

Coupled with a focus on physical factors (such as gravity) and biological factors (such as the head being on the top of the body), Laponce thus also outlines a vertical spacing where value connotations position 'above', or 'Up', as good, because it is on the side of the heavens, and 'below, or 'Down', as bad, because it is on the side of hell. In other words, while there might be cultural and linguistic trends that accentuate Right over Left, the dominance of 'Up' over 'Down' is near universal.[40] In fact, Laponce finds that the Up/Down dimension itself is dominant over all other dimensions as well.[41]

He then goes about trying to find out how we can develop a knowledge about Left/Right that works in tandem with these insights. Laponce notes that Left/Right emerge in a political capacity with the French Revolution and, through statistical data, he show how dominant they have become as markers of political space.[42] While describing Left/Right early in the book as one of the "weakest spatial dimensions",[43] Laponce later argues that,

[36] Ibid., p.7.
[37] Ibid., p.9.
[38] Ibid., p.9.
[39] Ibid., p.41.
[40] Ibid., p.45.
[41] Ibid., p.69.
[42] Ibid., pp.47-68.
[43] Ibid., p.7.

"this semantic success [of Left/Right in colonizing political space] that both clarifies and cripples the understanding of politics is unlikely to be accidental."[44] He finds the secret to the success of Left/Right in the dominance of Up/Down and its relation to Left/Right. Relying on Eliade, he introduces religion as a major factor, firmly aligning it (the sacred) with Up,[45] and atheism (the profane) with Down.[46] But once he has adopted this focus on the sacred and the profane, he also makes another finding: the sacred is also connected to Right.[47] With this, he starts to build an understanding of the processes native to the French Revolution that started to align Right with Up and Left with Down. As Laponce notes that the factions that supported the aristocracy and the church sat on the right side of the newly formed national assembly, and the revolutionary forces sat on the left, he gives the following account:

> The revolution that beheaded a king physically, and a society symbolically, the revolution that instituted government by discussion, that sought universal equality and located its rituals and ceremonies in open fields far from the vertical spires of churches, required a horizontal classification.
>
> One can more easily say 'left and right are alike' than one can say 'there is no difference between high or low'; but left and right could not remain equal. The existing religious and social symbolism prevented them from being mere images of each other or mere neutral dimension for the locating of political actors […] God and King – concepts that were up and right religiously – naturally became right politically; and an inverse rotation led the enemies of the king – many of whom were also enemies of the clergy – to move from low to left. Furthermore, since the very aim of the revolution was not to put the social order upside down but to level it off, the rotation movement that

[44] Ibid., p.68.
[45] See Eliade, Mircea, 1959, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, translated by: Willard R. Trask, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt: Orlando.
[46] Incidentally, we can also see here how it is that Leszek Kolakowski, in 1968, came to represent the Left as the party of negation. See Kolakowski, Leszek, 2014, 'The Concept of the Left', *South Asia Citizens Web*, 4 Nov, viewed 19 Jan, 2019, <http://www.sacw.net/article9655.html>.
[47] Laponce, 1981, p.92

> led from low to left did not lead further from left to high. The rotation stopped at the horizontal. The third estate did not want to replace the king; ideologically it could not. Unable to climb the symbolic hierarchy leading to the crown, it sought to erase that hierarchy. The new spatial notation of the new political order thus stabilized at the horizontal with king and clergy on the right, anticlericalism, parliamentarianism, democracy and the dominated on the left.[48]

By connecting Up-Right and Down-Left, Laponce posits his contribution to the study of Left/Right: Right becomes good, associated with strength and religion and Left becomes bad, associated with weakness and atheism.[49] The new political system that the French Revolution instilled required a new form of spatial ordering; the dominance of Up/Down had to go and Left/Right took their place while retaining and perhaps even strengthening the cultural connotations of Up-Right and Down-Left.

Laponce goes on to focus on handedness, which tempts him to "explain an increase in the level of left-hand writing by an increase in social liberalism".[50] However, he never acts on the temptation, even if he speculates that the success of Left/Right must be found in relation to the physical structures of our bodies.[51] Instead, he satisfies himself with the explanatory model that I have outlined above. He seeks to verify these hypotheses through survey data and notes that Left/Right has lost some of its overt religious connotations, but he nevertheless "feel[s] justified in concluding that the verification of the hypotheses does not undermine placing equality and religion at the core of the Left/Right structure."[52] This means that he operates with a core/periphery divide,[53] where he places questions of equality and religion as central to the Left/Right spectrum and questions of, for example, the economy, as only peripherally attached to the Left/Right spectrum.

Unfortunately, Laponce's incursion into Left/Right is somewhat lacking. The sheer array of methods that he employs and fields that he engages makes it difficult for him to arrive at

[48] Ibid., p.92.
[49] One might argue that what is really at play here is transcendence, rather than religion, but Laponce does not make this argument himself.
[50] Ibid., p.113.
[51] Ibid., p.93.
[52] Ibid., p.182.
[53] Ibid., p.135.

solid conclusions. The squaring of psychoanalysis, which he engages on a few occasions to exemplify his findings,[54] with questions about human nature, for example, is highly problematic. However, the problematic nature of his incursion into the study of Left/Right is also one of the book's strengths. For if we read it as more speculative than assertive, we see that it opens up a number of ways in which Left/Right can be engaged. Laponce opens up a number of conversations – for example, about Left/Right and its relation to our bodies, Left/Right and the French Revolution, Left/Right and cultural symbolism and Left/Right and spatial metaphors – and is careful to close only a few. As I proceed with examining Left/Right and the way it has been thought about in the established literature, we come across all these conversations again. We might take what we can from them, but I also note that we must move past them in order to give a better account of Left/Right and their current political function.

3.3. Following from Laponce

Following on from Laponce's opening of the conversation about Left/Right and handedness, Chris McManus, whose book on this subject looks at almost as many fields as Laponce's,[55] concurs that "always it is right that is good and left that is bad".[56] For McManus, this also has political implications:

> The symbolism means that right is the positive end of the scale, and hence it is more likely that people will apply it to themselves than apply the less positive end of the scale […] The mathematics therefore suggests that we should not expect left and right to be equally prevalent in the population, and since, as we have seen in other contexts, 'right' is the norm whereas 'left' is the marked form, then it is the left that is generally in the minority.[57]

[54] Ibid., pp.80-81.
[55] McManus, Chris, 2002, *Right Hand, Left Hand: The Origins of Asymmetry in Brains, Bodies, Atoms and Cultures*, Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA.
[56] McManus in Robinson, Andrew, 2009, 'Left-Right Symbolism', *The Lancet*, Vol. 373, No. 9662, p.452.
[57] McManus, 2002, pp.263-4.

In this way, McManus uses the prevalence of right-handedness to argue that more people will be likely to identify with right over left. McManus has written extensively on this,[58] although he is not the only one.[59] However, it should be noted that others working within the same methodological framework as McManus have sought to refute these claims. James Hall, with his book on Left/Right symbolism in Western Renaissance art,[60] seeks to show "the variety of left—right distinctions in western culture, and how these are far from being universally hostile to the left".[61] He makes the rather damning accusation, which he backs up with close textual analysis, that:

> I draw on all these studies [that assert that Right = good and Left = bad] and am hugely indebted to them, yet the essential Blavatsky-ite mindset which they have perpetuated is deeply flawed. As a result, modern editors and interpreters of historical texts in which the left hand/side is venerated tend to pass over the relevant passages in silence – or assume that they say the opposite. The situation is pretty much the same with visual images and aesthetics.[62]

As such, from an anthropological perspective, I cannot conclusively assign any intrinsic meaning to Left/Right, especially since anthropological studies has not looked at Left/Right and their meaning *politically*.[63] That there are loose cultural connotations cannot be

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[58] See, for example, McManus, Chris, 2004, 'Right-Left and the scrotum in Greek sculpture', *Laterality*, Vol. 9, No. 2, pp.189-199.

[59] For examples, see also Palka, Joel W., 2002, 'Left/right symbolism and the body in ancient Maya iconography and culture', *Latin American Antiquity*, Vol. 3, No. 15, pp.419-443; Guinan, Ann K., 1996, 'Left/Right Symbolism in Mesopotamian Divination', *State Archives of Assyria Bulletin*, Vol. 10, pp.5-10; and Bertrand, Pierre-Michell, 2008, *Histoire Des Gauchers*, Imago: Paris. Importantly, I must also recognise the work done by Robert Hertz in 1909 and Rodney Needham in 1978. See Hertz, Robert, 1909, *La preeminence de fa main droite, sociologie religieuse et folklore*, viewed 19 Jan, 2019,<http://www.anthropomada.com/bibliotheque/HERTZ-Robert.pdf>; and Needham, Rodney, 1978, *Right and Left: Essays on Symbolic Classification*, University of Chicago Press: Chicago.

[60] Hall, James, 2008, *The Sinister Side: How Left-Right Symbolism Shaped Western Art*, Oxford University Press: New York.

[61] Hall cited in Robinson, 2009, p.452.

[62] Hall, 2008, p.5.

[63] On this point, we have already seen how political science often uses Left/Right as a basis for their understanding of political space. This means that the trouble of finding out what Left and Right actually mean *politically* is, more often than not, left to the commentariat to figure out. However, due to this task being carried out by the commentariat, their efforts are not only explanatory, but

refuted, but the extent to which we can operate with a core/periphery distinction in order to assign a core meaning to Left/Right seems, on the basis of the literature that I have reviewed so far, questionable. However, as I renew my focus on Left/Right as orientational metaphors and their relation to the physical properties of the brain, we start to see that the dominance of Left/Right has real implications for the way in which politics is conceived today. With Downs and Riker, I argued that Left/Right have spatial qualities. With Laponce, McManus and Hall, I showed that Left and Right have meaning, even if that meaning is difficult to pin down. As I move on, we encounter the notion that we think in terms of spatial metaphors that have meaning attached to them. That is, we encounter the argument Left/Right provide a frame for our thoughts.

3.4. Left/Right in our brains

McManus and Laponce note that the body plays an important part in relation to the value connotations that might be said to denote Left and Right. I here focus more on the work of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, who have written much about orientational metaphors,[64] the way they frame our thinking, and how they are connected to the physical matter of the brain. Lakoff in particular, working in the field of Cognitive Linguistics, is widely read and has even exerted some influence on the Democratic Party in the US. He has been keen to show that progressives need to pay attention to the language they use in order to frame discussions in ways that are beneficial to them.

Fundamental to Lakoff and Johnson is the idea that conceptual metaphors structure the way we think: "concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people".[65] In other words, concepts, and the way we frame issues,[66] structure our political conversations, which after the French Revolution – Laponce reminded us – is what govern politics. This should not be mistaken for a post-structuralist

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also constitutive, as it is within the space that they inhabit that academic inquiry tends to look for the popular meaning of terms.

[64] Their most noteworthy book is perhaps Lakoff, George & Johnson, Mark, 2003, *Metaphors We Live By*, University of Chicago Press: London.

[65] Ibid., p.3.

[66] They take the concept of framing from Charles Fillmore. See his readings of Fillmore in Lakoff, George, 2002, *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think*, University of Chicago Press: Chicago, p.431. Fillmore's most explicit writings on framing can be found in Fillmore, Charles, 1982, 'Frame Semantics', in: The Linguistic Society of Korea (ed.), *Linguistics in the Morning Calm*, Hanshin Publishing Company: Seoul, pp.111-138, viewed 17 March, 2018, <http://brenocon.com/Fillmore%201982_2up.pdf>.

position,[67] however.[68] Instead, Lakoff and Johnson call this theory "Embodied Realism",[69] indicating that they seek to anchor their theory in (brain) matter. Specifically, they argue that:

> Embodied realism, as we understand it, is the view that the locus of experience, meaning, and thought is the ongoing series of embodied organism–environment interactions that constitute our understanding of the world. According to such a view, there is no ultimate separation of mind and body, and we are always ''in touch'' with our world through our embodied acts and experiences […] Embodied realism is not a philosophical doctrine tacked onto our theory of conceptual metaphor. It is the best account of the grounding of meaning that makes sense of the broadest range of converging empirical evidence that is available from the cognitive sciences.[70]

Importantly, Lakoff and Johnson claim that we think in terms of metaphors because we are hardwired to do so, even if this view is largely derived from their work on conceptual metaphors rather than from scientific inquiries into the matter of the brain itself. In this sense, however, we can view Lakoff together with Laponce and McManus, who also sought to anchor metaphors in the body. Like Laponce, Lakoff and Johnson argue that "Good is Up; Bad is Down".[71] However, unlike Laponce, they are careful not to attribute this to some innate feature.[72] That is, rather than explaining *why* 'Up is Good', they simply note that this

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[67] A charge that Steven Pinker levelled against them. See Pinker, Steven, 2006, 'Block That Metaphor', *The New Republic*, 9 Oct, viewed 23 Sept, 2014, <http://pinker.wjh.harvard.edu/articles/media/2006_09_30_thenewrepublic.html>.

[68] Even if many have tried to reconcile the cognitivist approach with the discursive approach. See, for examples, Santa Ana, Otto, 2002, *Brown Tide Rising: Metaphors of Latinos in Contemporary American Public Discourse*, University of Texas Press: Austin; and Hart, Christopher, 2010, *Critical Discourse Analysis and Cognitive Science: New Perspectives on Immigration Discourse*, Palgrave McMillan: Basingstoke, which seeks to speak to Critical Discourse Analysis in particular.

[69] Johnson, Mark & Lakoff, George, 2006, 'Why cognitive linguistics requires embodied realism', *Cognitive Linguistics*, Vol. 3, No. 13, pp.245–263. This article is itself elaborating on notions already set out in Lakoff, George, & Johnson, Mark, 1999, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought*, Basic Books: New York.

[70] Johnson & Lakoff, 2006, p.249.

[71] Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p.16.

[72] Johnson & Lakoff, 2006, pp.251-2.

is a dominant frame. The innate features of our brains are what allow us to think in terms of conceptual metaphors – they do not structure the meaning of the metaphors themselves.

They also do not follow Laponce in saying that 'Good is also Right'. In fact, they make very few remarks on Left and Right, which they do not treat as core orientational metaphors. Instead, when seeking to apply their theories to politics, Lakoff merely says that Left and Right are "inaccurate" and a false dichotomy, covering up the true divide between progressivism and conservatism.[73] However, this is a paradoxical position. For, while he posits that, "what is really happening in the brains of Americans is that there are two very general modes of thought, one fundamentally progressive, the other fundamentally conservative",[74] and that the Left/Right metaphor only plays into the hands of "radical conservatives",[75] he essentially invokes an ordering of frames, whereby the conservative/progressive frame assumes a primary function and the Left/Right frame a secondary. This, in turn, paints the primary frame as good and the secondary as bad. However, while he may or may not be right about what frames are 'really' in American's brains, in accordance with his political and philosophical project, the Left/Right frame should not be conceptualised as an 'inaccurate' frame, but as a competing frame, that has the potential to displace the conservative/progressive frame entirely, rather than simply obfuscating it, as if it has a status that is different to other frames.

In any case, in specific relation to spatial, and orientational, metaphors, Lakoff and Johnson note that, "most of our fundamental concepts are organised in terms of one or more spatialization metaphors".[76] The degree to which this is true is too big a question to answer here, and as Hall showed us in the previous section, in language, visual imagery and aesthetics, it is not always the case that Up=good and Down=bad. But this does allow us to say something more about Left/Right. For insofar as they are orientational metaphors, they also indicate directions in relation to which one can situate oneself, that is, in relation to which one can *identify* one's position in relation to the space that the orientational metaphor erects in our minds. We saw with Rikerian heresthetic that issue spaces can effect a relocation to different spatial neighbourhoods. With Lakoff and Johnson, we get a more sophisticated account of this type of 'political manipulation', where the concept of

[73] Lakoff, George, 2006, *The Political Mind: A Cognitive Scientist's Guide to Your Brain and Its Politics*, Penguin Books: London, pp.43-47.
[74] Ibid., p.45.
[75] Ibid., p.45.
[76] Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p.17.

issue space is replaced by the concept of framing, which, instead of effecting a relocation to a different spatial neighbourhood, effects one's orientation in relation to the core spatial, orientational metaphors of Left and Right.

3.5. What can we learn from this?

Firstly, we can take the lesson that there seems to be no ultimate meaning to Left/Right. The scholars who have engaged the meaning of Left/Right are concerned primarily with thematic meaning rather than literal meaning. But this does of course not mean that Left/Right signify nothing at all. In one sense, we can argue that Left can mean liberal, socialist, social justice warrior, snowflake, communist, and many other things and Right can mean liberal, conservative, nationalist, egotist, fascist, and many other things. I have not undertaken a review of various meanings of Left and Right and nor will I – I leave this job to the political commentariat.

When we stop focusing on literal translations, we see that some of the people I have reviewed thus far take Right to have a positive connotation and Left a negative connotation, but even this is not conclusive. Laponce entangled Left/Right with the notions of equality and religion and, as we shall see in the next chapter, Noberto Bobbio also writes about the relationship between Left/Right and equality. For now, the most important lesson we can take from our engagements with Laponce, McManus, Hall, Lakoff and Johnson is perhaps that we can establish Left and Right's being as orientational metaphors. This means that, insofar that Left/Right are the dominant political orientational metaphors, people can orient and identify themselves in relation to their perceived meanings.

We thus get one step closer to our goal of developing a larger understanding of Left/Right in relation to their political function. In this section we have been provided with another, and in many ways better, account of space and the function of space in relation to the constraint and production of cognition. Yet, we still lack an account of how Left/Right actually play out. Laponce et al. engage Left/Right in search for immutable, essential meanings and they come up empty handed. They treat Left/Right as given, but they are, in their political capacity, historically contingent on the French Revolution and as such in need of examination themselves. With that in mind, in the next section, I move onto Marcel Gauchet's historical account of the emergence of Left/Right in France.

3.6. Conclusion

In this section we, with Laponce, found that most cultures represent Up as good and Down as bad, with Right associated with religion and authority and Left associated with atheism and equality. Furthermore, Laponce argued that the French Revolution made horizontal the previously vertical ordering of society, turning Up into Right and Down into Left. However, this account was disputed by others, leaving us unable to attach any essential or immutable meanings to Left/Right. We also looked to Cognitive Linguistics for insights into metaphors, such as Left/Right, and how they might be said to structure our thinking. With Lakoff and Johnson, we learned to think of Left/Right as orientational, and spatial, metaphors that enable thought to place itself in relation to the meanings that Left and Right signify. As such, they enable some sort of identification to take place. However, the exact nature of the identification eludes us, as we still lack a historical aspect to our incursion into the study of Left/Right.

4. Left/Right in history

4.1. Introduction

The most impressive historical account of the emergence of Left/Right is that conducted by Marcel Gauchet.[77] Other, less thorough, accounts also exist,[78] but the degree of theorisation in Gauchet's account makes it by far the most interesting. He traces Left/Right's influence in France from their conception to their ultimate popularisation post-Second World War. As we shall see,[79] these terms are inextricably linked with the ascension of modernity in the Western world. As such, we are fortunate that one of the key theorists of the political forms of modernity – Claude Lefort – worked closely with Gauchet.[80] This section interweaves the account of modernity that we get from Lefort with an account of the emergence of Left/Right that presses us to adopt a focus on Left/Right as markers of division. I show how Left/Right becomes a way for the newly enfranchised members of the social body to represent their own divisions to themselves in order that they may appear as a political community, capable of administering democratic rule over themselves despite their divisions. Notably, this approach places Left/Right within the realm of representation.

[77] Gauchet, 1996.
[78] Most notable are perhaps Laponce, 1981; and Revelli, Marco, 2009, *Sinistra destra: L'identità smarrita*, Laterza: Bari.
[79] And as we saw Laponce allude to also.
[80] Lefort has written extensively on modernity. Here we rely on Lefort, Claude, 1986, *The Political Forms of Modern Society: Bureaucracy, Democracy, Totalitarianism*, Polity Press: Cambridge.

4.2. The conditions of modernity and the emergence of the public subject

For this account I rely mostly on Claude Lefort. Trained in the Marxist tradition, he was one of the first high-profile members in France to break from the Communist Party and insist that some of the ideas of more liberal thinkers should be re-evaluated.[81] Reading Marx not as an economic determinist,[82] he was able to reconceive division within the social body as unruly and impossible to ascertain a priori.[83] He traced this division back to what Alexis de Tocqueville called the "democratic revolution".[84] To understand this revolution, however, he turned to the work of Ernst Kantorowicz,[85] who examined Christian symbolism. Kantorowicz examined the symbolic image of the body of the King in the *ancien régime*. Underpinned by Christian mythology, Kantorowicz argued that the body of the King was a dual body.[86] His body was both mortal and immortal, it belonged both to society and to the divine.[87] Symbolically, society was *one*, only counter-posed to the divine, of which it had no part. This divinity, however, secured a stable symbolic order for society, exactly through the body of the King, which was both mortal and immortal. Symbolically, the publicity of the King was thus always a performance of a symbolic order that tied society together – the mere appearance of the king was always a representation of society to itself.

To Lefort, modernity started with the disincorporation of this bond, symbolically manifested in the literal disincorporation (the decapitation) of Louis XVI. What this disincorporation accomplished was to rip asunder the symbolic order that the body of the King guaranteed. No longer was power divine. Instead, it was placed in the hands of 'the

[81] See Gashkov, Sergey & Rubtsova, Maria V., 2017, 'Cornelius Castoriadis and Claude Lefort about the Soviet Union Manageability: Political and Educational Dilemmas of the Left wing', *Dilemas Contemporáneos: Educación, Política y Valores*, Vol. 4, No. 2, pp.1-16 for a description of the theoretical cause of this break. See Lefort, 1986, p.302 for his engagement with de Tocqueville.
[82] The term is here meant to signify historical materialism and the a priori assignation of the proletariat as the revolutionary agent par excellence. Lefort instead stressed the gap Marx placed between theory and praxis (see Lefort, 1986, p.128), thus almost reading him as a post-structuralist. Lefort is not the only one to read Marx as such. For example, see also Žižek, Slavoj, 2012, 'How Did Marx Invent the Symptom?', in: Žižek, Slavoj (ed.), *Mapping Ideology*, Verso: London, pp.296-331.
[83] "[S]ocial division is […] in a primordial way, the division between the process of socialization and the discourse which describes it." Lefort, 1986, p.194.
[84] Ibid., p.302.
[85] Ibid., p.302.
[86] Kantorowicz, Ernst, 1981, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology*, Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ.. This is also not too dissimilar from what Samuel H. Beer called the 'Old Tory' cosmology. See Beer, Samuel H., 1996, *British Politics in the Collectivist Age*, Vintage Books: New York.
[87] Lefort of course historizes this and sees the emergence of this symbolism in the secularization of Christian values. Lefort, 1986, p.255.

people' to do with as they could.[88] No longer was the social body *one*; instead, that which tied it together was gone and it now had to engage with itself in order to forge the unity that was lost and to represent itself to itself, even as its divisions could no longer be brushed over.[89] Modernity, then, was the emergence of a lack of certainty – of claims to power and rule that no longer had to be couched in divine rhetoric but were instead set free to be employed in whatever way would best guarantee their success. It was in this vein that Lefort so famously asserted that:

> The legitimacy of power is based on the people; but the image of popular sovereignty is linked to the image of an empty place, impossible to occupy, such that those who exercise public authority can never claim to appropriate it.[90]

This is the designation of a space that emerged from the disincorporation, and that would be dominated by conflict and division and which would give birth to modern (democratic) politics.[91] Of particular interest to us is the way in which this new type of publicity should be conceived. Harold Mah has looked closely at the historical writings of François Furet, Mona Ozouf and Keith Baker, who work within the field of political-cultural history, and examined the way in which an emergence of a public subject emerged from the Revolution.[92] Noting, like Lefort, that the previous symbolic order was ripped asunder and that uncertainty now governed, Furet et al. examined the dominant discourses in France shortly after the Revolution. Identifying two competing discourses, one centred around a reunification of the social body under a general will and another centred around the

[88] To be precise, for Lefort, "power is not 'a thing', empirically determined, but is inseparable from its representation, and that the exercise of it, being simultaneously the exercise of knowledge, the mode of articulation of social discourse – is constitutive of social identity." See Lefort, 1986, p.188.
[89] This is an unavoidable phenomenon as "each discourse tends to set off in search of its own foundations". See Lefort, 1986, p.188.
[90] Ibid., p.279.
[91] The above quote continues thusly: "Democracy combines these two apparently contradictory principles: on the one hand, power emanates from the people; on the other, it is the power of nobody. And democracy thrives on this contradiction." Ibid., p.279.
[92] Mah, Harold, 2000, 'Phantasies of the Public Sphere: Rethinking the Habermas of Historians', *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 72, No. 1, pp.153-182. On this matter, one should also read Balibar, Étienne, 2017, *Citizen Subject: Foundations for Philosophical Anthropology*, translated by: Steven Miller, Fordham University Press: New York.

expression of social particularities, Baker found that the National Assembly settled on the former:

> [The National Assembly] was setting aside a discourse of the social, grounded on the notion of the differential distribution of reason, functions, and interests in modern civil society, in favour of a discourse of the political, grounded on the theory of a unitary general will. In the most general terms, it was opting for the language of political will, rather than of social reason; of unity, rather than of difference; of civic virtue, rather than of commerce; of absolute sovereignty, rather than of government limited by the rights of man—which is to say that, in the long run, it was opting for the Terror.[93]

For the first time, French people were faced with the horror of politics, derived from the ashes of a now defunct symbolic order. The first real consequence of this emergence of politics was a development of subjects that could act politically. Without order, there was a fear that these subjects would tear society apart. 'The people', the new political subjects, would now rule, but who were 'the people'? Mah notes a British example of this problem of representing 'the people' as he highlights Gilmartin's account of a UK Member of Parliament from Hull stipulating that "we do not want radical reform!" only to be answered with the question, "who are 'we'?"[94] As we saw in the quote above, the competing discourses sought to answer this question of the identity of the people and to erect two different kinds of symbolic orders onto the newly found political landscape. The National Assembly ultimately chose a discourse of unity and, for Baker, Furet and Ozouf, that led to the Terror.

However, Mah criticises these historians for fearing this "mass public subject" that according to them developed from the discourses of the Terror.[95] Instead he conceptualises the choice of the National Assembly as a choice between two different ideals of public subjectivity: "The central conflict of the Revolution is not between reason and will but

[93] Baker cited in Ibid., p.173.
[94] Ibid., p.169.
[95] Ibid., p.168.

between the putative "subjects" of reason and will."[96] Central to our account is the idea that out of the Revolution, and out of the Terror, arose a public subject – a public subjectivity that was directed at acts of politics and the site of the in-common. As we see from Mah, this public subject was particular, rather than universal (and incidentally, we can see such an ideal for a particular kind of public subject in Downs and Riker as well, who might be said to conceptualise a public subject who acts politically solely to further their perceived personal gain).

4.3. The emergence of Left/Right in modernity

Through Lefort and Mah, I argue that the French Revolution gave birth to a public subject that would contest the empty place of power through acts of politics. It is by positing this that I move on to Marcel Gauchet, who provides the most extensive account of the emergence of Left/Right. Writing within the overarching field of continental philosophy (which allows him to focus on discourse, structure and mutability), he produces historico-theoretical accounts of modernity. He formerly collaborated with Claude Lefort and his work is largely underused in Anglophone scholarship. Here I examine his long chapter from 1996 on Left/Right,[97] where he plots the emergence of Left/Right and speculates about their ability to provide a symbolic order for a society that is constitutively divided amongst itself.

According to Gauchet, in France, shortly before the symbolic disincorporation literally took place, the newly emboldened National Constituent Assembly met to discuss the veto of the King and the Rights of Man. It is here that we first find Left/Right materialised and in the form which they would later take.[98] The French deputies, perhaps spontaneously, perhaps planned, seated themselves in such a manner that those who sympathised most with the King and the church, seated themselves in the right of the chamber, whereas those whose loyalties lay with the Republic and with the liberal concepts of freedom and equality for (bourgeois) individuals, seated themselves on the left. Although Gauchet describes this as a bit of a false start and instead highlights how this positioning only became the norm after the restoration of 1815,[99] Left/Right's emergence is always traced back to this moment.

[96] Ibid., p.180.
[97] Gauchet, 1996.
[98] Ibid., p.243.
[99] Ibid., p.247

Symbolically, then, insofar that parliament – in place of the dual bodied king – becomes the representative body of society, that body is no longer tied to the divine, meaning that the very divisions of the social body come to be represented within it. However, as we saw in the previous sub-section, it took time before these divisions were acknowledged. To account for this, Gauchet highlights how the change in the "economy of representation" goes hand in hand with the proliferation of Left/Right in public political discourse.[100] As for the economy of representation, Gauchet argues that, during most of the nineteenth century in France, the logic of the democratic elections of deputies was to unveil the will of the people.[101] Echoing the findings of Furet, Ozouf and Baker, Gauchet then also notes the dominance of this particular kind of public subject that was centred around a singular will – even if he does not counterpose it to some form of politics of reason. One peculiar feature of a public subjectivity that seeks a unity is that difference cannot be expressed as freely in a political way. It is then perhaps no accident that Left/Right were not widely used in public political discourse during most of the nineteenth century. Gauchet remarks that this economy of representation – the idea that you elected deputies with the aim of unveiling the will of the people – did not start to change until political parties became normalised and the social question started to gather more potency.[102]

A crucial concept emerges from this change to the economy of representation: the 'citizen-voter'. Gauchet remarks that, in a change that began with calls for proportional representation in 1902:

> […] the meaning of the act of voting itself changed. It ceased to be simply a matter of delegating a substitute to work in behalf of the voter's views and became a way for the voter to define himself, to identify himself, to situate himself on a political terrain whose salient features were recognized and understood. In other words, the voter became not just a participant in but an analyst of politics […] [Democracy's] heart lies in the singular process of competitive objectification whereby each person becomes a spectator of a division in which he is also an actor. The citizen-

[100] Ibid., pp.258-262.
[101] He traces this back to "the celebrated formula of Le Chapelier". See ibid., p.244.
[102] With this change, many parties even adopted names based on the Left/Right spectrum.

> voter is in fact a split personality, in whom political commitment coexists with the detachment of the observer who records results, evaluates their consequences, and orients himself with respect to the map that emerges.
>
> Left and Right – terms fraught with passion yet at the same time neutral markers – would prove to be appropriate landmarks in this twofold process: they made it possible to assert a clear-cut partisan identity while at the same time reckoning one's position on the overall political battlefield.[103]

This absolutely crucial quote is central to the overall argument of this thesis. It affirms a number of things. As party machinery removed the ability of the individual deputy to simply act in accordance with their individual opinions and beliefs, the fiction of "will of the people" could no longer be rendered meaningful. The party machinery was now standing between the deputies and the voting public, meaning that the voter, instead of realising their immersion into the category of 'the people' upon the act of voting, became once removed from the process. The citizen was therefore required to develop a knowledge of the political landscape that had been once removed from them, so that they could both understand it and place themselves in relation to it. According to Gauchet, it is this crucial occurrence that enabled Left/Right to hegemonise public political discourse.

After this change, the voter became once removed from the symbolic unity of the nation and was placed in a position of observer and analyst. Left/Right, partly because they were already tied to the names of political parties, and partly because they were fairly neutral and could signify almost anything (unlike Red/White or Bourgeoisie/Proletariat which were steeped in symbolic signification),[104] came to provide a form to this new political landscape that the citizen-voter had both to understand and to place itself within.

There are a few things Gauchet does not remark upon but which I have previously discussed in this thesis. First, it was not only because Left/Right are "fraught with passion

[103] Ibid., p.264.
[104] Gauchet also speculates that they perhaps came to prominence also because they could be physically embodied, thus allowing for a symbolic imagery that was not too far removed from the symbolic unity of society signified by the dual body of the king. See ibid., p.264 & p.288.

yet at the same time neutral markers"[105] that they became popularised. As we saw with Lakoff and Johnson, it was also because they were orientational metaphors that enable identification in relation to an orientation in a predefined space. Gauchet of course references the singular space which is required for identification to make any sense to begin with when he refers to the "overall political battlefield", but the orientational nature of the Left/Right spatial metaphors undoubtedly helped as well. Second, we can helpfully conceptualise this citizen-voter as a new kind of public subject. That is, with the emergence of politics and the responsibility for conducting it delegated to 'the people', 'the people' gathered and represented itself to itself as 'the public'. This representation constituted a public identity; a public subjectivity. We saw with Mah that this type of subject is never universal but always particular. He mentions two such particularities, but what we see with Gauchet is the emergence of another kind of public subject. And crucially, it was this public subject – a public subject that emphasised its internal differences – that grasped at Left/Right in order to constitute itself still as a singular subject. In other words, Left/Right enabled the citizen-voter to recognise its own partiality to the overall political landscape, and with the 'spectatorship' that this move begot, politics no longer appeared immanent to the public subject. In a sense, the 'doing' of politics thus changed and became constituted around practices that recognised some kind of difference. I return to the nature of this 'doing' throughout the thesis.

Another thing that I refer to throughout this is the connection between rationalism and Left/Right. While I am still to develop this argument, at this juncture, we can start to see that rationalism and Left/Right are linked historically (although, as we will see, they are also linked conceptually). I qualify the type of rationalism in question in Chapter Three when I go over the writings of Jürgen Habermas and his theory of communicative reason, but here we can see how pluralistic practices are, in a way, secured through the hegemony of Left/Right over political discourse. As it is only through specific pluralistic practices that a Habermasian rational consensus can come about, there absolutely exists a historical link between this kind of rationalism and Left/Right.

This is the case as it is with this change in the economy of representation, that the division of the social body finally starts to rear its head. And it is Left/Right that emerge as our tools to understand that division and enable us to place ourselves within a social body that nevertheless remains, somehow, divided. With Left/Right, we have a dichotomy that

[105] Ibid., p.264.

accounts for the whole of the social body that also recognises that this whole is still not *One*.[106]

In reference to the previous section where I discussed the impossibility of nailing down any final literal meaning to Left/Right, Gauchet also breaks down the many positions that were signified through the Left/Right dichotomy in France at the turn of the twentieth century: the authoritarian right (that seeks to enforce unity under a strong leader); the monarchist right (that seeks a return to the dual body of the king as its representative force); the free market liberal right (that dissolves society under individualism and consumer preference); the republican left (that seeks to protect the legacy of the Revolution); the communist left (that proclaims Left/Right to be a false dichotomy that merely covers up the real division centred around class);[107] and the socialist left (that seeks to find a happy medium between communism and republicanism).[108] On an abstract level too, many different Rights and Lefts emerged, as both moderate Left/Rights and extreme Left/Rights became thinkable.[109] With the rise of the 'national' question, a nationalist right also came about, coming into opposition with a new republican left focused on human rights.[110]

We can then already see that, since Gauchet's work is historical and based on historical evidence, it becomes problematic to exactly qualify what the Left/Right spectrum signifies. To make matters even more complicated, Gauchet also outlines how Left/Right have worked in relation to different phenomena at different times. In 1789 and 1815 the conflict that Left/Right conveyed was between the *ancien regime* [right] and Revolution [left]; in 1900 it was "a choice between faith [right] and enlightenment [left], between human rights [left] and the nation [right]"; in 1935 it was "a confrontation between fascism [right] and socialism [left]".[111]

When Left/Right entered public discourse in France around the turn of the twentieth century, it was perhaps enabled by the above-mentioned qualities inherent to Left/Right as spatial metaphors: their neutrality, their metaphorical qualities, and perhaps their allusions to the body. Yet they also provided a degree of stability at the level of the representation of

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[106] Ibid., p.263.
[107] This point has been made repeatedly and across history. See P.C.F. cited in ibid., p.267, but for more contemporary arguments to this end see also Hoare, George, 2012, *Left/Right and Thinking about Politics*, (Doctoral Thesis), <https://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.552756>.
[108] Gauchet, 1996, p.277.
[109] The language of moderate/extreme in relation to Left/Right appeared very early on in their history. See ibid., p.249. Gauchet traces it back to at least 1818.
[110] Ibid., pp.257-259.
[111] Ibid., p.298.

the social body to itself. Parties were formed and named after them, and it became normal to understand difference and divisions within the social body as encapsulated within the Left/Right distinction. As such, while the Left/Right distinction both came to signify a public always at odds with itself, never completely united, they also allowed for structure to be put in place at the level of representation that made this division understandable. Lefort famously declared that modernity marked the dissolution of the markers of certainty.[112] While this may be true, Left/Right would always be at the forefront of society's attempt to regain some semblance of certainty, without seeking to betray the legacy of the democratic revolution itself.

We now start to see the rich life that the Left/Right spectrum has lived. Yet, when we try to construct a positive knowledge about them, the only things that really stand out are that they have always signified an ordered division and that they gained in popularity as the public subjectivity changed into a form that I have here referred to as the citizen-voter. It is because of this that they could not have come about prior to the democratic revolution and the specific change to the economy of representation that Gauchet highlights. As we have seen, many people have tried to qualify the Left/Right distinction, arguing that it was about equality,[113] authority and religion,[114] or that it is somehow rooted in human nature,[115] but through Gauchet's careful historical work, we see that the ontological question – what *are* Left/Right – is the wrong question to ask as we try to develop a knowledge about it. Or as Gauchet phrases it:

> The wonderful power of right versus left comes from the infinite openness of the terms, whose meaning can always be added to or altered. The search for an ultimate meaning is thus inevitable yet pointless.[116]

[112] Lefort cited in Mouffe, Chantal, 1994, 'Democracy and Pluralism: A Critique of the Rationalist Approach', *Cardozo Law Review*, Vol. 16, No. 5, pp.1533-1546, p.1534.
[113] Bobbio, Noberto, 1996, *Left and Right: The Significance of a Political Distinction*, translated by: Allan Cameron, Polity Press: Cambridge; Noël, Alain & Thérien, Jean-Philippe, 2008, *Left and Right in Global Politics*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK; and Kymlicka, Will, 2002, *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Introduction*, Oxford University Press: Oxford.
[114] Laponce, 1981.
[115] For example, George Lakoff thinks that it is "physically in your brain". See Lakoff, 2006, p.47.
[116] Gauchet, 1996, p.259.

4.4. What does the historical approach accomplish and what does it *not* accomplish?

So far, I have counterposed the emergence of Left/Right with the emergence of modernity and the public subject. With Gauchet, I have made these two accounts work together by positing that the early twentieth century saw a change in the economy of representation, giving rise to the citizen-voter – a particular kind of public subject – who used Left/Right to position itself in relation to a representation of the social body. A few things follow from these arguments.

First, we must rid ourselves of the Rational Choice Theory of Downs and, to a certain extent, Riker. As Mah remarks, the idea that a liberal public subject has privileged access to reason over a more unitary, willing public subject, rests not only on a misreading of Rousseau, but also seeks to effect a freezing in time of the kind of space in which the public subject is formed – an effect which is otherwise contrary to the pluralist tenets of the liberal public subject,[117] as it entails a curtailing of new differences that could be encapsulated in the public subject. As we dispense with Rational Choice Theory, with its idea of the autonomous, rational individual, we must replace it with something else. As we have gleaned from Lakoff and Johnson, the answer can be found in relation to orientational metaphors. That is, as orientational metaphors enable the subject to place itself in a space and in relation to the markers of that space, it becomes possible for the subject to identify itself in relation to those markers. As we saw with Gauchet, this is exactly what Left/Right enabled the citizen-voter to do. Once it had found itself once removed from the doing of politics and needing a space in which to relate to others and understand itself, it grasped at Left/Right because they, as orientational metaphors, allowed for the subjects to construct a knowledge about themselves as citizens. We must therefore throw out the concept of the rational individual that makes political choices based on perceived personal gain and replace it with the concept of identity. This identity is then dependent on processes outside of its own immediate control. For insofar as the identity is determined by Left/Right, as Left/Right changes meaning (as Gauchet has shown that it frequently does) the meaning of the identity also becomes a site of condensed contestation.

We can also extract an even more nuanced reading of Riker from these observations. Riker speaks about heresthetic techniques as a way for people to relocate to different spatial neighbourhoods. He remains tied to the concept of the individual subject defined by tastes and preferences, but if we conceive of the subject as an identity instead, whose meaning,

[117] Mah, 2000, pp.180-182.

at least partially, is derived from the Left/Right spectrum, the only way to effect a spatial relocation becomes to engage with the meaning of Left/Right. For example, if Left means both multiculturalism and environmentalism then there is a left identity that is tied to both of those tenets. However, if a politician wanted to enact a policy that made it cheaper to fly – a policy that is against the environmentalist aspects of the Left identity, they could make arguments referring to the value of cultural exchange in order to acquire enough support. They could even attempt to frame this argument in terms of individual liberty – that governments should not put restraints on individuals' ability to effect cultural exchange – and if such a move were successful, it would effect a spatial relocation of aspects of the Left identity to the Right.

One problem with this example could be that it simply is not feasible that Left should mean both environmentalism and multiculturalism, now that I have shown them to work against each other. Yet, it clearly does.[118] So how is it possible that it means both things at once? Gauchet has already given us the answer: it is because of Left/Right's "infinite openness […] whose meaning can always be added to or altered";[119] it is because they both constitute and are constituted within a space of contestation whose meaning is always overflowing. If we then view this example again, but start from the end, rather than the beginning, we can see that this type of heresthetic can only work because Left/Right have this "infinite openness" – because they provide a map of the political community that stresses mutability and anti-essentialism.

Another core lesson from our engagement with the historical dimension – and which we also saw in our review of the anthropological literature – is that we cannot pin down the exact meaning of Left and Right. This has given birth to a long tradition of denouncing the Left/Right distinction as a very bad map of the political community and one that should be replaced by a more accurate one.[120] What this tradition fails to understand is that, as we have just seen with the example about multiculturalism and environmentalism, it is because it is such a 'bad' map that a modernity based on a lack of the markers of certainty has taken to it so affectionately. Indeed, Left/Right are productive to modernity, as they

[118] See, for examples, Madood, Tariq & Dobbernack, Jan, 2011, 'A left communitarianism? What about multiculturalism? A more plural approach can help to heal breaches both within the 'multicultural community' and beyond', *Soundings*, Vol. 48, pp.54-64; and Wall, Derek, 2010, *The Rise of the Green Left: A Global Introduction to Ecosocialism*, Pluto Press: London.
[119] Gauchet, 1996, p.259.
[120] Gauchet traces the first such occurrence to 1931. See Gauchet, 1996, p.266. See also Bobbio, 1996, p.89.

exactly enable a confusion of meaning which, in turn, enables some kind of play and difference to assert itself. This is partly because they are orientational metaphors, unlike Red/White, but we can also read Laponce, who emphasised their horizontality,[121] with Gauchet, who emphasised their neutrality,[122] and say that no other orientational metaphors could have managed to encapsulate the wilderness of modernity quite so efficiently.

4.5. Conclusion

We have seen that the democratic revolution gave birth to a public subject and that this subject, around the turn of the twentieth in France, took the particular form of the citizen-voter. This citizen-voter was once removed from the political process and thus needed a map to orient itself and identify itself in relation to the rest of the public subject, the rest of the political community. This map was provided by Left/Right and, through their "infinite openness", they enabled an infinity of issues to flow through them, allowing for various identities to be associated with Left and Right at different times. Left/Right, then, constitute a space in which subjects are invited to identify themselves in order to become public subjects and participate in the construction of 'the people'. Left/Right enable members of the social body to represent themselves as *one* political community that nevertheless remains constitutively divided and capable of changing form as new issues come to dominate the site of the in-common.

5. Conclusion

Since the emergence of Left/Right, political commentators have attempted to understand what they mean. It has remained in fashion to assert that Left/Right provide a bad or outdated map of the political community yet Left/Right remain as popular as ever. Why is that? I have argued that it is because Left/Right are so open to new meanings and enable a form of identification that is purely orientation that they became popularised and helped constitute a political space that situates itself in an entirely unpredictable terrain. In this sense, I have argued that they are not only products of modernity but also constitutive of it, because they are so discursively mobile and productive.

However, questions still remain. I have established that we need to think about identities, as, following Lakoff and Johnson, I argued that spatial metaphors structure our perception

[121] Laponce, 1981, p.92.
[122] Gauchet, 1996, p.264.

of what is real, meaning that our self-image is also constituted through our engagement with a symbolic realm in which metaphors roam. Clearly, however, identities also exist that are not tied to Left/Right. I have argued that Rikerian heresthetic is in need of a conceptual meta-space in order to work and that Left/Right provide that. However, since Riker does not operate with the concept of identity, we cannot use him to move forward in our understanding of Left/Right and their exact relation to identification in an unpredictable political terrain.

We also need to acquire new and different tools in relation to our understanding of the concept of space. With most of the scholars here, I have understood space in relation to a distribution of differences. We saw that, with Downs and Riker, we could qualify these differences as tastes and preferences. However, we have no way of qualifying them once we relinquish Rational Choice Theory. Through Gauchet, I established the primacy of the public subject as the citizen-voter, but we have no knowledge of it; we do not know how it engenders political expression. Left/Right thus constitute a space where the citizen-voter can position itself in relation to other citizen-voters, but how does this positioning express itself? Through opinion, though argument, through violence, through direct action or through lived experiences? Despite our efforts, and those of the scholars I have reviewed here, we still have not developed a satisfactory understanding of Left/Right as spatial metaphors. We can see that they are connected to the citizen-voter, but that is it. We thus have some way to go before we can establish their exact function in modernity.

Chapter 2: Left/Right in democratic theory

1. Introduction

Building on our engagement with Lefort, Gauchet and Mah, I here place Left/Right in democratic theory[123] and contextualise Left/Right in relation to the democratic revolution and its focus on the principle of equality. I also further explore conceptions of Left/Right as spatial and identitarian markers that are constitutive of political modernity and enablers of an aestheticized apprehension of the political world.

To accomplish this, I first consider Noberto Bobbio's influential book on Left/Right, which centres on the concept of equality. I argue that Left/Right, while certainly containing a politics of equality, has a more complex relationship with the democratic revolution than Bobbio allows for. To better account for this complexity, I then turn to Chantal Mouffe and Torben Dyrberg. Mouffe argues, following Bobbio, that for equality to have meaning it must be qualified. However, she notes that this qualification is political, rather than juridical – as Bobbio would have it – and effectively causes a segregation of the social body by excluding certain elements of it from the representation of the political community – the space where the management of society takes place. Both Dyrberg and Mouffe agree, however, that Left/Right have positive functions in relation to liberal, democratic constitutional order enabling subjects to identify in accordance with terms that recognise some sort of political difference. But they conceive of the process of identification differently. To Dyrberg, Left/Right are just one of four pairs of orientational, spatial metaphors that structure political thought (the others are In/Out, Up/Down and Front/Back) and they function to qualify a political symbolic order that is freestanding from comprehensive doctrines and as such can channel the passions of other orientational metaphors and enable liberal, democratic, constitutional order to be reproduced. Mouffe, however, stresses the way in which Left/Right structure a political community that is constitutively divided amongst itself, thus making it easier for excluded parts to emerge.

Finally, I turn to Mustafa Dikeç and Jacques Rancière to provide another account of political space and identity and to further our understanding of Left/Right in relation to exclusion. Dikeç introduces us to the 'spatial turn' in political theory and, with Rancière, a concern for the aesthetic qualities of space and identity. I focus on Rancière's two concepts of *the*

[123] Claude Lefort is of course also viewed as a post-structuralist political theorist of sorts. We have, however, used him in this section as a means to which to theorise modernity while giving an account of Left/Right.

distribution of the sensible and *the police* and argue that Left/Right not only function to count available subject positions but also enable subject positions to provide an account of themselves that is necessarily particular. Exclusions/miscounts can thus manifest themselves not only in relation to the count, but also in relation to way in which political expression is structured.

2. Noberto Bobbio, Left/Right and equality

2.1. Introduction

In this section, I examine the writings on Left/Right by Noberto Bobbio. Bobbio's central claim is that Left/Right are about equality. The further to the left one moves, the more likely one is to emphasis sameness, whereas the further to the right one moves, the more likely one is to emphasise difference. He argues that there has to be limits to a 'space of equals' where the criteria for treating some people differently is decided upon and notes that it is the Left that always seeks to expand this space and engender more inclusion. With Pizzorno, I criticise Bobbio for making this move as it introduces another criterion that precedes questions about Left/Right and equality – the inclusion/exclusion dyad.

2.2. Left/Right and Equality

Bobbio's *Left and Right: The Significance of a Political Distinction*, first published in 1994,[124] was an unexpected bestseller. At that time the political landscape in Italy had recently shifted from a narrowing and a strengthening of the centre to a more bipolar political community. Bobbio used his book to argue against moves to try and displace the Left/Right distinction, such as those by the proponents of the third way, and for its place in a healthy, pluralist, democratic society.[125] The book should be read in the context of Bobbio's wider, normative, legal and political thought (even if his output is notoriously eclectic and without a guiding star to tie it all together).[126] Following Thomas Hobbes,[127] he adheres to an individualistic conception of society,[128] which leads him to posit that liberalism and

[124] Bobbio, 1996.
[125] This book also received some attention internationally. The most productive fallout was perhaps Bobbio's debate with Perry Anderson. See Anderson, Perry, 1998, 'A Sense of the Left', *New Left Review, No*. 231, pp.73-81 for Anderson's initial review. See subsequently Bobbio, Noberto, 1998, 'At the Beginning of History', *New Left Review, No*. 231, pp.82-90; and Anderson, Perry, 1998, 'A Reply to Noberto Bobbio', *New Left Review, No*. 231, pp.90-93.
[126] Bobbio cited in Bovero, Michelangelo, 2005, 'Noberto Bobbio (1909-2004). A Short Guide to a Great Work', *Ratio Juris*, Vol. 18, No. 2, pp.271-284, p.272.
[127] Bovero, 2005, p.272.
[128] Bobbio, Noberto, 2005, *Liberalism and Democracy*, translated by: Martin Ryle & Kate Soper, Verso: London p.41.

democracy are necessarily intertwined.[129] Importantly, however, liberalism and democracy are not in themselves capable of securing social rights, which is why there has to be a place for socialism as well.[130] Modern politics then cannot rely on utopian thinking, but rests instead on the balancing of the great ideologies, which together serve as the foundation for the central concepts of equality and liberty. Bobbio thus sees Left/Right in a favourable light not only because they guarantee a constitutive difference within the political community, but also because they are about equality – one of the core democratic concepts.[131]

In his book, Bobbio engages Marco Revelli, who has provided an extensive account of Left/Right in Italian history,[132] to make the point that Left/Right have no literal meaning.[133] Instead, following Revelli's examination of Left/Right's connection to criteria such as Time, Space, agents involved, its relation to function and its relation to epistemology,[134] he offers an observation:

> As the founding principle, equality is the only criterion that withstands the test of time, and resists the steady breakdown to which the other criteria have been subjected.[135]

Equality is, to Bobbio, together with 'liberty', a founding criterion of democratic order, which means that Left/Right must be complemented with another axis governed by the criterion of freedom: a freedom/authoritarianism axis.[136] However, as Bobbio focuses on

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[129] "Liberalism amputates the individual from the organic body, makes him live – at least for much of his life – outside the maternal womb, plunges him into the unknown and perilous world of the struggle for survival. Democracy joins him together once more with others like himself, so that society can be built up again from their union, no longer as an organic whole but as an association of free individuals." Ibid., p.43.
[130] Yturbe, Corina, 1997, 'On Noberto Bobbio's Theory of Democracy', *Political Theory*, Vol. 25, No. 3, pp.377-400, p.388.
[131] Bobbio spends some time engaging Laponce and chastises him for focusing so much on religion. See Bobbio, 1996, pp.38-44.
[132] Revelli, 2009. Unfortunately, this document has never been translated into English.
[133] "'[L]eft' and 'right' are not words which designate immutable meanings, but can signify different things in different times and situations." Bobbio, 1996, p.56.
[134] Ibid., p.59.
[135] Ibid., p.59.
[136] Ibid., pp.72-79. This is the form used to determine one's political stance in the much-used 'Political Compass Test'. See The Political Compass, 2019, *The Political Compass*, viewed 16 Jan, 2019, <https://www.politicalcompass.org/>.

Left/Right, he argues that they are about the balance between equality and difference: the further to the Left one goes, the more individuals tend to view human beings as fundamentally similar and deserving of similar treatment, whereas the further to the Right one goes, the more difference is emphasised:

> We can then correctly define as egalitarians [leftists] those who, while not ignoring the fact that people are both equal and unequal, believe that what they have in common has greater value in the formation of a good community.[137]

In the previous chapter, we saw that Left/Right is a horizontal spatial dimension, which, Laponce argued, enables politics in modernity to function because modernity is partially defined by the levelling of old hierarchies. Bobbio places himself decidedly on this side of modernity, as a champion of equality.[138] It is in this context that we should read his support for the Left/Right spectrum. Bobbio believes that Left/Right are centred around 'equality, and that they, as such, accomplish very particular things: they systematise the differences that are distributed along its spatial dimension in terms of equality and ingrain the concept of equality into the DNA of those who use Left/Right to orient and identify themselves in relation to the whole. Left/Right are thus conceivable as a bulwark against anti-democratic institutions and practices, ensuring that equality remains a defining feature of modernity.

However, problems emerge as Bobbio tries to further qualify this equality:

> I have developed the theory in this book that the distinction between left and right corresponds to the difference between egalitarianism and inegalitarianism, and ultimately comes down to a different perception of what makes human beings equal and what makes them unequal. However, the idea is so abstract that it can only be used to distinguish two ideal types. [… As such,] [i]n order not to remain an empty formula, the golden rule of justice,

[137] Bobbio, 1996, p.66.
[138] Bobbio considers himself a "man of the Left". See ibid., p.82.

> 'Treat like as like, and unlike as unlike', requires an answer to the question, Who is alike and who is not?[139]

We see here some interesting fissures. Now the question of justice precedes the question of equality and the latter demands the exclusion of elements from sharing in this equality:

> The question of who is equal and who unequal is a historical question which cannot be answered once and for all, because the criteria used for uniting the equal and dividing the unequal are constantly changing. The discovery of a difference is irrelevant to the question of justice when it can be demonstrated that this difference justifies a different treatment […] Difference only becomes important when it is the basis for unjust discrimination. However, the injustice of discrimination depends not on the difference, but on the recognition of the lack of good reasons for the unequal treatment.[140]

Bobbio, then, does not seek to adjudicate on the just and the unjust – merely asserting that this question belongs to history. Instead, in order for his criterion of equality to make sense as a way to construct a knowledge about Left/Right and for the public subjects that use them to identity and orient themselves in relation to the whole, he implicitly effects an introduction of another criterion: inclusion/exclusion.[141] To further this argument, he maintains that it is the job of the Left to effect an inclusion of different elements into this 'space of equals' – into this space of 'the same'. As such, when groups of people struggle for equality they must, as it were, struggle to be seen as similar to the rest, and it falls to the Left to seek their inclusion. We can find one such example of people wishing to be included into this 'space of equals' in Denmark. There, a campaign with the slogan

[139] Ibid., p.69.
[140] Ibid., pp.54-5.
[141] As Bobbio asserts that it is the Left that must deal with this task of showing that discrimination is unjust, he footnotes that: "The question of the universalist task of the left is posed in the same terms by the distinction between inclusion and exclusion. The left tends towards inclusion, and the right towards exclusion." See ibid., p.82 & 117.

'#enmillionstemmer' works to address injustices facing disabled people, who have been disproportionally impacted by austerity policies. Mette Lylloff, who has both physical and mental disabilities, explains it like this:

> [Danish] Mere end en million mennesker er direkte berørt af handicap eller psykisk sårbarhed. Dertil kommer alle pårørende. Vi er under pres, men alligevel er vi nærmest usynlige på den politiske dagsorden. Vi ønsker at blive set og hørt. Vi vil ikke glemmes i systemet. Del din historie under hashtagget #enmillionstemmer og vis politikerne din virkelighed.
>
> [English] More than one million people are directly affected by handicaps or mental vulnerability. You can add the people around them as well. We are under pressure, but still we are almost invisible on the political agenda. We wish to be seen and heard. We do not want to be forgotten in the system. Share your story under the hashtag #enmillionstemmer and show the politicians your reality.[142]

That it is the party furthest to the Left in Denmark, the Red-Green Alliance, which champions this cause more than any other party,[143] would seem to prove Bobbio's theory correct. But there is a more interesting point we can take from this. The insight comes when we ask one simple question: is Mette Lylloff, in her capacity as an activist for people with disabilities, left wing? Insofar that she also considers herself a public person – a public subject – she may or may not identify as left wing. But in her capacity as a disability activist, is she left wing?

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[142] Lylloff, Mette, cited in Dansk Handicap Forbund, 2019, *KAMPAGNE #ENMILLIONSTEMMER SAMLER STEMMER PÅ HANDICAPOMRÅDET*, 16 May, viewed 20 June, 2019, <https://danskhandicapforbund.dk/da/nyheder/kampagne-enmillionstemmer-samler-stemmer-pa-handicapomradet#gsc.tab=0>. My translation.

[143] Enhedslisten, 2019, *Enhedslisten*, 1 June, viewed 20 June, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=381190849159529>.

2.3. Left/Right and equality in relation to inclusion/exclusion

I do not think we can identify Mette Lylloff, in her capacity as a disability activist, through the Left/Right spectrum, exactly because, as we saw in the previous chapter, that spectrum is a way for the public subject, the citizen-voter, to orient and identify itself in relation to other citizen-voters and the whole. What Mette Lylloff seeks is simply to be seen as part of the whole, to share in the equality that comes with that. In this sense, it is nonsensical for her to utilise Left/Right to construct her political identity. Left/Right are useful for people who already consider themselves parts of the whole, but need to orient and identify themselves in relation to others as well: Left/Right are useful for people who simply seek to differentiate themselves from others in a manner that allows for them to live peacefully together. Mette Lylloff, in her capacity as a disability activist, does not identify with the whole but rather with an exclusion from it. In a discourse that is all too familiar, Lylloff stresses that she needs a voice, that she needs to be seen, and that without those things she will suffer. She is expressing herself in terms of lived experience, not through arguments concerning universal justice or the common good. Is it not the case that the key division here is included/excluded, not Left/Right?

Bobbio, in conceiving of 'the Left' as effecting an inclusion into a 'space of equals', the category of the "alike",[144] implicitly locates Left in relation to the already-established public and its subjects oriented by Left/Right. He understands that difference is there to be "discovered",[145] but in so doing imposes inclusion/exclusion onto the Left/Right distinction. In this context it is perhaps significant that Bobbio's book was a bestseller by a public intellectual. Through the text he is positioned as a "man of the Left",[146] but also as one who is already identified as a public subject. He argues for the distinction that gives him that position while relegating the question of who is part of the category of the "alike" to a historical context. That is to say, his subordination of the inclusion/exclusion opposition to that of Left/Right leaves Bobbio and other political positions essentially undisturbed and forecloses the possibility of identifying not with the position of the Left but with the excluded.

While we can then talk about Left/Right being *about* equality in Bobbio, they are perhaps more accurately describable as designating different attitudes towards equality. In Bobbio,

[144] Bobbio, 1996, pp.54-5.
[145] Ibid., p.54.
[146] Ibid., p.82.

Left/Right do not designate attitudes towards anything other than equality, but they remain as designators of attitudes. One way of explaining why it is then nonsensical for Lylloff to use Left/Right as markers of her political identity is by posing the question, *who* gets share these attitudes in public? For it is not that Lylloff has no attitude towards equality. She most certainly does. Rather, in this sense it is nonsensical because no one listens to her attitudes. Through her personal experiences, she understands that she does not belong to the category of the "alike" – the category of those who are listened to. Rather, she understands that she is instead relegated to the category of difference, the place from which she might be discovered as, in fact, "alike" (should she be so lucky). For Lylloff to construct a political identity through Left/Right then could be done, but it would establish her as a person with attitudes (or arguments, opinions, beliefs, etc.), rather than a person who experiences a form of oppression which must be acknowledged and ended. As we shall see, then, while her attitudes towards equality might at some point be heard, this form of inclusion carries with it its own problems.

In any case, I therefore endorse Alessandro Pizzorno's critique of Bobbio,[147] that the question about inclusion/exclusion is of a different order to the question about equality, and that we must introduce the concept of "collective identities"[148] before we look at the meaning of Left/Right. That is, if equality as a concept only makes sense when the concept of justice qualifies it, and if the nature of justice is decided upon by the included – but difference only exists to the extent that different treatment is shown to be just in relation to the nature of justice decided upon by the included – then we cannot talk about equality and hence Left/Right until we have talked about inclusion/exclusion.

Once we accept the argument that questions of inclusion/exclusion *precede* questions of Left/Right and equality, we can ask some different questions about space and identity and can make the identity of the public subject, the citizen-voter, an object of study. We can theorise not only Left/Right but also the space it creates within which citizen-voters exist in relation to each other, and we can ask questions about inclusion/exclusion.

[147] Gnoli, Antonio, 1995, 'Caro Bobbio, ecco dove sbagli', *La Repubblica*, 7 Feb, viewed 3 July, 2019, <https://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/1995/02/07/caro-bobbio-ecco-dove-sbagli.html?refresh_ce>.
[148] Alessandro Pizzorno cited in ibid.

2.4. Conclusion

In this section we have seen, via a critical reading of Bobbio, that Left/Right have a complex relationship with inclusion/exclusion. To investigate this further I turn to a debate between two other political theorists of modernity – Chantal Mouffe and Torben Dyrberg.

3. Inclusion/exclusion and Left/Right

3.1. Introduction

In this section, I elaborate on the distinction between Left/Right and inclusion/exclusion by making the writings of Torben Dyrberg and Chantal Mouffe speak to each other. For both theorists, Left/Right have a positive function in relation to democratic, constitutional order as they enable modes of identification that recognise differences within the whole of the social body. But they conceive of identification in different ways. For Dyrberg, Left/Right channel violent impulses relating to other ways of identification into forms of reasoning that accept political difference as a precondition for entering the in-common. For Mouffe, Left/Right, rather than channelling violent impulses produced by other forms of identification, create a political space that is constitutively divided, thus disabling a formation of a strong 'we' and making it easier for the excluded parts of the social body to gain entrance into this space in which the management of society is conducted.

3.2. Chantal Mouffe v. Bobbio

Chantal Mouffe is the first wholly post-Marxist political theorist that I engage.[149] Her prominence was established when, together with Ernesto Laclau, she wrote *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* in 1985.[150] It is fair to say that all her subsequent theoretical and political projects can be linked back to this work. Mouffe's scholarship, which spans decades, has often been specific to the state of politics in which she found herself. However, her writings have always been anchored in post-Marxist theory that, theoretically, sought to do away with class and other forms of essentialisms and, politically, stress the need for political actors to articulate their identities in order to win and sustain democratic, political power.

Mouffe has spoken to Bobbio's scholarship on a few occasions, most notably in *The Return of the Political*.[151] There, Mouffe engages Bobbio's overall normative project, which seeks

[149] You could possibly lump Lefort, Mah and Gauchet in this category, but their work is primarily historical whereas Mouffe's work is solely situated in the realm of theory.
[150] Laclau, Ernesto & Mouffe, Chantal, 1985, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, Verso: London.
[151] Mouffe, 1993a.

to combine the positive aspects of the liberal state and the democratic state.[152] Her argument most relevant to this thesis is that Bobbio places too much emphasis on the individual,[153] and does not pay enough attention to the way in which the individual needs representation through being part of a social group in order to acquire participatory rights in democratic decision-making:

> It is necessary to theorize the individual, not as a monad, an 'unencumbered' self that exists prior to and independently of society, but as a site constituted by an ensemble of 'subject positions', inscribed in a multiplicity of social relations, the member of many communities, and participant in a plurality of collective forms of identification.[154]

The foundations of post-Marxist theory are summed up in this revealing passage. I engage this much more closely later in this chapter and in Chapter Four but for the argument I am making here, a few points need emphasising. Mouffe is making both a theoretical and a political claim, in which the theoretical informs the political. Theoretically, she argues that the individual is a site for identification. That is, 'we' are constituted through acts of identity representation. Furthermore, these representations are collective. These representations are then not located with the "unencumbered" self, but in some place that is in-common: in discourse.

Politically, this means that Bobbio's normative project is a non-starter. According to Mouffe, Bobbio's conception of pluralism grants an ability to the individual to live together peacefully with other individuals, while seeking to deepen their social and political rights.[155] Because Mouffe argues that this relies on an imperfect understanding of who we are, she insists that we must look at democratic politics differently. Specifically, because we are dealing with representations of identity, rather than immanent individuality, different rules apply in relation to how we can and cannot act and our focus should not be on securing

[152] Ibid., pp.91-101.
[153] "Without individualism, there can be no liberalism", Bobbio has remarked. See Bobbio cited in ibid., p.95.
[154] Ibid., p.97.
[155] Ibid., pp.91-101.

rights but on the way in which identification takes place. To this end, she refers to the fact that meaning is relational, that all identity can only constitute itself as whole insofar as it defines itself in relation to what it is *not*. To cement this point, she turns to Carl Schmitt.

Schmitt's main texts were written shortly before the Second World War. He was a jurist, a political theorist and a prominent member of the Nazi Party. Schmitt mostly operated at the intersection of liberalism and democracy, attempting to prove that the two could not operate together.[156] To contextualise this discussion, Schmitt, like Bobbio, turned to the concept of equality. To Schmitt, liberalism demanded equality be applied universally.[157] Yet, he argues that:

> Equality is only interesting and valuable politically so long as it has substance, and for that reason at least the possibility and the risk of inequality.[158]

In this sense, like Bobbio, Schmitt insists that abstract equality is an unworkable concept. As we saw, Bobbio sought to qualify this equality through allusions to justice. Schmitt instead uses the concepts of substance and unity.[159] That is, for equality to be meaningful, it has to be distributed within a delimited space. While Bobbio would stress the need for inclusion in proper democratic procedures governing this 'space of equals', Schmitt deserves credit for making explicit the consequence of the move that comes when we start to qualify who equality is for and who equality is not for:

> Every actual democracy rests on the principle that not only are equals equal but unequals will not be treated equally. Democracy requires, therefore, first homogeneity and second - if the need arises - elimination or eradication of heterogeneity.[160]

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[156] See Mouffe, Chantal, 2000, *The Democratic Paradox*, Verso: London, pp.36-59.
[157] See Schmitt, Carl, 2000, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, translated by: Ellen Kennedy, The MIT Press: Cambridge, MA..
[158] Ibid., p.9.
[159] Ibid., 2000.
[160] Carl Schmitt cited in Mouffe, 2000, p.38.

In this particularly chilling passage, Schmitt lays the foundation for Mouffe's later critique of Bobbio. The point that Mouffe tries to make, which Bobbio does not allow, is that this 'space of equals' always takes the form of a substance, a unity, an *identity*. For Schmitt, this identity ends up becoming the Nation and the Race, but Mouffe stresses that it could be anything.[161] As such, to Mouffe:

> What matters is the possibility of tracing a line of demarcation between those who belong to the demos – and therefore have equal rights – and those who, in the political domain, cannot have the same rights because they are not part of the demos.[162]

This identity of the demos – the people – can then be structured around anything: race, class, gender, nation, etc. The important thing is that it becomes a collective identity. This means that people who share in this identity will be prone to treat each other as equals but at the expense of those who do not share in this collective identity.[163] To Mouffe, Bobbio attempts to avoid this consequence through stressing that it is about individuals, not identities. In this way, he is able to construct a normative platform that heralds Left/Right because he thinks it possible for individuals, working within the right institutional framework, to justly decide who does and does not belong to this 'space of equals'. Mouffe's point is that Bobbio is wrong to think of *being* in this way: that we are a 'site' where identities constitute themselves, and that, politically speaking, we are then not a community of individuals, but an ensemble of identities that all require an *other*, in relation to which they identify themselves.

To Mouffe, this logic came to fruition with Nazism: one identity successfully aligned itself with the identity of the democratic concept *par excellence*, 'the people'. And, importantly, this was not an accidental occurrence. It was not simply an example of a populist rhetoric that swept the nation (and beyond) but an expression of a logic that is constitutive to *being* and politically constitutive to modernity. This does not mean that we are constantly faced

[161] Ibid., p.40.
[162] Ibid., p.40.
[163] Not to mention the relation between this particular collective identity and the state.

with the spectre of Nazism. Rather, it means that exclusion is a constitutive feature of identity and that 'the people', insofar as it must have some kind of meaning (some kind of identity) must always only be able to bestow equality onto those who share in that identity – and at the expense of those who do not.

In order to tie this consideration back to our discussion on Bobbio in relation to the inclusion/exclusion dynamic, we need to look back to Chapter One and the work of Harold Mah. For Bobbio could still escape this criticism by stating that we are confusing the concept of identity with the concept of space. He could claim that Left/Right, as spatial, orientational metaphors, serve to open up a space that is constitutively divided amongst itself. He could remark that it provides an exceptionally bad map of the political community, which is why it is so well suited to protect the legacy of modernity that is qualified by the lack of markers of certainty. Along Schmittian lines, he could argue that, insofar as equality requires a unity of substance, it will not find it amid a political community that identifies itself in terms of Left and Right. In other words, the question of equality and to whom it belongs will remain open so long as these terms govern public discourse.

However, with Mah, I noted the emergence of a public subject and with Gauchet, I noted the particular form that this subject took: the form of the citizen-voter. This subject was public exactly because it identified itself as a member of *the* public sphere – an identification that was made possible through the very real force that a conception of the public sphere exerted over political life. And it was this public sphere that laid claim to the concept of 'the people', making the identity of the public subject so politically important.

As we saw, it was this particular public subject, the citizen-voter, that used Left/Right to orient itself in relation to other citizen-voters and find its place in the political community. It was also amongst these citizen-voters that equality was to count. The Mouffean point is that this citizen-voter constitutes an identity and that this particular identity is the one that uses Left/Right to further differentiate itself from subjects that are otherwise similar in name ('public'). However, as this citizen-voter must also be said to constitute a unitary identity, it must necessarily be defined in relation to something that it is *not*. In one sense this something is *private*. Being a public subject, this particular type of exclusion comes naturally. But it is not only a public subject, for it has a particular form – that of the citizen-voter. The question then becomes: what other kinds of exclusions are taking place?

In the last section, I briefly reviewed the case of Mette Lylloff. We now possess a few more conceptual tools to help us understand her case better. Physically hurt by government cuts to services, she, together with others, has sought to articulate an identity as disabled. Within this identity, she includes both mental vulnerability and physical disabilities. The central claim made by this identity is that it is not heard and seen in 'the space of equals' and that because of this invisibility, it does not share in the equality.[164] In other words, the identity positions itself as excluded from public discourse. I asked if it made sense to place Mette Lylloff on the Left/Right scale. We can now answer in the negative. For if Left/Right provide a map of all the citizen-voters, if you do not identify as a citizen-voter, you cannot place yourself on the map. This does not necessarily mean that you do not want to share with this in-common, that you are simply *private*. It can clearly also mean, as it does in Mette Lylloff's case, that you feel excluded from this particular identity of the citizen-voter.

But how does this exclusion constitute itself? Through which means is inclusion/exclusion accomplished? What is Left/Right's role in it? Bobbio remarks that, since the discovery of difference, it is the job of the Left to engender inclusion, but should this be conceptualised as an inclusion into the identity of the public subject as citizen-voter? Is this the only way for the Left to engender visibility and a recognition of a voice? Or, rather, by ascribing this role to a Left, does this in fact prescribe a specific manner in which inclusion can be brought about?

In Mouffe, we find no answer to these questions and we must therefore turn our attention to Dyrberg. More than anyone, Dyrberg understands what Left/Right are about and captures the role they play in modernity. However, he engages Left/Right not from the post-Marxist tradition, which, as we have seen, stresses that meaning is relational and that the establishment of political frontiers is a constitutive feature of politics, but from the perspective of Lakoff and Johnson. As I have alluded to, Lakoff and Johnson present us with a theory that bears echoes of post-structuralist reasoning, but the dissimilarities between the two approaches generate an interesting debate that I now stage in relation to Left/Right to advance our understanding of their function in modernity in relation to inclusion/exclusion.

[164] Dansk Handicap Forbund, 2019.

3.3. Dyrberg on identification

Dyrberg holds that Left/Right are spatial and orientational metaphors that structure the way we think. Importantly, he sees them as fairly neutral metaphors (i.e. not attached to, or favouring, any substantial doctrines), which allow them to channel other orientational metaphors such as In/Out, Up/Down and Front/Back – which are anything but neutral and instead have the potential to instigate violence. In this sense, Dyrberg thinks that Left/Right have a positive function in modernity as they allow for the social body to engage in reasoned argumentation over the common good without resort to modes of argumentation/action that are arrived at from conceiving of the social body in terms of more volatile orientational metaphors.

I largely agree with Dyrberg in respect to the nature of the function of Left/Right in modernity, but I cannot follow him all the way, primarily because of his adoption of the theoretical framework of Lakoff and Johnson. Dyrberg states:

> Orientational metaphors are ingrained in the ways we talk, act and relate to each other, which means that they operate as structuring logics of discourses and that they are related to our physical, cultural and political existence.[165]

While I am not sure that Lakoff and Johnson would necessarily appreciate this application of their theory to the concept of 'discourses', the argument presented here is recognizable: it is through orientational metaphors that we can understand ourselves in relation to others. In this sense, orientational metaphors open up a space in which differences are distributed. However, according to Dyrberg, the type of difference that dominates the discursive logic is also contingent on the type of orientational metaphor that structures it.

Dyrberg focuses on four such metaphors: Left/Right, In/Out, Up/Down and Front/Back:[166]

[165] Dyrberg, Torben Bech, 2003, 'Left/Right in the context of new political frontiers: What's radical politics today?', *Journal of Language and Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp.333-360, p.336.
[166] Dyrberg, Torben Bech, 2006, 'The democratic ideology of right–left and public reason in relation to Rawls's political liberalism', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp.161-176.

> In–out concerns issues such as member–non-member and inclusion–exclusion […] Up–down indicates hierarchical positions in terms of high–low status, upper– lower classes, elites–people, patron–client, etc. […] Front–back measures position in relation to time and direction […] Right–left is the modern democratic polarity measuring the positions among equal opposites and balances them against each other.[167]

Having established that orientational metaphors structure discourses, Dyrberg shows us exactly how that works: In/Out structure political thought in terms of membership of a community; Up/Down in terms of power; Front/Back primarily in terms of time and direction. Contra those, Left/Right structure political discourse in modernity by constructing a 'political symbolic order', wherein some sort of 'political difference' is tolerated by all.

For some obvious examples of this Dyrbergian approach, we can turn our attention to the following. When the Danish political party Stram Kurs contested the 2019 general election with the slogan, "[Danish] [m]est mulig lykke til flest mulige etniske Danskere ([English] [m]aximum happiness to maximum amount of ethnic Danes)",[168] it sought to structure political discourse in terms of membership within a Danish community, that is, in terms of In/Out. When the UK Labour Party contested the UK general election in 2017 with its slogan, "For the many, not the few", it sought to structure political discourse in terms of class and power, so in terms of Up/Down. When the UK Labour Party contested general elections while Tony Blair was the leader, it sought to structure political discourse in terms of Front/Back, through framing issues in terms of epochal changes.[169] However, to Dyrberg, Left/Right are of a different category to In/Out, Up/Down and Front/Back. While Left/Right are still spatial, orientational metaphors, they are also in this world in a different way to the other metaphors. In/Out, Up/Down and Front/Back may structure political discourse

[167] Ibid., p.163.
[168] Jensen, Uwe Max, 2019, 'Mest mulig lykke til flest mulige etniske danskere', *Document*, 28 April, viewed 24 June, 2019, <https://www.document.dk/2019/04/28/mest-mulig-lykke-til-flest-mulige-etniske-danskere/>. My translation.
[169] Dyrberg, Torben Bech, 2009a, 'What is beyond right/left? The case of New Labour', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, Vol. 14, No. 2, pp.133-153, p.138.

symbolically, but Left/Right are part of political discourse, *literally*. And as we shall see, Dyrberg thinks this is a decidedly good thing.

We have seen that Left/Right are tied with modernity because they have certain qualities: they can mean many different things at the same time and they are relatively neutral. This is a fundamental reason why they have come to hegemonize a political discourse that tends to centre around freedom and equality. To Dyrberg, this means that while Up/Down, In/Out and Front/Back identification is penetrated by emotion and intensity, Left/Right identification is not. It is from within this idea that the first fruitful encounter between Dyrberg and Mouffe can be staged. For Dyrberg, Up/Down, In/Out and Front/Back identification is pre-political.[170] What he means is that they all seek to structure the in-common in ways that precede argumentation and evidence, which they accomplish as these types of orientational metaphors invoke emotions and intensity. In this sense, they are dangerous because they flare up the passions of the people caught up in those modes of identification, and this can lead to violent outcomes.

As I have just argued, however, unlike those orientational metaphors, Left/Right do not inspire emotions and intensity. Rather, citing Claude Lefort, Dyrberg asserts that they allude to a strictly political terrain in which:

> societal unity is constituted in the face of division […] which means that it is illegitimate from a democratic point of view to base political values on a pre-political or primordial unity such as nation or people.[171]

As such, Dyrberg posits that Left/Right in modernity function to channel other types of orientational metaphors, which inform political values in a pre-political manner. For him, Left/Right, as spatial, orientational metaphors open up a space, a 'political symbolic order', for democratic contestation over the nature of the in-common that is "autonomous" from other modes of identification.[172] It is these particular qualities that Left/Right have

[170] Dyrberg, Torben Bech, 2009b, 'The Leftist Fascination with Carl Schmitt and the esoteric quality of 'the political'', *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, Vol. 35, No. 6, pp.649-669.
[171] Dyrberg, 2006, p.168.
[172] Ibid.

(qualities that Dyrberg thinks are in part intrinsic and in part historical)[173] that allows them to institute and regulate a political symbolic order that is "freestanding" from other types of orders,[174] and that is what make Left/Right so valuable to modernity. As such:

> Right/Left does not monopolise the political symbolic order, but is a hegemonic device to organise and channel political orientation and intensity, which depends on its articulation with other oppositions.[175]

By hegemonizing the political symbolic order, Left/Right can channel the passions and emotions stirred through other modes of identification into a productive expression that sees them anchored around freedom and equality and around the need to provide political justifications for their impulses. In other words, Left/Right "can thus be seen as a medium for 'defusing' political hostility by channelling and domesticating it".[176] But this also means that Left/Right need other modes of identification, as, if Left/Right were to be become completely dominant, there would be nothing to 'defuse'. We can perhaps then also use Dyrberg's thoughts to cast another light on Riker's conception of issue spaces and their relation to a Left/Right meta-space, by positing that these issue spaces can be brought into being through spatial, orientational metaphors such as Up/Down, In/Out and Front/Back, even if they must refer back to the Left/Right meta-space.

3.4. Dyrberg v. Mouffe

Having established the ways in which Dyrberg conceives of identification through orientational metaphors, we can go to his critique of Mouffe. While Dyrberg is somewhat on the same page in relation to Mouffe's insistence on a pluralistic politics, he has substantial problems with her uptake of Carl Schmitt. Dyrberg, unlike Mouffe, considers Schmitt a dangerous thinker, whose theoretical writings cannot be disentangled from the context of Nazism in which he was situated. As such, his critique of Mouffe can be read not only to have an academic function but also a normative function: to ensure that the

[173] Across his writing he quotes both historical accounts and essentialist accounts to note the ways in which Left/Right might be said to work in relation to other orientational metaphors.
[174] Dyrberg, 2006, p.169.
[175] Dyrberg, 2003, p.355.
[176] Ibid., p.354.

contemporary left does not attempt to rehabilitate a political theorist, the logic of whose writings justifies a far-right identity politics.[177]

To begin his critique, Dyrberg engages Mouffe's account of identity formation. As we saw in a previous sub-section, we could, with Mouffe, assert that there is a "constitutive outside"[178] to all identity. We also saw that she uses Schmitt to illustrate that the relationship between the identity and that which is outside it tends towards a friend/enemy distinction. She views Schmitt as a discoverer of the place of animosity generated in the encounter between the 'us' and the 'them', of the place known as "the political"[179] (although it should be noted that her politics is not Schmittian, as she posits the possibility of a democratic pluralism that can come to terms with 'the political' – something I return to later in the chapter). I then argued, through Mouffe's engagement with Schmitt's concept of substantive equality, that equality preceded questions about Left/Right and is instead tied to questions of inclusion/exclusion, creating a 'space of equals', where equality can come into play for members of the collective identity, but not for those outside it.

Their difference thus relates back to their different ways of perceiving identification. Whereas, for Dyrberg, identification relies on the construction of a "common symbolic space"[180] or a "political symbolic order",[181] within which individuals can think about the in-common through dominant orientational metaphors, for Mouffe, identification relies on the construction of a 'we' that is necessarily counterposed to a 'them'. Internal difference within the 'we' is of course always acknowledged somehow (even man and woman would constitute a difference), but there remains an outside, the inhabitants of which fall outside the scope of equality.

For Mouffe, Schmitt presents us with a, for some, uncomfortable truth – that 'the political' is an ineradicable feature of life and that passion and intensity will thus always lurk and cannot simply be ignored.[182] But for Dyrberg it might not be so simple. For according to his

[177] Dyrberg's engagement with Mouffe spans many years. Interestingly, while he was at first largely sympathetic to her work (See Dyrberg, 2003) he later became much more critical (See Dyrberg 2009b).
[178] Mouffe, Chantal, 2005a, *On The Political*, Verso: London, p.18.
[179] Schmitt, Carl, 1976, *The Concept of the Political*, Translated by: George Schwab, Rutgers University Press: New Brunswick, NJ..
[180] Dyrberg, 2009b, p.662.
[181] Dyrberg, 2003, p.355.
[182] Mouffe, Chantal, 2002, 'Politics and Passions: Introduction', *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, Vol. 28, No. 6, pp.156-616, p.616.

basic theoretical foundations, In/Out (which he takes to be Mouffe's dominant orientational metaphor) is but one of many orientational metaphors. To Dyrberg, we do not only identify ourselves in relation to others through the In/Out orientational metaphor, but also, for example, through Up/Down, Front/Back and Left/Right. If we were to apply both a Dyrbergian and Mouffean reading to, say, the identity of the proletariat, Dyrberg would posit that it is an Up/Down mode of identification, which positions itself in political space as the dominated part in relation to the dominating part: the bourgeoisie.[183] Mouffe, however, would maintain that the proletariat remains an identity based on what it excludes. That is, it is organised around some perceived essence, a sense of what it *is* (depending on the epoch, this could be wage-earner, greasy, rough, male, honest, integrity, etc), which would be sustained through an exclusion of some representation of something which it *is not* (depending on the epoch, this could be owner of means of production, conniving, rich, snob, etc.).[184]

As Mouffe operates only with 'constitutive exclusion' she naturally develops a concern for that which is relegated to the outside of the identity, which is forgotten or discriminated against (in relation to the category of the proletariat; this exclusion could, depending on the epoch, be directed at women, blue collar workers, hipsters, etc.). As she is a political actor of the Left, it is furthermore perhaps only natural that she should place an emphasis on exclusion and an amelioration of it. As Dyrberg sees inclusion/exclusion as synonymous with In/Out, but also recognises the existence of other modes of identification, he cannot as easily side only with a concern for exclusion. As such, his primary concern is for the establishment and maintenance of a 'political symbolic order'. It is here that his emphasis lies. Additionally, as his theory does not emphasise that exclusion is in fact constitutive to identity, the idea that a political symbolic order can ameliorate it also becomes an alluring prospect.

It is in this difference in theoretical assumptions that Dyrberg finds Mouffe's uptake of Schmitt and his friend/enemy distinction problematic. While Mouffe takes the friend/enemy distinction to exemplify the logic of inclusion/exclusion and as governing 'the political', Dyrberg, along familiar lines, thinks that for Schmitt there is more to it than that:

[183] Dyrberg, 2006.
[184] Laclau & Mouffe, 1985. Note that to both approaches, the proletariat is never constituted through the logic of capital, but only through identification.

> […] the political is modelled on the most powerful types of symbolic orientation: in/out as the 'container metaphor' marking membership of a given order, inclusion/exclusion, us/them; up/down as the vertical relationship of powerful/powerless, high/low status, class, etc.; and front/back which partakes in defining a 'we' temporally as passed down in history and instituting destiny.[185]

He then asserts that he thinks 'the political' is more complex than Mouffe gives it credit for – as she thinks mostly in terms of inclusion/exclusion[186] – and argues that she forgets how Schmitt himself engaged the political to further the political aims of Nazism. Dyrberg says that, for Schmitt:

> These three pairs of orientations are contrasted to the image of an anaemic and depoliticizing liberalism obsessed with ethics, rational consensus, neutrality and constitutionalism. In its place we [instead] get a fusion of membership (in/out), submission (up/down) and destiny (front/back), which historically have proven to be a powerful pole of identification.[187]

As Dyrberg contends that Mouffe does not see this complexity, he also contends that she does not understand that by rehabilitating Schmitt and using his theory as a vehicle to engender political inclusion, she is in fact using a theory, and a theorist, whose work only serves the far right that wishes to undo the autonomy of the political symbolic order.[188] In other words, Dyrberg understands that Mouffe is also concerned with the regulation of passions,[189] but seeks to assert that Schmitt will not help her in her quest to theorise the way in which they can be 'defused'.

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[185] Dyrberg, 2009b, p.656.
[186] Ibid., p.657.
[187] Ibid., pp.656-7.
[188] Ibid., p.654.
[189] Ibid., p.660. He reads Mouffe explicitly this way in Dyrberg, 2003.

Their difference in how to understand identification also has another consequence. That is, we cannot ascribe the same reading of Schmitt's notion of "substantive equality" that we did to Mouffe to Dyrberg. Like Dyrberg, we can understand this difference in relation to the twin categories of homogeneity and heterogeneity. As we saw, for Mouffe, identity formation is structured in terms of inclusion/exclusion. This means that there must be a homogeneity that holds the included together at the expense of the excluded. This homogeneity is, for her, held together through some sense of a substantive equality. Mouffe's point is that the exact nature of this substantive equality cannot be designated prior to its construction, which means that it should be possible to construct a type of homogeneity that is itself open to an ever-growing inclusion.

For Dyrberg, however, Mouffe misreads Schmitt:

> It is noteworthy that the homogeneity/heterogeneity discussion gets off the ground without questioning Schmitt's definition of democracy as 'substantial equality'. For leftists it might have a nice ring to it as it suggests that equality is substantial or real as opposed to insubstantial or merely formal […] However, a closer look at these terms reveals something very different, namely radical conservative identity politics: 'substantial equality' is a euphemism for sameness and relates for all practical purposes to race, nation and Volk, and the identity of rulers and ruled means the latter's submission to the former.[190]

In this passage, Dyrberg again lays out the problems with using Schmitt, again centring his critique around a failure to comprehend that one cannot simply appropriate his concepts. Dyrberg dryly asserts that "'substantial equality' is a euphemism for sameness",[191] and again notes that this type of sameness can be successfully invoked in many modes of identification that are native only to the far right. There is, however, an interesting dynamic in relation to homogeneity/heterogeneity that is not touched upon as much as is warranted. Dyrberg contends that the category of friendship functions to enforce a

[190] Dyrberg, 2009b, p.656.
[191] He later asserts that the translation of "Artgleichheit" into "substantial equality" is disingenuous as it means sameness and uniformity. See ibid., p.660.

homogeneity across the three pairs of orientational metaphors, aligning the citizen with the state, effecting a common destiny etc. But all order requires some form of homogeneity – the pre-political always informs the nature of the political – and Mouffe uses Schmitt to make this point. In the next section, we see what kind of homogeneity Dyrberg stresses as he seeks to 'defuse' the passions that the pairs of orientational metaphors that engender homogeneity invoke.

Dyrberg is concerned that Mouffe seeks to rehabilitate Schmitt, but this, to Mouffe, is not so much the choice that Dyrberg makes it out to be.[192] As we have seen, Mouffe simply reads Schmitt differently to Dyrberg, because she comes from a post-Marxist tradition while Dyrberg comes from an Embodied Realist tradition. The differences between these approaches are minute, but crucial. Dyrberg stresses that we establish identities on the basis of orientational metaphors, that they structure the way we think. In this sense, they precede the operation of cognition. For Mouffe, identity is established through a constitutive outside. This then also precedes the operation of cognition, and the approaches are therefore similar in this regard. But Dyrberg is wrong to simply read Mouffe as emphasising In/Out at the expense of other orientational metaphors, because In/Out are not translatable to 'us/them' in Mouffe. Mouffe does not emphasise the category of 'thought' in the same way Dyrberg does. Or rather, the category of 'thought' is preceded by the questions, for who? whose thought? Mouffe might then very well agree with Dyrberg that 'we' should think in particular ways so as to not to be overtaken by antagonisms, but this still implies that 'we' is established prior to the entrance of the category of thought. Or rather, while Dyrberg stresses the degree to which identity is relational through the working of metaphors, Mouffe holds that the process that produces the exclusion of the constitutive outside – which is what enables relational identities to exist to begin with – must precede relational identifications, which, to her, would be the establishment of subject positions.

Yet both Dyrberg and Mouffe see identification as constitutive of social formations (even if they conceive of its logic in different ways) and both acknowledge the existence of passions, emotion and intensity in relation to identification. Both also seek to theorise some sort of social order that can tame these passions without excluding them completely. As we move forward, I engage their proposals for political orders and Left/Right's relationship to them. And, as we shall see, despite their similarities, they end up theorising

[192] Ibid., p.661.

the kind of homogeneity that is needed to sustain that order rather differently. Both come out largely in favour of Left/Right's hegemony over political discourse, but for different reasons.

3.5. Dyrberg, Left/Right and Public Reason

Both Mouffe and Dyrberg theorise a political community that maintains some sort of homogeneity while still enabling some sort of internal difference. Importantly, both theorise this in relation to Left/Right. As we saw, Dyrberg follows Lakoff and Johnson in asserting that identification takes place in terms of spatial, orientational metaphors. Dyrberg asserts that three of those pairs of metaphors – In/Out, Up/Down and Front/Back – are pre-political in that they operate in accordance with values that are formulated prior to an engagement with the political realm that was born from the democratic revolution. As these metaphors also imbue identification with passion and intensity, to organise political space through them presents a challenge to the democratic ideology of modernity. As we have already seen, Dyrberg argues that Left/Right can provide a frame through which this intensity can be diffused. In his most important contribution to his more normative thoughts,[193] he specifies this function of Left/Right even more closely:

> As a symbol of parity, right–left clears a space in which opposition and disagreement are legitimate and where contending forces are on equal political footing and can be balanced against each other. This assigns right–left with the overarching function of instituting the autonomy of the political symbolic order, and it points at that right–left is related to public reason as balancing different and conflicting claims.[194]

From this, we can start to engage Dyrberg's normative project. First, he notes that Left/Right function to distribute legitimate differences – something which Left/Right can accomplish because they are equal to each other (they are horizontal, so there is no

[193] Dyrberg, 2006.
[194] Ibid., p.167.

hierarchy between them).[195] He also here starts to qualify the kind of difference that we are talking about: disagreements (I will return to this later). Second, by accomplishing this legitimization of disagreement between equals, Left/Right function to secure this space as autonomous from other modes of identification. That is, pre-political expressions cannot/must not be understood as political exactly because Left/Right qualify a political domain that is apart from them. Third, Left/Right are then connected to public reason – and this is of course the move I have been building up to. For Dyrberg here qualifies this political domain that is to be freestanding from pre-political expressions. It is the public domain, and he even introduces a particular conception of it – the Rawlsian conception of public reason.[196]

This then takes us back to our engagement with Mah, Gauchet and Lefort, and we see how Dyrberg's account of the function of Left/Right dovetails with their account of the emergence of the public subject and the specific form it takes as a citizen-voter. That is, we are faced with a juxtaposition between Gauchet's concept of the citizen-voter and Rawls' concept of the use of public reason. One account, Gauchet's, seeks to describe a particular kind of public subject, while the other, Dyrberg's, seeks to describe the mode of expression that subjects can entertain while inhabiting the political domain that, according to both Gauchet and Dyrberg, is structured by Left/Right. Particular to Dyrberg is his invocation of the use of public reason in relation to the political domain that Left/Right secure as freestanding from pre-political expressions. He writes:

> […] public reason operates outside the state as sound judgements that draws on and reflects the political capital of democratic traditions. Public virtues can only be cultivated in a society governed by the democratic value of equal liberty, which connects the institutional and the personal dimensions of politics and systematises our intuitions about fairness. [Rawls] is in this respect outlining a democratic ideology, centred on political

[195] Dyrberg, following Laponce and McManus, contends that when Left and Right are coded culturally, Right is Up and Left is Down, but that, when they are coded politically, they are equal. See Ibid., p.167.

[196] Although we do not cite from it here, see also Dyrberg, Torben Bech, 2005, 'Radical and plural democracy: In defence of right/left and public reason', in: Tønder, Lars & Thomassen, Lasse (eds.), *Radical Democracy: Politics Between Abundance and Lack*, Manchester University Press: Manchester, pp.167-184.

> orientation and political justification, whose task is to create a workable coupling between democratic regime and public culture so 'that deeply opposed though reasonable comprehensive doctrines may live together and all affirm the political conception of a constitutional regime' (Rawls 1993a: xviii)."[197]

Here we can see exactly how Left/Right are made to work with this conception of Rawls' political thought. Pre-political modes of expressions are connected to comprehensive doctrines, which Rawls opposes to doctrines proper to public political deliberation. This opposition is required because comprehensive doctrines seek to offer justifications, or reasons, for the intervention into the in-common that are not always in line with "the democratic value of equal liberty", thus endangering the value of fairness, which Rawls connects to the concept of justice.[198] In other words, we cannot live in a just society unless the political symbolic order is freestanding from substantial doctrines.

In turn, if the political symbolic order is freestanding, Dyrberg, with Rawls, contends that it can breed "[p]ublic virtues",[199] which means that people will learn to identify as a public and accept that all people have equal liberty when making interventions in relation to the in-common. Upon this acceptance, people will then enter the political domain using public reason, thus reproducing the acceptance of the dominance of politics in relation to constitutional order.

Left/Right, then, serve to differentiate between distinctly public reasons, which they can do because they also help institute the political symbolic order in which this type of difference is seen as legitimate. Left/Right, to Dyrberg, are central to the reproduction, not only of the democratic ideology writ large (the governing principles of modernity outlined by Claude Lefort) but of the liberal constitutional order that created the room for a distinctively political order to begin with.[200] They do this because they work to produce a particular kind of public subject, one that gives reasons that presuppose equal liberty between people,

[197] Dyrberg, 2006, p.170.
[198] Rawls cited in ibid., p.170.
[199] Ibid., p.170.
[200] We do not engage more of Rawls here. This is primarily because we look at Habermas later on, whose theory of deliberation provides a much more fruitful example of the way Left/Right might be said to work in relation to the liberal constitutional order.

and which fill out a public realm, a public sphere, which is seen to connect civil society to the state.

Giving reasons that presupposes equal liberty, to Rawls and Dyrberg, also require a particular type self-understanding. Rawls qualifies this through the concept of "anti-perfectionism,"[201] which Dyrberg links to Lefort's notion of the absence of the markers of certainty that I discussed in the Chapter One.[202] That is, Dyrberg's normative conception of democracy entails a development of a public virtue that recognises the lack of the markers of certainty inherent to the democratic revolution and thus codes the being of its parts in the form of reason-giving arguments that recognise their own anti-perfectionism. Dyrberg argues that Left/Right accomplish the development of this public virtue that is centred around anti-perfectionism exactly because they encourage a recognition of partiality. In Chapter One, I linked, *historically*, a particular type of rationalism that stresses partiality with the emergence of Left/Right. With Dyrberg, the link becomes, not *historical*, but *conceptual*. Or, using the vocabulary from Chapter One, we can see how the citizen-voter, the public subject that embraces its own partiality; that embraces Dyrberg's public virtues, is co-constitutive of, and thus linked with, Left/Right conceptually. I look at this link even more closely in the Chapter Three.

But one problem remains in relation to Dyrberg's normative project and Left/Right: that of inclusion/exclusion. As I argued, Dyrberg does not privilege In/Out conceptions of political space because he does not think political identification should be structured that way. But when I, with Mouffe, argue that identification in fact *is* structured in relation to inclusion/exclusions, that all identity always excludes in order to be able to define itself, the obvious question returns: what do Left/Right exclude? To Dyrberg, the answer is simple:

> Democratic public reason has to enforce limits towards comprehensive views to maintain its defining political characteristics by excluding views if they cannot be made accessible to all on a reciprocal basis, that is, if they violate the founding principles of liberty and equality. Public reason exhibits

[201] Ibid., pp.173-174.
[202] Ibid., p.173.

> in this respect a dogmatism of its own: that those who violate this principle must be barred access to the domain of public reason.[203]

To Dyrberg, only reasons that respect the basic rules of the game – freedom and equality – should be allowed in. But also excluded are expressions that, while respecting the rules of the game, do not take the form of reasons. It is perhaps in this sense that we can see why it is so difficult to place Mette Lylloff of the #enmillionstemmer movement on the Left/Right scale, for she does not use public reason to structure her expression; she does not engage in rational argumentation. She instead structures her expression in terms of lived experience. As I start to engage Jürgen Habermas and deliberative democracy a little more, I draw out the implications of this inability to place certain modes of expression on the Left/Right spectrum. But suffice it to say here, that while Dyrberg provides a splendid account of how Left/Right function to reproduce the liberal democratic constitutional order, he remains incapable of theorising the exclusions from it. In Dyrberg, Left/Right have a positive function as they secure the autonomy of the political symbolic order, but, once I have engaged the logic of exclusion even more explicitly, will we have to give up a belief in the positivity of the Left/Right spectrum, or find a way to appropriate it in order to combat exclusions? To approach an answer to this question, we again turn to Mouffe and agonism.

3.6. Mouffe, Left/Right and agonism

While Dyrberg's account perhaps comes the closest of any approach to Left/Right in describing the function of Left/Right in modernity, his application of Left/Right to a normative approach is questionable as it cannot account for the phenomenon of exclusion – which is constitutive to identity formation. In this sub-section, I return to Mouffe and her normative political project, agonism, and the way in which it attempts to appropriate the Left/Right dichotomy. First, I outline her conception of agonism. I do this using mostly her references to Carl Schmitt and thus, at this time, forego an encounter with Marxism,[204]

[203] Dyrberg, 2006, p.174.
[204] Just as Laclau left orthodox Marxism through Althusser, Mouffe left it through Gramsci. See her early engagement with it in Mouffe, Chantal (ed.), 1979, *Gramsci and Marxist Theory*, Routledge and Kegan Paul: London.

Psychoanalysis[205] and Semiotics,[206] while remaining aware that Mouffe is influenced by those traditions as well.

Dyrberg argues that, "[f]or leftists [substantial equality] might have a nice ring to it as it suggests that equality is substantial or real as opposed to insubstantial or merely formal".[207] He makes this argument somewhat flippantly, but for Mouffe this distinction between formal and real equality is very important:

> No doubt there is an opposition between the liberal 'grammar' of equality, which postulates universality and reference to 'humanity', and the practice of democratic equality, which requires the political moment of discrimination between 'us' and 'them'.[208]

Viewing Schmitt as a discoverer of this realm of 'the political' where the political frontier between an 'us' and a 'them' is established, she here again asserts that exclusion is constitutive of identity and space – insofar as a space must have an identity in order to have meaning. It should also be noted that she does not necessarily like that passion and exclusion are constitutive features of politics in modernity – she simply acknowledges that this is the case.[209] This is why you cannot simply dismiss a concern for the development of some kind of substantive equality, some kind of erection of a space of equals wherein people who find themselves represented share in an equality, but only at the expense of a

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[205] Mouffe has recently cited Freud, arguing that we have a "libidinal investment" in the nation-state. See Mouffe cited in Novara Media, 2018, 'NovaraFM: For a Left Populism: Chantal Mouffe', *Soundcloud*, 30 Nov, viewed 3 July, 2019, <https://soundcloud.com/novaramedia/novarafm-for-a-left-populism-chantal-mouffe>. See also Wenman, Mark Anthony, 2003, 'Laclau or Mouffe? Splitting the difference', *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, Vol. 29, No. 5, pp.581-601, p.603, which traces the influence of psychoanalysis in *Hegemony and Socialist Struggle*. Lasse Thomassen, however, also highlights that, even if aspects of her theory dovetail with some of the aspects of psychoanalysis, it would be unreasonable to label her a Lacanian – as some of her post-Marxist bedfellows profess to be. See Thomassen, Lasse, 2004a, 'Lacanian Political Theory: A Reply to Robinson', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Vol. 6, pp.558-561, p.559.

[206] Mouffe is particularly fond of Derrida's concept of the "constitutive outside". See Mouffe, Chantal, 2005c, 'Which Public Space for Critical Artistic Practices', *Corc Caucus*, Firkin Crane, Institute for Choreography and Dance, pp.149-171, p.155.

[207] Dyrberg, 2009b, p.656.

[208] Mouffe, 2000, p.44.

[209] Thomassen, Lasse, 2016, 'Hegemony, populism and democracy: Laclau and Mouffe today', *Revista Española de Ciencia Política*, Vol. 40, pp.161-176, p.168.

constitutive exclusion of people who then do not share in it. She uses Carl Schmitt and his friend/enemy distinction to denote the violent nature of this constitution, which is a constitution of antagonisms. The key argument we can take from this reassertion of the primacy of substantive equality, however, is that the operative concept changes from the abstract concept of humanity, which she, with Schmitt, asserts is not a political category,[210] to the concept of 'the people'. That is, with Mouffe, we cannot simply erect some kind of public sphere wherein everyone is free and equal to express their arguments and opinions relating to common concerns based on some shared humanity. For, being an alleged political space, it requires a pre-political homogeneity to be in place for the space to recognise itself as *one*, that is, in order for that space to have meaning – even if the oneness of the space is never actually realised.[211] In other words, being a political space, it requires a notion of who 'the people' are – which in turn requires a notion of who 'the people' *are not*. Thus:

> […] if the people are to rule, it is necessary to determine who belongs to the people. Without any criterion to determine who are the bearers of democratic rights, the will of the people could never take shape.[212]

Previously, we have seen arguments for justice as fairness as regulating this conception of 'the people', but this is clearly problematic as Mouffe, with Schmitt, asserts that this homogeneity of 'the people' is established through these people's participation in the political entity.[213] This creates a catch-22, where it is the people who are already constituted as belonging to 'the people' who get to decide the future contours of this category. And remember, the invocation of abstract equality and liberty as essential, rather than rhetorical, categories just cannot be applied here, because they only become political categories upon application: they are meaningless until they are instantiated.[214]

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[210] Mouffe, 2000, pp.43-4.
[211] I examine the reasons for this in Chapter Four.
[212] Mouffe, 2000, p.43.
[213] Ibid., pp.42-43.
[214] We return to this problematic in the chapter on Habermas.

Instead, Mouffe contends that this democratic paradox in which equality, to have meaning, must entail an exclusion of some people from that equality, must be embraced and, most importantly, acknowledged:

> The logic of democracy does indeed imply a moment of closure which is required by the very process of constituting the 'people'. This cannot be avoided, even in a liberal-democratic model; it can only be negotiated differently. But this in turn can be done only if this closure, and the paradox it implies, are acknowledged.[215]

Here we start to see the agonistic model: exclusion and antagonism is constitutive of 'the political', but this does not mean that we must give up on democracy. Instead, we must acknowledge that perfect democracy is impossible.[216] However, by articulating agonism in relation to liberalism we can also refer to its universalism and humanistic claims to always seek to engender inclusion into this category of the people. Agonism then needs liberalism, even if it relies on a different (meta)ontology in order to make sense of the world.

Mouffe often expands on her agonistic project through engaging specific liberal thinkers whom she accuses of failing to engage 'the political'. Perhaps her favourite target is John Rawls.[217] As we saw with Dyrberg, Rawls theorises the possibility for a liberal order in a society that is at odds with itself:

> [Rawls'] objective is to provide a moral, albeit minimal, consensus on political fundamentals [… His] 'political liberalism' aims at defining a core morality that specifies the terms under which

[215] Mouffe, 2000, p.43.
[216] This is not to be confused with Rawls' concept of anti-perfectionism. See Caney, Simon, 1995, 'Anti-Perfectionism and Rawlsian Liberalism', *Political Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 2, pp.248-264 for an outline and engagement with this Rawlsian perspective. The dissimilarity rests in the fact that Mouffe is beholden to a Lacanian logic that stresses a constitutive negativity, while Rawls arrives at this principle of anti-perfectionism through other means.
[217] See, for examples, Mouffe, Chantal, 2005b, 'The limits of John Rawls's pluralism', *Politics, Philosophy & Economics*, Vol. 4, No. 2, pp.221-231; Mouffe, 2000, pp.80-107; and Mouffe, Chantal, 1993b, 'Rawls: Political Philosophy without Politics', *The Return of The Political*, Verso: London, pp.41-59.

> people with different conceptions of the good can live together in political association.[218]

As Mouffe sums up here, this possibility rests on decidedly moral grounds, grounds that I in the previous sub-section called an acceptance of the rules of the game: liberty and equality for all. Rawls' pluralism sees it as fact that the public realm is headed by several substantive doctrines,[219] which is why it is so important that all can agree on these basic principles. In accordance with the catch-22, these basic principles then also provide the basics for a conception of justice, upon which Rawls contends that all 'reasonable' people can agree.[220]

However, for Mouffe, this move to ground a form of pluralism in morality is problematic, because it:

> […] allows Rawls to present as a moral exigency what is in fact a political decision. It serves to avoid acknowledging the antagonistic nature of the political and the fact that no regime, not even a liberal one, can pretend to have a privileged claim on rationality.[221]

In other words, the kind of pluralism that is on offer from Rawls, is, to Mouffe, a pluralism that is decidedly liberal. She argues that one may have good reason to support such a pluralism, but this choice could not be grounded in morality, but in politics.[222] It is grounded in politics because it can only constitute itself through a closure – through an identification with something that it *is not* – and as such is constituted through frontiers, just as an identity of a space. The problem is that Rawls effects an exclusion from political participation. This exclusion applies to democratic doctrines such as socialism just as it applies to non-democratic doctrines such as fascism.[223] As Mouffe sees it, this exclusion is

[218] Mouffe, 2000, p.23.
[219] Mouffe, 2005b, p.223.
[220] Rawls cited in Mouffe, 2000, pp.23-4.
[221] Mouffe, 2005b, p.223.
[222] Mouffe, 2000, p.25.
[223] As I have argued in the previous sub-section, and as we will greatly elaborate on in the coming chapters, this exclusion might also be said to apply to political modes of expressions that are not constituted in the form of an opinion or argument.

made all the more grievous through an inability on behalf of its designers to conceive of 'the political'. Indeed, to Mouffe, what Rawls is trying to do is to eradicate 'the political' under his rationalist, individualist and universalist banner of reason.[224] But this suppression of antagonism, which to Mouffe persists as a feature of modernity whether Rawls likes it or not, only serves to make its final expressions even more powerful. Indeed, taking a look at the recent phenomena of US President Donald Trump and Brexit, Mouffe has argued that this inability to give voice to different narratives eventually sees popular support shift to movements that are at odds with the liberal doctrine.[225]

As such, Mouffe proposes a different type of political order that acknowledges its own impossibility and the existence of 'the political', but nevertheless seeks to bind identities together in a space whose sole structuring principle is a recognition of its own fallibility. She calls this political order agonism.[226]

> My proposal is based on the acknowledgement of antagonism and its ineradicability, but I also state that antagonism can manifest itself in two ways: in the friend-enemy form, or as what I call 'agonism', which takes place between 'adversaries'. The latter is a sublimated form of the antagonistic relation, in which the opponents know there is no rational solution to their conflict and that they'll never be able to agree, but accept the legitimacy of the adversaries in defending their position […] In both cases there is a frontier, but it's constructed differently.[227]

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[224] Mouffe, 1993a.

[225] See, for examples, Mouffe, Chantal, 2016, 'A Salutary Shock? Chantal Mouffe on Brexit and the Spanish Elections', *Verso*, 27 June, viewed 26 June, 2019, <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/2732-a-salutary-shock-chantal-mouffe-on-brexit-and-the-spanish-elections>; and Shahid, Waleed, 2016, 'America in Populist Times: An Interview With Chantal Mouffe', *The Nation*, 25 Dec, viewed 26 June, 2019, <https://www.thenation.com/article/america-in-populist-times-an-interview-with-chantal-mouffe/>.

[226] Agonism can and should of course be traced back to Mouffe and Laclau's joint work on radical democracy. See Laclau & Mouffe, 1985. That being said, Lasse Thomassen has pointed out how radical democracy and agonism should not necessarily be read as synonymous political projects defined by their homogeneity. See Thomassen, Lasse, 2005a, 'Reading radical democracy: A commentary on Clive Barnett', *Political Geography*, Vol. 24, pp.631-639, p.633.

[227] Mouffe, Chantal & Errejón, Íñigo, 2016, *Podemos: In the Name of the People*, Lawrence & Wishart: London, p.58.

Agonism, then, is based on a negativity, on the inexistence of rational solutions. Yet this lack of being is made to work productively to enable political actors to perceive of different political actors as legitimate through a recognition of their own inability to effect a perfect closure of the democratic space. Differences remain, but instead of manifesting themselves in relation to the friend/enemy dynamic, which occurs when closure is attempted, exclusion is emphasised and 'the political' is ignored, they manifest themselves through the dynamic of adversity.

Agonism thus remains based on ideals of equality and emancipation, but it acknowledges that these can be completed only partially.[228] What this theory accomplishes is to construct a political imaginary with holes in it – which is also decidedly historical. Through those holes, new differences that acquire enough momentum can manifest themselves and gain recognition as established political adversaries. Morality is out of the picture and, to a lesser extent, so is justice. Instead, what remains is a conception of political order that works to enable disagreement without seeking to synthesise it into a higher meaning. Importantly, the objective of this move is not only to avert fascist imaginaries displacing the liberal imaginary, but to radicalise the liberal imaginary to better enable people who cannot find expression within its order to announce their presence and be represented within public discourse.[229]

While Mouffe has not written extensively on Left/Right, like Dyrberg, she generally perceives of Left/Right as enabling the type of adversarial politics that agonism demands.[230] During the period when protagonists of the Third Way were particularly prominent[231] –

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[228] Mouffe, Chantal, 1999, 'Deliberation Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?', *Social Research*, Vol. 66, No. 3, pp.748-758, p.752.

[229] This concern for the public remains intricately tied to her thinking. See, for examples, Carpentier, Nico & Cammaerts, Bart, 2006, 'Hegemony, Democracy, Agonism and Journalism: An interview with Chantal Mouffe', *Journalism Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 6, pp.964-975; and Mouffe, 2005c.

[230] She has previously called for a "genuine left" in Mouffe, Chantal, 2013, *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*, Verso: London, p.120, and in Mouffe, Chantal, 2005, p.157, she hailed Left/Right as instituting a common symbolic space where disagreement is possible. But in various places in Mouffe & Errejón, 2016, she speaks about Left/Right as something to be overcome and in Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p.179, it is also spoken about negatively.

[231] For works of such theorists and politicians see, among many others, Giddens, Anthony, 1994, *Beyond Left and Right: The Future of Radical Politics*, Polity Press: Cambridge, UK; Giddens, Anthony, 1998, *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy*, Polity Press: Cambridge, UK; Gray, John, 1996, *After Social Democracy: Politics, Capitalism and the Common Life*, Demos: London; Beck, Ulrich, 1999, *World Risk Society*, Polity Press: Cambridge, UK; McKnight, David, 2005, *Beyond Right and Left: New politics and the culture wars*, Allen & Unwin: Crows Nest, NSW; and Blair, Tony, 1998, *The third way: New politics for the new century*, Fabian Society: London. Bobbio calls the Third Way an example of his concept of the Inclusive Middle. He denounces both as attempting to transcend the Left/Right distinction. See Bobbio, 1996, pp.7-9. However, I would posit that the Third Way is

protagonists who sought to put an end to the Left/Right distinction all together,[232] arguing that the divisions that the dyad signified were no longer pertinent,[233] and that what was needed was just rationalism and efficiency in governance[234] – Mouffe was particularly assertive that we needed to return to a Left/Right ordering of the political community:[235]

> I consider that the shortcomings of third way politics help us to understand why envisaging modern democracy as a form of agonistic pluralism has very important consequences for politics. Once it is acknowledged that this type of agonistic confrontation is what is specific to a pluralist democracy, we can understand why such a democracy requires the creation of collective identities around clearly differentiated positions as well as the possibility to choose between real alternatives. This is precisely the function of the left/right distinction. The left/right opposition is the way in which legitimate conflict is given form and institutionalized.[236]

We see then that Mouffe arrives at a conceptualisation of Left/Right that is not too dissimilar from Dyrberg's. Obviously, this plays into the hands of those who seek to portray Mouffe as overtly liberal and not particularly radical,[237] but she arrives at this point for different reasons. For her, Left/Right simply accomplish a collective identification of particular subject positions with the whole. Given that this particular mode of identification implies a recognition of the legitimacy of disagreement, Left/Right thus lend themselves to a political imaginary in which the political community is constitutively divided amongst

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merely a more radical expression of his decision to forget about the truly political dimension of modernity.

[232] Giddens, Anthony, 2000, *The Third Way and its Critics*, Polity Press: Cambridge, UK, pp.28-9.

[233] Giddens, 1994, p.49.

[234] Dyrberg provides an excellent account of this in Dyrberg, 2009a, pp.145-6.

[235] See Dyrberg, 2003.

[236] Mouffe, 2000, p.117.

[237] Žižek is the obvious example of this. See Brockelman, Thomas, 2003, 'The failure of the radical democratic imaginary: Žižek versus Laclau and Mouffe on vestigial utopia', *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, Vol. 29, No. 2, pp.183-208.

itself; that is, Left/Right lend themselves to a construction of frontiers that emphasises adversity rather than enmity.[238]

However, I consider this move to be done in haste. To recall, Gauchet and Mah identified the historical emergence of the public subject as the citizen-voter. It is this subject that grasped at Left/Right in order to identify itself with the whole in a modernity that was marked by a lack of the markers of certainty. Mouffe's location of agonistic politics within the Left/Right spectrum fails to honour the people who cannot identify themselves with this citizen-voter. While I am still to qualify the exact identity of this citizen-voter – something which I shall not accomplish until I have engaged Habermas and Laclau – Mouffe has taught us that this identity can only constitute itself insofar as there is an exclusion. If I argue, as I shall, that Left/Right, in a sense, belong to the citizen-voter, then Left/Right do not only serve as a justificatory device for liberal democracy, as Dyrberg would have it,[239] or for agonistic politics, as Mouffe would have it, but to construct a space in which subject positions can identify themselves with the whole. However, as this is something that can only take place if there is a constitutive outside to that space, that is, if something is excluded, then there remains a problem with Left/Right.

This also has implications for the way we conceive of passion in relation to Left/Right when we, with Mouffe, accept that passion is a constitutive feature to identity. Mouffe (and, to a certain extent, Dyrberg) seeks to tame the violent passions that can flare up in times of antagonism. She employs Left/Right for this purpose – to turn enemies into adversaries. But what are the consequences of this removal of passion? I submit that a removal of passion equates to a removal of political commitment to a cause. Indeed, the excluded are passionate about their demands because their material conditions are precarious, but once the passion is removed, how can they continue a commitment to the cause? For, once we accept that Left/Right belong to the citizen-voter, we must also acknowledge that Left/Right identification is secondary to the identity of the citizen-voter – an identity which exactly does require affectual investment. In other words, while Left/Right might enable

[238] She is even on record, in a Lacanian vein, claiming that, "[Danish] Den eneste måde, man kan mobilisere følelser på, er ved at appellere til højre-venstre skillet [English] The only way in which you can mobilise passions is by appealing to the right-left divide". See Mouffe cited in Møller, Bjarke, 2002, 'Midten fremmer højrefløjen', *Information*, 15 Feb, viewed 26 June, 2019, <https://www.information.dk/2002/02/midten-fremmer-hoejrefloejen>. My translation. She has more recently turned to Left populism. See Mouffe, 2018. I discuss the Left/Right and populism in Chapters Four and Five.

[239] This particular idea that they have a justificatory function in Dyrberg is also highlighted in White, Jonathan, 2011, 'Left and Right as political resources', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, Vol. 16, No. 2, pp.123-144, p.125.

different citizen-voters to view themselves as adversaries, to which extent do they also enforce a mode of expression that is necessarily devoid of passion and commitment and to which extent does that impact on people who do not identify as public subjects to begin with? If you live an excluded and precarious life, but you are not allowed to be committed to its rectification, at least in any real sense, what effects does that have?

These are question that I attempt to answer in future chapters, but for now, we might reconsider the case of Mette Lylloff. In her capacity as a disability activist, she can be identified with this place of exclusion exactly because she does not express herself through reason-giving argumentation but through lived experience – a mode of expression that is inherently more passionate. She participates in this way because her primary concern is to evidence her exclusion from the 'space of equals'. However, her exclusion thus also comes to pertain to modes of political participation, and we cannot theorise this appropriately through Mouffe and Dyrberg alone. That is why I now turn to Mustafa Dikeç to introduce us to the 'spatial turn' in political theory, before I proceed to Jacques Rancière and the concepts of 'the police' and 'distribution of the sensible', which will help us think further about political space and identity.

3.7. Conclusion

In this section, I explored the degree to which Left/Right have a justificatory function in relation to democratic order. We saw that Dyrberg postulates that Left/Right can work to facilitate Rawls' conception of the use of public reason. We also saw that Mouffe, taking issue with this particular application of Left/Right to Rawlsian political liberalism, instead posits a Left/Right political imaginary that is constitutively open and aimed at transforming antagonism into adversity. But Mouffe's project also relies on Left/Right in order for adversaries to recognise each other as parts of a whole, despite her critical emphasis on exclusion.

4. Identity and space in relation to Left/Right

4.1. Introduction

We still lack an account of exclusion that can explain how particular modes of political expression can be excluded from a space/identity. As such, in this last section I explore how space and identity are linked, enabling each other to function conceptually although both are undermined by the (non)being of lack/void. I examine Rancière's twin concepts of the police (ac)count and the distribution of the sensible to see the ways in which the latter

creates a space in which subject positions are counted and made to give an account of themselves. Through being made to give an account of themselves, I argue that subject positions are required to express themselves in a manner that is particular. It is here that we finally find an account that can shed some light on the relationship between Left/Right, reason-giving argumentation/opinion and exclusion in relation to other modes of political expression. We thus end up with an account of identity and space that I use for the rest of the thesis.

4.2. Mustafa Dikeç and the 'spatial turn' in political theory

Mustafa Dikeç is one of the foremost protagonists of the "spatial turn"[240] in democratic theory. In his work, he examines the ways in which various political theorists can be said to rely on a concept of space to produce their theory.[241] So far, I have defined space as a site of differences that nevertheless share something in common. With Dikeç we can now start to qualify it further:

> Space not only gives form to and orders how this world appears, but also allows distinctive gatherings of beings – things and people – that establish relationality and open new spaces […] Space becomes a form of appearance and a mode of actuality, making manifest established orders, generating particular relationships to them, and providing relational domains of experience for the constitution of political identities.[242]

[240] Dikeç, Mustafa, 2012, 'Space as a mode of political thinking', *Geoforum*, Vol. 43, pp.669-676, p.669. It should be noted that Dikeç has one foot in each of the political theory and political geography camps, which can at times create some confusion. For example, when Doreen Massey charged that Laclau consigned the social sphere, as space, to a state of stasis which rendered a theory of change impossible. See Massey, Doreen, 1992, 'Politics and Space/Time', *New Left Review*, No. 196, pp.65-84. The debate is nicely summed up and outlined in Marchart, Oliver, 2014, 'Institution and dislocation: philosophical roots of Laclau's discourse theory of space and antagonism', *Distinktion: Journal of Social Theory*, Vol. 15, No. 3, pp.271-282.

[241] For various examples of this, see Dikeç, 2012; Dikeç, Mustafa, 2005, 'Space, politics and the political', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, Vol. 23, pp.171-188; and Dikeç, Mustafa, Clark, Nigel & Barnett, Clive, 2009, 'Extending Hospitality: Giving Space, Taking Time', in: Dikeç, Mustafa, Clark, Nigel and Barnett, Clive (eds.), *Extending Hospitality: Giving Space, Taking Time*, Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, pp.1–14.

[242] Dikeç, Mustafa, 2015, *Space, Politics and Aesthetics*, Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, pp.1-2.

Most notable here is the idea that space is constitutive of appearance. If it was not already clear then, we are speaking in terms of apprehension – in terms of the encounter between material reality and the way in which we understand it. Space, then, is that which structures our apprehension of the material world, ties bodies and things together, places and orders them and imbues them with a specific form. In one sense, it is space that codes our apprehension of the world. Through effecting this order and giving of form, space establishes a relationality between people and things that is 'particular'. It is within this particular constellation of relations that political identities are then constituted. Here, however, I should be careful to mark out the ways in which we can now theorise exclusion in a different way from Mouffe. Where Mouffe specifies identification as negatively relational or dissociative,[243] in Dikeç's theory of space we find a structuralist emphasis on the way in which power operates to produce relationality, and through this operation, identification. However, if we shift focus from Dikeç to Rancière – whom Dikeç engages extensively anyway – we start to encounter some theoretical concepts that are extremely illuminating in relation to Left/Right, space/identification, inclusion/exclusion and rationalism.

4.3. Rancière, the distribution of the sensible and the police (ac)count

As Dikeç puts it:

> [The distribution of the sensible] is a spatial term Rancière uses to refer to forms and modes of configuring a sensible order that makes a certain perception of the world possible and sensible by relating what is given to the senses to ways of sense-making.[244]

Dikeç argues that his own conception of forms of relationality can, in Rancière, be conceptualised as a space in which the senses are activated in particular ways. It is then through the senses that we apprehend the relationality of the world. The ways in which this apprehension is regulated is through the mechanisms of 'the police'. This term is not to be confused with standard police officers, referring to something else entirely:

[243] Dikeç, Mustafa, 2013, 'Beginners and equals: political subjectivity in Arendt and Rancière', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, Vol. 38, No. 1, pp.78-90, p.79.
[244] Ibid., p.82.

> The essence of the police […] lies in a certain way of dividing up the sensible. I call 'distribution of the sensible' a generally implicit law that defines the forms of *part*aking by first defining the modes of perception in which they are inscribed. The partition of the sensible is the dividing-up of the world (de monde) and of people (du monde).[245]

The police thus gives form to relationality in a way that is particular, in a process that precedes our engagement with relationality. Through dividing up the realm of the sensible and categorising it, it also performs a political task. It structures the "parts" of the whole of the society.[246] In this sense, to Rancière, our relations are pre-figured by the police. It accomplishes this prefiguring through the "(ac)count".[247] The (ac)count is a mechanism through which the police effects the ordering of 'parts'. Considered in relation to the phenomenon of politics, these parts are subject positions. The police, through the employment of the distribution of the sensible, thus makes it possible for subject positions to invest themselves in bodies of individuals. In this sense, identification, at the level of subject positions, is created by the police (ac)count. However, as the mode of relation between the counted parts is particular, the police also "defines the forms of *part*aking" in the in-common that are possible for these parts. In this sense there is thus an arithmetical and a narrative element to the existence of subject positions. They are not only counted but also made to give an account of themselves insofar that they wish to *part*ake in the in-common.

As we look back to the previous section, we, with Mouffe, learned that exclusion is a constitutive feature of all space. Mouffe conceptualised this exclusion in terms of 'us' and 'them'. With Rancière, exclusion is conceptualised not as 'us' and 'them' but through the mechanism of the "miscount".[248] It is the miscount that generates the possibility of politics to take place in the first place; politics, which, for Rancière, centres around the concept of

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[245] Rancière, Jacques, 2010, *Dissensus*, translated by: Steven Corcoran, Continuum Books: London, p.36.
[246] Rancière, Jacques, 1999, *Disagreement*, translated by: Julie Rose, University of Minnesota Press: London, pp.8-9.
[247] Espersen, Peter & Kyriacou, Michael, 2016, 'The DisOrdered Polis: Öcalan, Bookchin & Rancière in International Political Theory', *4th Annual St Andrews Graduate Conference in International Political Theory*, St. Andrews University, 26-27 May, Unpublished, p.12.
[248] Rancière, 1999, p.6.

equality that acts as a presupposition[249] and which is wronged by the imposition of the sensible order.[250]

To Rancière, even the excluded are featured in the count.[251] The miscount thus does not revolve around the exclusion in so much as it revolves around misrecognition and a lack of voice.[252] Dikeç describes this lack of an excluded part through reference to the whole in which parts find themselves misrecognised and un-equal:

> The whole is more than the sum of its parts. The whole in question is a whole defined as the whole by the police order. Rancière's 'unaccounted for' does not mean that there exists a hidden bunch of political subjects to turn up and disrupt the police order. Everybody is counted. The unaccounted for is at once nowhere and everywhere.[253]

Exclusion, in Rancière, then takes on a different garb than it does in Mouffe and, with it, space and identity also acquire different nuances. An emphasis develops on the aesthetic qualities of space and identity rather than purely the names that are given to spaces and identities, as it becomes the aesthetic qualities that, through assigning certain practices as normal and common-sensical, effect the misrecognition through an inability of other subject positions to perform those practices – causing them to appear un-equal. This aesthetic dimension is then emphasised because the distribution of the sensible that the police (ac)count effects is particular. It is not that identity and space in Mouffe is not particular, but her conception of them through dissociation also downplays their aesthetic qualities.[254] Rancière's usefulness then comes in our ability to, through him, locate the dynamic between order and the 'unaccounted for' within the same space, and, crucially, to

[249] Rancière, Jacques, 1991, *The ignorant schoolmaster: five lessons in intellectual emancipation*, translated by: Kristin Ross, Stanford University Press: Stanford, CA..
[250] Rancière, Jacques, 1992, 'Politics, identification, and subjectivization', *October*, Vol. 61, pp.58-64, p.59.
[251] Dikeç, 2005, p.176.
[252] Rancière cited in Dikeç, 2013, p.84.
[253] Dikeç, 2005, p.176.
[254] There, space and identity are constituted around nodal points that partially fix discourse. See Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p.112. It is not that you cannot use this to construct a knowledge about the particularity of certain practices, but they are more geared towards explaining a logic of social reproduction.

do so in respect to the ways in which people are made to give an account of themselves. It is then with this assertion – that it is particular practices, with their particular forms of relationality that constitute misrecognitions and miscounts – that we can start to better understand the role of Left/Right in political space.

While I have still to flesh out the exact aesthetic qualities of the space that Left/Right police, I have already tied it to a conception of rationalism that structures relationality in terms of arguments, opinions, beliefs, etc. With Rancière, I can then qualify this rationalism a bit further. Or rather, we can see that what, at a theoretical level, what is at stake is not so much the utterings of the arguments, opinions, beliefs, etc., themselves, but rather the prefiguring of the boundaries of rationalism that only allows certain expressions to appear rational to begin with. This is linked to the count of subject positions, in that only the expressions of certain, prefigured groups and interests can be deemed reasonable. But it is also linked to the form of the account given by those subject positions; a form which is amenable to their being. When I then argue that Left/Right are linked to rationalism, they are linked in the sense that they participate in the policing, or the prefiguring, of the boundaries of rationalism. And again, as this is a rationalism that forces subject positions to acknowledge their partiality to the system, it leaves subjects who consider themselves excluded or miscounted with no remedy to ameliorate the material situation which the miscount and the exclusion help engender. At least not through participation in said rationalism.

4.4. Left/Right, the police (ac)count and the distribution of the sensible

If we, with Rancière, acknowledge the validity of the (ac)count in relation to the distribution of the sensible, and if we explicitly adopt a focus on the space of the in-common – the space of the public – we come to the realisation that the Left and Right, in Rancièrian terms, have a policing function. When we remember that I criticised Downs and Riker for using Left/Right to explain politics but failing to explain Left/Right themselves, this criticism starts to function also as an example of the way in which Left/Right function to police. In our example, Downs and Riker erect a knowledge about politics, but that knowledge is exactly contingent on the particular distribution of the sensible that Left/Right enable.

With Rancière, then, we can say that Left/Right provide for an aestheticized apprehension of the political world. In other words, Left/Right enable us to become and identify members of the political community. With this argument, we can also shed some light on

some of the previous scholars that I have engaged. As stated, we start to see that Downs and Riker rely upon Left/Right to mark out a meta-space through which they can develop a knowledge of the voting behaviour of the whole, but we can now also understand many of the anthropological efforts to engage the meaning of Left/Right to be working to produce the means for a count of the political community. In a sense, even when Gauchet highlights the many different meanings that Left/Right has had in French political history, he too is enabling a count; and Bobbio, through whom we were first introduced to the concept of exclusion, also seeks to enable a count through his argument that Left/Right is about equality.[255] What this shows us is exactly that Left/Right function to create this illusion of the possibility of a perfect count. As such, they are markers of the police because through them we get a distribution of sensibilities that relate to a strictly political realm. It is in this sense that Left and Right themselves also become markers of identities.[256]

We have now arrived at a position that is very close to Dyrberg's. But Dyrberg, through Rawls, saw this dynamic as a positive feature of modernity. With Rancière, and previously with Mouffe, we however cannot be so sure. This is the case because, through marking out a realm that claims a dominance over politics; by distributing the sensible through its police (ac)count,[257] Left/Right effect an image of society that is absent "of void and of supplement".[258] Or rather, Left/Right function to annul the possibility of exclusion/miscounts and hence politics[259] – which, within all post-Marxist theory, exists not in the deliberation over the nature of the in-common[260] but in the putting into question of the very identity of the nature of the in-common, the very way in which 'politics'[261] is conducted.[262] Mouffe tends to see Left/Right as enabling inclusion and defusing

[255] Even if he argues that Left/Right need to be complimented with a freedom/authoritarianism axis.
[256] Even choice of dress can mark out a left-wing person from a right-wing people. This is of course obvious in some cases (with high-hats, berets, suits and the khăn rằn shale). Weal, Rory, 2015, 'Left wing people dress way better than right wing people – here's why', *The Cambridge Student*, 22 Jan, viewed 31 March, 2016, <http://www.tcs.cam.ac.uk/comment/0033612-left-wing-people-dress-way-better-than-right-wing-people-here-s-why.html>.
[257] This is a state of affairs that is reproduced, for example, during polling where respondents are asked to place themselves on the Left/Right scale.
[258] Rancière, 2010, p.36.
[259] Specific to Rancière, "The main concern […] is to 'resist the givenness of place' […] – that is, not to take as natural the distributions or partitionings of established orders." See Dikeç, 2013, p.82.
[260] Rancière, 1999, pp.9-10.
[261] Or, to Rancière, 'policy'. See Rancière, 1992, p.58.
[262] We must remember that even the strands of post-Marxism that centre around radical democracy, hospitality etc., i.e. around the possibility of letting the excluded parts in, require that the place of the 'in' (the place that excludes and into which inclusion is supposed to happen) be defined in relation to the negativity and the void/lack/non-being. See Marchart, Oliver, 2007, *Post-Foundational Political Thought: Political Difference in Nancy, Lefort, Badiou and Laclau*, Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh.

antagonisms, but insofar as we can plausibly reconceptualise the authors that I have engaged with thus far to utilise Left/Right as means to produce an (ac)count of a political realm and distribute sensibilities to that effect,[263] it is hard to see how we can comfortably endorse such a move.[264] In fact, Dyrberg, following Bobbio, even highlights how, in accordance with "classic logic", Left/Right in effect seal off a space:

> The Right/Left distinction follows the three laws in classical logic: the law of identity (A is A), the law of non-contradiction (nothing can be both A and not-A) and the law of the excluded middle (everything is either A or not-A). In other words, (1) Right and left are clearly defined political poles of identification; (2) poles of identification cannot be both right and left and (3) poles of identification are either right or left.[265]

Furthermore, Left/Right, like some kind of Xeno's paradox, are also infinitely divisible, meaning that a particular point can always be broken down and subdivided by using Left/Right as well. For example, while the UK Labour Party might be to the left of the UK Conservative Party, people still talk about a Labour Left and a Labour Right.[266] Dyrberg later asserts that Left/Right can be disrupted by other orientational metaphors,[267] and I have in the previous chapter argued that Left/Right provide for a constitutive openness to a

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[263] This is the case for Downs and Riker and the protagonists of the anthropological approach as well. And that does not really include the work that Left/Right perform in much of the political science that is explicitly reliant upon Downs. There Left/Right structure the site of politics in accordance with the police (ac)count and the distribution of the sensible. For an example, see Alonso, Sonia & de Fonseca, Saro Claro, 2012, 'Immigration, left and right', *Party Politics*, Vol. 18, No. 6, pp.865-884.This reliance on Left/Right is particularly prevalent in comparative politics. For a discussion on this, see Jahn, Detlef, 2010, 'Conceptualizing Left and Right in comparative politics: Towards a deductive approach', *Party Politics*, Vol. 17, No. 6, pp.745-765.

[264] This should not be taken to mean that we endorse criticism that seeks to assert that Mouffe (and Laclau) ontologizes agonism/radical democracy. See Barnett, Clive, 2004, 'Deconstructing radical democracy: articulation, representation, and being-with-others', *Political Geography*, Vol. 23, No. 5, pp.503-528. Thomassen has already engaged this claim (Thomassen, 2005) and has, in part, attributed such readings of Mouffe (and Laclau) to conceptual divides between political theory and political geography, just as Marchart did when Massey criticised Laclau. See footnote 240.

[265] Dyrberg, 2003, p.338.

[266] See, for example, Meredith, Stephen, 2019, ''Divided Within Itself': The Parliamentary Labour 'Right' and the Demise of Post-War Revisionist Social Democracy in the 1970s', *Parliamentary History*, Vol. 38, No. 2, pp.244-261.

[267] Dyrberg, 2003, p.339.

penetration of topics and themes. Yet, with Rancière, what is at stake is what happens prior to the point where modes of thinking are chosen between: the point of the distribution of the sensible. As I noted, Up/Down, Front/Back and In/Out are modes of thinking only. They are not *literally* in this world in the same way as Left/Right, which means that they are not able to effect their own distribution of the sensible. Yet, to simply argue that Left/Right thus have a police function and align them to all other kinds of established orders is also problematic, as different orders structure their terms of stability differently. In other words, we need to be able to theorise the extent of Left/Right's hegemony over political discourse, something that we can better accomplish through the work of Ernesto Laclau.

It is thus here that we leave Bobbio, Mouffe, Dyrberg, Dikeç and Rancière behind, as we have reached the point where different theorists can serve us better. We have, through the aforementioned theorists, acquired a deeper knowledge about space and identity and about the ways in which Left/Right function to construct both. Notably, we have arrived at the point where we need to acquire an aesthetic account of the in-common of politics. Dyrberg, who taught us so much, uses Rawls for such an account. To emphasise the ways in which justice and equality are made to work in contemporary society, I instead turn to Habermas, whose early work on the public sphere and later focus on deliberative democracy makes him a much better suited candidate to introduce us to such an account. I then turn to Laclau, not only to critique Habermas and engage post-Marxism more systematically, but also to give us an explicit account of hegemony and order so that I may better theorise the kind of whole of which Habermas provides us with an aesthetic account.

We have learned that Left/Right, in some form or another, function to reproduce aspects of (liberal) democracy, but after the next chapter, we will know more about which aspects are the subject of the reproduction, and how they relate to the order itself – which will put us in a better place to understand how radical politics can engage Left/Right with the greatest success.

4.5. Conclusion

In this section, I argued that both space and identity are discursive. I thus argued that space structures our apprehension of the world through a distribution of sensibilities that effect a recognition of differences, and that identities constitute those differences, becoming particular forms which can be reproduced through partaking in the space that is the in-common for those particularities. I used Rancière's two concepts of the distribution of the

sensible and the police to account for the function of Left/Right in modernity. I argued that the distribution of the sensible is the space of relationality that structures our apprehension of the world and that Left/Right are markers of the police, whose job it is to define the relationality of the parts of the space marked out by the distribution of the sensible. The police, and Left/Right through it, accomplishes this by constructing and counting particular parts/subject positions that become inhabitable by individuals, and by enabling these parts/subject positions to give an account of themselves that is particular.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I sought to engage democratic theory in order to better understand the ways in which Left/Right are constitutive of politics in modernity. To accomplish this, I examined Noberto Bobbio, Chantal Mouffe, Torben Dyrberg, Mustafa Dikeç and Jacques Rancière. I have argued that political space and identity are such that there is a proper form of political expression that subject positions must adopt in order to be counted and accounted for when the nature of political justice is engaged within the politics of modernity that is partly structured by the Left/Right spectrum. However, in order to partake in the in-common, subjects are made to express themselves in a manner that is specific. This means that exclusion can manifest itself in relation to the form of political expression that subject positions adopt, just as much as the way in which they may be consigned as *other* through more Mouffean conceptions of identity formations. Or rather, this means that the two modes of being that subject positions must relate to, the *arithmetic* and the *narrative*, are co-constitutive – you cannot subtract one from the other. If, as I have argued, Left/Right enable a count of the political community, they are then also caught up in the ways that subject positions are made to give an account of their being.

Now I seek to further our understanding of the aesthetic dimensions of political space through an engagement with Habermas, one of the most prominent theorists of the place of the public. With him, we encounter an engagement both with the concept of the public sphere and with the political deliberation that takes place within it. We see a theory outlined that seeks to regulate a sphere of politics within which political expression is made to appear in a manner that corresponds to rational-critical debate. With Habermas, then, we start to see the way in which Left/Right can work to reproduce liberal, democratic order through regulating political expression – making subject positions account for their being in relation to their partaking in the in-common in a manner that is particular, and, as such, in a manner that also engenders miscounts/exclusions:

> […] it is important to recognize the vicious circle that characterizes political philosophy; a vicious circle located in the link between the political relationship and the political subject. This vicious circle posits a way of life that is 'proper' to politics.[268]

[268] Rancière, Jacques, 2001, 'Ten Theses on Politics', translated by: Rachel Bowlby & Davide Panagia, *Theory & Event*, Vol. 5, No. 3, viewed 7 June, 2019, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/32639>.

Chapter 3: Political space in Habermas

1. Introduction

Left/Right are markers that enable the social body to represent itself to itself as one political community. They mark out and order a political space, and in so doing enable a variety of ways of being political while also excluding others. This is what **I** concluded in the last chapter. In this chapter I seek to learn more about political space and the ways in which subject positions can express themselves within it. I do this by examining the writings of Jürgen Habermas. Not only is Habermas one of the most influential thinkers on the 'public sphere', one of the names that I give this political space, but he also speaks to the categories of inclusion and exclusion as he forwards his normative theory for deliberative democracy. In this sense, he is the prime candidate to give us an account of political space that is situated within the enlightenment tradition – an account that I sought at the end of the last chapter.

Habermas' theory of democratic deliberation is centred around reason-giving arguments. He constructs a 'wild' political space that is saturated by arguments in the search for a rational consensus. It is rational insofar as arguments conform to the regulative ideals of "democracy, publicity, inclusion and egalitarianism"[269]. In this sense, it is a consensus that always sets out in search of its enlightenment foundations as it always seeks to engender more inclusion into the political space. This space, however, remains *one* as it is not only tied to democratic decision-making (i.e. legislation) but also because it qualifies legitimate political expression, requiring it to take the form of the reason-giving argument.

In the previous chapter, through Rancière, I noted that political space is formed by the police effecting a distribution of the sensible. It does this by counting the subject positions and enabling subject positions to express themselves in a way that is particular. In other words, the police functions to give form to subject positions.[270] In the previous chapter, I argued that Left/Right are categories of the police. As such, they map out the political space by distributing subject positions in relation to one another (arithmetic). However, as the police also functions to give expression to those political subject positions in a way that is particular (rather than universal), Left/Right then also become intertwined with this

[269] Thomassen, Lasse, 2008, *Deconstructing Habermas*, Routledge: New York, p.17.
[270] Ranciere does not actually use the phrase 'subject position', but in line with noted Rancierian scholar, Samuel Chambers, we think it can be read into his theory quite unproblematically. For example, see, Chambers, Samuel, 2013, *The Lessons of Ranciere*, Oxford University Press: New York, p.117.

mode of expression. In Habermas, this mode of expression is the reason-giving argument, which means that Left/Right might be said to not only structure reason-giving arguments but also bestow upon them a degree of legitimacy. This also means that other modes of expression cannot be heard equally and that the subject positions forwarding them cannot be counted to the same extent. Habermas then does provide us with a version of the interior of the Left/Right political space that I sought, yet, as we will see, we must go beyond him to theorise the hegemony of this space and its propensity for rupture and so also the ideological function of Left/Right.

In the first two sections of this chapter, I discuss the notion of the common good in Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Immanuel Kant. I do this to show some of Habermas' intellectual heritage and to ground the discussion in humanism, the ways in which we might be said to be different from each other, and how we can manifest difference in a public and political setting without arousing violence. I also discuss how Habermas avoids some of the more troubling aspects of Kant and Rousseau's theory while remaining within a humanist tradition that has 'reason' as a viable political concept. It is also here that I outline his idea of communicative action as a way to guarantee difference, inclusion and reason, all at the same time.

In the third section I engage the ways in which we might conceive of difference in Habermasian theory and note that the only really legitimate political difference between us can be a difference in argumentation. However, as this difference must make way for a consensus, the category of difference is found to be quite narrowly conceptualised.

After this, I square Habermas' account of the wild political public sphere with a concept of a constitutive open space, that nevertheless is only open to reason-giving arguments. From this, I integrate what we have learned about Left/Right and argue that they function well in relation to Habermasian political space to enable an identification of different reason-giving arguments to the different participant to democratic deliberation.

2. The common good in Rousseau and Kant

2.1. Introduction

In this section, I locate Habermas – and the question of political space – in a wider context, starting with Rousseau and Kant. I highlight their contribution to the conceptualisation of the innate *freedom* of the willing individual and the innate *equality* between human beings.

These are concepts which, more than any others, structure our democratic theory and which, as we have seen, are closely related to the thinking of Left/Right.

2.2. Rousseau

Before the social body started to represent itself to itself as a political community, before the advent of politics and the democratic revolution, the seeds of democracy in the West were being sown. As civil society started to come into its own, so too did a representation of those who inhabited this civil society – a new concept of the human being. Intellectually, Rousseau was at the forefront of these developments. He relied on a particular kind of humanism in his attempt to draft an early ideal of a political community. We see this with Kant's famous words that:

> I feel a great thirst for knowledge and an impatient eagerness to advance, also satisfaction at each progressive step. There was a time when I thought that all this could constitute the honor of humanity, and I despised the mob, which knows nothing about it. Rousseau set me straight. This dazzling excellence vanishes; I learn to honor men.[271]

At a time when the mob was often seen as just that, Rousseau discovered a value to the human in the mob. This value expressed itself through the notion of a will – a will that all individual human beings possessed.[272] As such, his arguments foreshadowed the way in which political order would one day acquire its legitimacy, not from the will of God, but from the will of the people. Before Ernst Kantorowicz and Claude Lefort had theorised the ultimate separation of the dual body for the king and the emergence of the empty seat of power, Rousseau was effecting it. Particularly relevant to Kant, Rousseau argued that this 'will' could act as a free "moral cause":[273] it was free as it resided in the human and was

[271] Kant, Immanuel cited in Stace, Walter T., 1949, 'The Need for a Secular Ethic', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientist*, Vol. 5, No. 6-7, pp.197-198, p.197.
[272] He derived this notion of will from the ideas of the divine will. See Riley, Patrick, 1978, 'The General Will before Rousseau', *Political Theory*, Vol. 6, No. 4, pp.485-516, p.486.
[273] Riley, Patrick, 1991, 'Rousseau's General Will: Freedom of a Particular Kind', *Political Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 1, pp.55-74, p.66. Rousseau was seen to take many positions on this, many of which ascribed the choice of the will to honour others as motived by sentiment, i.e. making it so that the will could not act as a moral cause in and of itself. No matter what, however, his establishment of the relative independence of the will was hugely significant for Kant.

thus not *necessarily* constrained by external factors and it could act as a moral cause as this freedom endowed it with qualities of a first mover, unaccountable to no one but itself. This capacity of the will was a capacity that was peculiar to the human species and endowed it with a status that was different to other beings.[274] As such, the honouring of the will became of supreme importance.

Rousseau argued that, "to deprive your will of all freedom is to deprive your actions of all morality".[275] With this, he tied politics to morality and the freedom of the will that it demanded. Yet, in Rousseau, the object of politics became to "generalize the will, so that it elects only law, citizenship and the common good, and avoids wilful self-love",[276] to establish a 'general will'.[277] Rousseau's idea of the political community, then, became lodged at the intersection of freedom and equality. Free will was equally possessed by all human beings but had to be directed at the establishment of a general will that would be concerned with the common good. This general will would be devoid of discord, and singular. The political community of Rousseau's dreams would then not need representation[278] and it would not be multiple. It would be an organic *one*.

The political community of Rousseau's thinking would be one in which human beings, imbued with value – thanks to their willing capacities – could have their differences annulled through the election of the general will: the space of the manifestation of the public then became the space in which it manifested its sameness. In this sense, while his thought was influential in establishing a base for the emergence of formal democratic institutions – and with them, a political community, his concept of politics remained something to be overcome. The establishment of the general will and the common good was of superior importance to the allowance for (political) discord. Interestingly, we find Marcel Gauchet's account of the prevalent economy of representation that characterised nineteenth century France echoed here. Politics was about the election of the general will, about the revelation of the unitary will of the people – which we, for example, see echoed in Rousseau's abhorrence of factions.[279] In this sense, while Rousseau was laying the

[274] Rousseau, after all, was one of the founders of modern Romanticism, which imbued the category of the human with a notion of spirituality. See Rousseau, Jacques, 1889, *Emile: Or, Concerning Education*, translated by: Eleanor Worthington, D. C. Heath & Company: Boston.
[275] Riley, 1991, p.55.
[276] Ibid., p.55.
[277] Ibid., p.55.
[278] Rousseau, Jacques, 2002, *The Social Contract and the First and Second Discourses*, translated by: Susan Dunn, Yale University Pres: New Haven, p.221.
[279] Ibid., p.173.

groundwork for the emptying of the place of power, he was not ready to embrace it. Rousseau's idea of the public space was a place of immanence and the realisation of the general will; it was a place where differences were not represented, but annulled. As such, there would be no room for Left/Right either, as they allude to a legitimate division within the political community.

2.3. Kant

It is from these observations, with regards to the supremacy of the will and an establishment of a general will preoccupied with the common good, that we can trace Kant's thoughts back to Rousseau. Yet, to Kant, one factor helped clarify the notion of the general will: the universal nature of 'reason' – that is, the ability to act according to what *ought* to be, rather than acting based purely on instincts, passions or indoctrination.[280] Throughout his life, Kant modified his account of human beings' access to Reason by moving from an earlier assertion that reason was just *there* for people to see, as a fact, to reason being something that was learned through socialisation.[281] Here, I work mostly with Kant's earlier notion of the "fact of reason",[282] as it is from this that Habermas draws inspiration.[283] It would, however, be controversial to paint him and/or Kant as pure rationalists.[284]

To Kant, Reason was universal and there to be apprehended as a fact. As such, it had to be located inside us, even if it could only be manifested in our relations to each other. Reason itself was not a manifest thing, but rather represented an ability to think about the common good, as it was through reason that one could understand that reason was located in all willing beings, in all human beings, and not just in oneself. It was through reason that the question of 'what is good for me?' became 'what is good for all of us?'. Reason taught humility and appreciation for peace and prosperity for all.[285] As such, it was

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[280] This was one argument that Rousseau never forwarded. Reason was never universal for Rousseau the way in which it was for Kant.
[281] For a debate on this, see Beck, Gunnar, 2006, 'Immanuel Kant's Theory of Rights', *Ratio Juris*, Vol. 19, No. 4, pp.371-401.
[282] Immanuel Kant cited in Riley, 1991, p.58.
[283] Thomassen, 2008, p.19. Even though later tenets of Kant's work are also clearly present in Habermas' writings.
[284] Much of *Deconstructing Habermas* implicitly deals with whether or not it is fair to label Habermas as a rationalist, which Thomassen implicitly argues that Mouffe does. See ibid., pp.24-27.
[285] "[R]eason from its throne of supreme morally legislating authority absolutely condemns war as a legal recourse and makes a state of peace a direct duty". Kant, Immanuel, 2017, *Towards Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*, pp.1-30, p.10, viewed 13 Feb, 2019, <https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/kant1795.pdf>.

reason that taught that all human beings are equal and, in some sense, the same: *one*. It was also reason that taught that the prosperity of people, the human beings, should be the end, not the means, of politics.[286] Like Rousseau, then, Kant was busy ensuring that the bond between the divine and the mortal was severed, so that the people could rule themselves. However, he too sought to fill the empty space with a positive concept: reason.

Reason, then, became inherently intertwined with morality and imposed moral duties on all of us.[287] These duties related to the ways in which we should relate to one another in accordance with the maxim that we should treat others as we would like to be treated ourselves, i.e. as equals. This concern could, in turn, only arise if a voluntary association of citizens were living together in a society free from coercion, so that the wills would be free to grasp the fact of reason. In this sense, the common good could only come about in a polis that was governed by Reason.

Kant's ideal political community thus became informed by a humanism that proclaimed all human beings to be equal and subsumable under the category of the human being 'as such'. This also meant that politics, for Kant, became a realisation of this freedom and equality between all human beings. The human being became his political subject, and it

[286] Kant, Immanuel, 2006, 'Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Perspective', in: Kleingeld, Pauline (ed.), *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace and History*, translated by: Pauline Kleingeld, Yale University Press: New Haven, pp.3-16.

[287] Reason, however, while being both there as a fact to the younger Kant and learned in the older Kant, required "understanding" to be grasped. Understanding, in Kant, is, "our active faculty for relating the data of intuition by thinking them under concepts". See Guyer, Paul & Wood, Allen, 1998, 'Introduction', in: Kant, Immanuel, *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated by: Paul Guyer & Allen Wood, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, pp.1-80, pp.6-7. As such, in *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant describes the ways in which human understanding exists, before external stimuli encounter it, as an a priori. Kant writes: "We can have synthetic cognition a priori about objects of experience, if [it] consists of principles of the possibility of experience". Cited in Guyer & Wood, 1998, pp.62-63. This meant that there are elements, be they cognitive or otherwise, which enable an understanding of external forces. This is a necessity for any sort of, not only order, but coherence. Importantly though, at least in the Kant of *The Critique*, things cannot be known outside of our sensibility. Yet, while we thus must have faculties that enable knowledge about external forces, the knowledge can only take shape qua the existence of our faculties. Importantly as well, these faculties are shared and present in human cognition as such. Equality and freedom are then, in both Kant and Rousseau, deeply intertwined and cannot be realised separately from one another.

took on this role qua the equal autonomy of our wills and our ability to reason.[288] We became the animal that can reason.[289]

Again, as with Rousseau, there is a problem in relation to the recognition of difference. Again, the political community in which the public was to manifest reason became one in which it realised and represented sameness, not difference. It follows that, again, Left/Right, would be meaningless signifiers in such a public community. As all would be subsumed under the rubric of the human being who is capable of reason, the political community – within which equality and freedom are to be realised – would, on a conceptual level, be a political community that relied on an *a priori*. In other words, it is already defined by Kant before it would have a chance to realise its own incongruence, leaving any deviance from the Kantian ideal a mistake, rather than a legitimate difference. If we look back at the previous chapter, we see that questions of identification, upon which Chantal Mouffe and Torben Dyrberg focused so heavily, are made null and void in Kant, as identification relies on representation while the reason of Kant's human being is immanent. This means that Kant (and Rousseau) also cannot theorise any sort of exclusion from the political community.

We can, of course, also still see Gauchet's description of the nineteenth century economy of representation echoed in this, as Kant's political community is one in which equality and freedom become subsumed under an underlying sameness that is asserted through his philosophical reasoning. There is no need for Left/Right as there is no difference. Left/Right work to legitimise a type of difference and make it intelligible in relation to a whole, but whatever difference that might exist in a Kantian world must be negated by objective moral principles. The place for politics that I opened with Lefort, Harold Mah and Gauchet is thus rapidly closed by Kant as people become enveloped in the immanence of reason.

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[288] Yet different emphases are placed on either the autonomy of the will or the ability to reason, depending on whether one looks at the earlier or the later Kant. In the earlier Kant, reason is not learned through socialisation, it is just there as a fact. In the later Kant, as socialisation begins to imply an accumulation and perfection of reason over a progression of time, reason itself becomes a driving force of history, rather than the human beings who tap into it every so often. It is also in this sense that the notion of the Enlightenment, or *Aufklärung*, acquires two different meanings; one is individual and one is social. See Riley, 1991. For an example of a later reading, see Kant, Immanuel, 1784, *What is Enlightenment*, translated by: Mary C. Smith, viewed 1 Sept, 2017, < http://www.columbia.edu/acis/ets/CCREAD/etscc/kant.html>.

[289] Kant, 2006, p.5.

2.4. Conclusion

In this section, we learned that Rousseau sees morality as dictating that we are all equal, but that this equality can only be realised if our wills are also free from coercion. Rousseau therefore strives for a community in which people will elect a general will. Expanding on this, Kant stresses the importance of reason. He argues that we have moral duties to treat others as we would want to be treated ourselves, that we all have *a priori* cognitive faculties that enable us to understand that. As such, he argues that politics should serve to advance the general prosperity of the human race. Both Rousseau and Kant thus saw politics, conceived as some kind legitimate discord about the in-common, as something to be overcome.

3. The common good in Habermas

3.1. Introduction

In this section, I start to engage Habermas. I first discuss the problems with the Rousseauian and Kantian approach in relation to the degree to which reason simply becomes a tool for the powerful to enforce norms. We then see Habermas acknowledge these shortcomings, but nevertheless seek to salvage the emancipatory potential of reason. He does this by stating that reason can only manifest itself intersubjectively, through communicative *processes* that seek to protect 'the forceless force of the better argument'. I nevertheless critique Habermas for failing to break decisively enough from the Kantian tradition, as his political subject, the emancipation of which becomes the goal of his imagined political community, remains located outside representation, and thus immanently graspable. That subject is the human being, defined through its ability to participate in the creation of a rational consensus.

3.2. The problems with reason

In Kant, the political subject was the human being. Human beings were now generating value, rather than their value being derived from something other. We all mattered innately and equally, and this made the establishment of a public reason the political (and moral) task *par excellence*. However, while adherence to reason leads us to a common good – at least insofar that we can ensure that it thrives – the question becomes one of *whose* common good that is. Is it only the smartest of us who are able to see reason most clearly, and if so, is it only the smartest of us who rule? If we do not all see reason in the same way, who is right and how is it decided? History is littered with cruel representations

and treatments of people who could and would not conform to what was deemed reasonable. In Kant, one could argue that reason promised to annul our differences as we learned the truth of it, yet, as the cruel treatment between supposed equals around the globe has shown, either human beings have failed to grasp reason satisfactorily and are thus still some way off the state of perpetual peace,[290] or Kant's theory requires modification.[291] Kant's political community that would be immanent to itself, without the need for representation, has then palpably failed to materialise. But even if it could, would we want it to?

Habermas does not deviate significantly from Kant's position, as the autonomous will has to remain for morality to still be a workable term.[292] For Habermas, it is only through Kant that we are able to avoid abject nihilism[293] and remain within the humanist tradition. Habermas, then, like Kant, subsumes politics under morality. Specifically, this means that his work is normative, and that he grounds his political theory in something on the basis of which knowledge can develop, but which knowledge also cannot explain: the sanctity of the human being. This grounding takes place within the realm of communication and language and sees his Kantian heritage take on an explicitly deliberative form. It does this so as to overcome the extreme rationalism that is arguably present in Kant and try to find a place for reason in a political community, without reason simply being what those who dominate say it is. In this sense, he attempts to insert a degree of representation into the

[290] Kant, 2017.

[291] These questions were clearly not lost on Kant, as he himself developed extremely racist ideas and sought to formulate them into coherent theory. See, for example, Kant, Immanuel, 2007, 'Of the Different Races of Human Beings', in: Louden, Robert (ed.), *Anthropology, History, and Education*, translated by: Günter Zoller & Robert B. Louden, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, pp.82–97. There is some debate over whether Kant's views on race implicated his philosophical insights. See, for example, Cash, Mason, 2002, 'Distancing Kantian Ethics and Politics from Kant's Views on Women', *Minerva: An Internet Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 6, pp.103-150. Pauline Kleingeld also contends that he changed his mind as he got older. See Kleingeld, Pauline, 2007, 'Kant's Second Thoughts on Race', *The Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 57, No. 229, pp.573-592. However, Bernard Boxill convincingly shows that it was no accident that these views sprang from Kant's writings. See Boxill, Bernard, 2017, 'Kantian Racism and Kantian Teleology', in: Zach, Naomi (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook on Philosophy and Race*, Oxford University Press: New York, pp.44-52. His views on women, sex and marriage has also appeared to some to reveal a "deep-seated conservative misogyny". See Cash, 2002, p.103. This has led Charles Mills, paraphrasing Schröder, to argue that Kant "arguably defines his terms so that being male is a prerequisite for full personhood". See Mills, Charles W., 2005, '"Ideal Theory" as Ideology', *Hypatia*, Vol. 20, No. 3, pp.165-184, p.179.

[292] Habermas, Jürgen, 2007, 'The Language Game of Responsible Agency and the Problem of Free Will: How can epistemic dualism be reconciled with ontological monism', *Philosophical Explorations*, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp.13-50, p.15. This does not mean that he views Rousseau unproblematically, however. See Habermas, Jürgen, 1992a, 'Further Reflections on the Public Sphere', in: Calhoun, Craig (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, The MIT Press: Cambridge, MA., pp.421-461, p.445.

[293] Habermas cited in Thomassen, 2008, p.19.

Kantian conception of the political community, while nevertheless retaining reason as a workable concept.

Habermas accomplishes this adaptation of Kantian theory to a more discursively focused theory by asserting that reason can only manifest itself in communication that presupposes the inherent freedom and equality between its participants. In this sense, we cannot say what is reasonable prior to the establishment of the deliberative consensus.[294] While the sanctity of the human being remains beyond reproach, in Habermas, it is no longer possible for the philosopher to decree the level of reason that any given person has obtained. Reason can now only be manifested in language, i.e. intersubjectively, which means that human beings are no longer privileged because we can access reason, but because we can access language. The human being morphs from the animal that can reason, to the animal that can communicate. As this happens, a notion of plurality and difference also emerges from this type of "detranscendentalization", as:

> […] the transcendental subject loses its position outside time and space and is [instead] transformed into a multitude of subjects capable of speech and action.[295]

It is in this sense that, in Habermas, political difference truly comes into its own in relation to Kantian theory. Certainly, speech must honour the freedom and equality of the human being to be considered capable of bringing about a rational consensus and it must adhere to the principle of universalisation,[296] but Habermas still breaks with the Cartesian subject-centred philosophy that otherwise held Kant (and Rousseau) back. In this sense, he can be perceived as being somewhat aligned with more recent post-structuralist thinkers who otherwise critique him for being too rationalist.[297]

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[294] Habermas maintains that there is an always-already, implicitly formed background consensus within which we interact with each other. Here, meaning is established before the willing individual encounters it.

[295] Habermas, Jürgen, 2001a, 'From Kant's "Ideas" of Pure Reason to the "Idealizing" Presuppositions of Communicative Action: Reflections on the Detranscendentalized "Use of Reason"', in: Rehg, William & Bohman, James (eds.), MIT Press: Cambridge, MA, pp.11-40, p.16.

[296] Habermas, Jürgen, 1990, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, translated by: Christian Lenhardt & Shierry Weber Nicholsen, Polity Press: Cambridge, p.116.

[297] For two such readings see Mouffe, 2005, pp.83-89, and Laclau, Ernesto, 1997, 'The Death and Resurrection of the Theory of Ideology', *MLN*, Vol. 112, No. 3, pp.297-231, pp.307-308.

It is in and through language that the political community must realise the promises of freedom and equality. This, of course, does not mean that Habermas only thinks that one discursive space exists, or that there can be no exclusion from this space.[298] Indeed, the political space that presents itself as the political community is never neutral as it is always informed by an already established consensus. As such, we enter communication, not from a vacuum, but from within a background consensus that contains within it its own rules and its own notion of morality – in the sense that notions of right and wrong are embedded within it – and its own ethics – in the sense that certain worldviews have more prevalence than others.[299] Members of the political community, then, do not enter into communication from disparate positions but from a consensus about the world which human beings must continue to inform an understanding of and influence through more communication.[300] For his political community, this of course has the peculiar effect that the human species must be *one* before it can scatter and become different. In other words, difference is not constitutive of the human species. Rather, humans are the same before we can even begin to talk about our differences and we would have to be the same in order to talk about them to begin with.

3.3. The way past the problems: communicative reason

We then start with a consensus, but through speech acts, this consensus is also disrupted and disputed. Notably, Habermas contends that speech acts contain validity claims,[301] understood primarily as claims to truth and moral rightness.[302] These validity claims both originate within and break from the consensus, even if they, qua their being as speech acts, also point towards a renewed consensus.[303] Importantly, for Habermas, engaging J. L. Austin, these speech acts can be illocutionary, meaning that they can be formed with a "communicative intent",[304] where "the meaning of what is said"[305] forms the basis of the communication. This means that a sincerity is inherent to the act. To Habermas, the making

[298] Habermas, 1992a, p.425.
[299] Insofar as this does not refer to his work on the linguistic necessity of this assumption, see his work on the lifeworld/system distinction that he develops fully in Habermas, Jürgen, 1987, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol 2.*, translated by: Thomas McCarthy, Polity Press: Cambridge.
[300] Ibid., p.220.
[301] See Niemi, Jari I., 2005, 'Habermas and validity claims', *International Journal of Philosophical studies*', Vol. 13, No. 2, pp.227-244 for a discussion.
[302] Thomassen, 2008, p.17.
[303] Ibid., p.17.
[304] Habermas, Jürgen, 1984, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol 1.*, translated by: Thomas McCarthy, Heinemann: London, p.289.
[305] Ibid., 1984, p.289.

of these speech acts is normative in nature, as they then presuppose a reciprocity on behalf of the people who are also engaged in the communication.[306] The adjudications of social norms and morals can thus be removed from the purview of philosophers, as they can still find reasonable resolutions insofar that the communication in which that takes place is in accordance with ideal procedures.[307] Reason, which remains tied to morality, can then find expression intersubjectively, because the use of language has some particular features that are tailored towards unprejudiced mutual understanding.[308]

For this type of discourse ethics to be workable, however, some more concrete features also remain. For example, it still involves some form of reason-giving account for validity claims. A consensus cannot be reasonable if it has not been formed by reasons. The extent to which this consensus is rational, however, depends on the quality of the reasons given. Habermas elaborates in the following on the ideal procedures required for such a rational consensus to come about:

> Whoever takes part in moral argumentation must be able to assume that certain pragmatic presuppositions are sufficiently fulfilled, that is, that the practice of reaching understanding is public, is universally accessible, is free of external and internal violence, and permits only the rationally motivating force of the better argument.[309]

In order for a rational consensus to develop, certain procedures for communication must then be met. Lasse Thomassen refers to these as "democracy, publicity, inclusion and egalitarianism".[310] These are then regulative ideals that provide the grounding for a vision of society in which communication between all informs power, rather than "money and

[306] Habermas, 1990, p.130.
[307] Ibid., 1990, p.122.
[308] While we do not get into the philosophical roots of this argument here, we can note that Habermas maintains that, "the moral point of view is already implicit in the socio-ontological constitution of the public practice of argumentation, comprising the complex relations of mutual recognition that participants in rational discourse 'must' accept (in the sense of weak transcendental necessity)". Habermas, Jürgen, 1995, 'Reconciliation Through the Public use of Reason: Remarks on Rawls's Political Liberalism', *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 92, No. 3, pp.109-131, p.127.
[309] Habermas, Jürgen, 1996, *Between Facts and Norms*, translated by: William Rehg, Polity Press: Cambridge, p.182.
[310] Thomassen, 2008, p.17.

administrative power"[311] deciding how the 'lifeworld' should be organised. Habermas' vision for the political community is thus a democratic vision that circumscribes a notion of the common good through the ability for all to decide what is good for all.[312]

We therefore find the notion of the common good lodged in relation to the notion of communication. Communication should ideally fulfil certain criteria, but the common good is realised, when the political public sphere, the sphere of communication where the political community is manifested, produces communication that enables "new problem situations" to be perceived,[313] which can then be acted on politically. This implies a structural relationship between the legislative sphere and the political public sphere – or, the sphere of political communication – in which the legislative sphere is supervised and overseen by the political public sphere rather than being beholden to money or bureaucracy. We might even qualify this legislative sphere as forming an institutionalised aspect of the public sphere, which secures that the otherwise wild and unruly public sphere can have an impact on decision making.[314]

However, Habermas' vision of the common good remains focused on the realisation of the political community as a *one*, not only because – despite talk of the political public sphere as being wild and unruly – he still refers to it in the singular,[315] but also because his theory of communicative action remains couched in the belief that consensus is generative and difference derivative – a belief derived from the conceptualisation of the human being as necessarily *the same*. Habermas criticised the noted Kantian scholar, Dieter Hamann, for forwarding an unapologetically subject-based philosophy and, in the process, disregarding the critique levelled against Kant by the champions of the primacy of language (and discourse).[316] Yet, the political subject, for Habermas, remains located outside of discourse and immanently present; it is the human being. This is the case as the human being, unlike all other animals, always-already exists as part of a community of language users – as part

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[311] Habermas, 1992a, p.444.

[312] Much of Habermas' writing is lodged at the intersection of law and democracy as we need law to protect and enable democratic processes, but at the same time we require for those laws to be democratically decided upon. This apparent conundrum is not explicitly discussed here, but it has caused ample debate in many other places. See, for example, Habermas, Jürgen, 2001, 'Constitutional Democracy: A Paradoxical Union of Contradictory Principles?', translated by: William Rehg, *Political Theory*, Vol. 29, No. 6, pp.766-781.

[313] Habermas, 1996, p.308.

[314] Ibid., p.307.

[315] This is evident throughout his writings.

[316] Velkley, Richard L., 1994, 'Introduction', in: Velkley, Richard L. (ed.), *The Unity of Reason: Essays on Kant's Philosophy*, translated by: Jeffrey Edwards, Louis Hunt, Manfred Kuehn & Guenter Zoeller, Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA., pp.1-16, p.5.

of a community within which a code of ethics, a worldview, is defined intersubjectively. There may be more than one community and people can co-exist in many communities at once, yet the human being remains located outside of language (and discourse). Habermas' political project thus becomes one of emancipation of human beings. It is a deeply humanist project. Yet, it is a project in which the finer nuances of that emancipation must remain democratically defined.[317] He lodges the common good in communication and posits a theory of communicative action that raises a regulative ideal for rational arguments that can lead to rational consensuses. However, those consensuses can only be rational insofar that they are children of the contexts within which they have been formulated (and, as such, will always be in need of reformulation once the context shifts).[318] Habermas' political community, while requiring representation in order to make sense of the world, and while requiring language and discourse in order to come to an idea of what the political community *is*, must then be steered towards a particular type of language via the regulative procedures that I outlined above, in order to be rational and *good*. Importantly, the criteria for this goodness remains located outside language, outside representation, and is instead immanently present in the form of the physical manifestation of the human being, who simply *is*.

One repercussion of this idea – locating the political subject outside of discourse – is that it implies a notion of difference that, while pivotal to rational communication, is ultimately subsumed by a forced designation of the human being as the political subject.[319] In this sense, difference is always only a pathway to consensus, a flaw that is necessary only because it enables clarity. Despite the focus on communication and deliberation, difference remains a mistake to be corrected.

Within the problematic that I outlined with Lefort, we might then argue that Habermas struggles to come to terms with the emptiness of the place of power as he, in forwarding a

[317] This also leaves him with a peculiar definition of progress, which raises further doubt as to the extent to which one can place him in a liberal camp. For it sees him ascribe to the necessity of an idea of progress, yet denounce the implicit notion of an increased perfection inherent to the idea of progress.

[318] See Habermas, 1996, pp.132-193. We subsume a rather substantive amount of Habermas' thought in this brief sentence and quote. As this thesis is focused on Habermas' notion of deliberative democracy in relation to its spatial dimensions, an engagement with the gap between legality and legitimacy is simply beyond its scope.

[319] See Wagner, Gerhard & Zipprian, Heinz, 1991, 'Intersubjectivity and critical consciousness: Remarks on Habermas's theory of communicative action', *Inquiry*, Vol. 34, No. 1, pp.49-62, for how Habermas fails to complete the discursive turn and some of the consequences this can be said to have.

specific conception of the human being vis-à-vis language, effects an identification of the procedures necessary to bring about the immanence of 'the people' – the political category *par excellence*. This allows us to productively map Habermas onto our discussion about Left/Right. For, in one way, Left/Right emerged under the condition of the empty place of power that engendered a constitutive division within the political community. In this sense, Left/Right require difference in order to function. In another way, however, Left/Right enable an identification with a whole; they refer to an overarching totality, just as Habermas refers to inter-subjective reason as bridging the gap between difference and constituting the human being.

3.4. Conclusion

In this section, we saw how Habermas moves past Kant's subject-centred philosophy to establish that reason can only be manifested intersubjectively. In doing so, he envisions a political space in which the public can come together to define the contours of human emancipation. Habermas makes room for representation to a different degree than Rousseau and Kant as he asserts that any consensus to deliberation must adhere to the overall mantra that only the forceless force of the better argument should rule. However, as I noted that he still locates the source of this rationality in a conception of the human being that is established outside of discourse itself, and is thus beyond reproach, his political theory comes to a halt at that point. Most notably, this shows us that the concept of difference, while necessary for reason to be inter-subjective, must have a limit to be viable.

4. Difference in Habermas

4.1. Introduction

In this section, I argue that political difference, in Habermas, manifests itself in at least two different senses in his theory of communicative action. In the first sense, difference can be articulated in terms of ethical worldviews, or, taking from John Rawls, as comprehensive doctrines.[320] In the second sense, within the formulation of the rational consensus, it is only through difference (or negation) that consensus, viewed as a synthesis, can be accomplished. This second difference is a difference between arguments. Overall, Habermas only allows for political difference in the political community to express itself

[320] Habermas, 1995, p.124. Habermas here uses the term 'worldviews' in place of Rawls' 'comprehensive doctrines' in a discussion otherwise revolving around the consequences of using the term 'reasonable' to qualify validity claims.

insofar as it takes the form of reason-giving arguments, arguing that reasons derived from ethical worldviews must be translated into political reasons in order to engender a rational consensus.

4.2. The difference between worldviews

In Habermas' theory of communicative action, there might be said to be two distinct types of differences. This is important as we need to excavate a notion of difference to be able to give a Habermasian reading of the Left/Right spectrum. The first difference can be said to be differences between ethical worldviews – which are comprised mainly of religions and cultures. These worldviews, beyond the fact that "they offer interpretations of the world as a whole",[321] create values which take as their political subjects something that is at odds with the political subject as the human being itself:

> It belongs to the religious convictions of a good many religious people in our society that they ought to base their decisions concerning fundamental issues of justice on their religious convictions. They do not view it as an option whether or not to do it.[322]

As such, religious reasons often limit the scope of who counts (i.e. non-believers often count less than believers). In narrowing their concept of the political subject in this way, they fall foul of the ideal of universalism that Habermas takes from Kant (and the Enlightenment more broadly) and that acts as the bedrock upon which freedom and equality work. To be rational, the political community must be a community of equals, the forwarding of whose freedoms and equality must be the object of the conversation.

In his later writings, Habermas acknowledges the validity of the existence of these types of differences, and even argues that religious reasons must be accepted in the political public sphere.[323] However, as the political public sphere links up with other democratic institutions, such as parliaments, which must remain neutral in relation to different

[321] Ibid., p.126.
[322] Wolterstorff cited in Habermas, Jürgen, 2006, 'Religion in the Public Sphere', *European Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 12, No. 1, pp.1-25, p.8.
[323] Habermas, 2006, p.10.

conceptions of 'the good life', it is important that these reasons are also translated into "post-secular" reasons,[324] and that this is done in the political public sphere itself.[325] In other words, reasons must eventually be given that address the common good on the basis of a common equality and freedom: they must be political reasons, not cultural or religious reasons. In this first sense, then, difference might be conceptualised as a difference in values (or ontologies). Within a Habermasian conception of the common good, however, these differences must ultimately not be political; they may not carry undue weight in the search for a rational consensus. Unlike Rawls, then, Habermas does not seek the exclusion of religious reasons from the political public sphere, even though he does establish a hierarchy between modes of reasoning.[326]

4.3. The difference between arguments

In the second sense, within the formulation of the rational consensus, it is only through difference that the rational consensus can be accomplished. As much as rational consensus – the synthesis of arguments – is the goal of communication, it can only come about through arguments – arguments that necessarily express different things. This is not a difference between people or between values, it is a difference in arguments – a difference that holds the promise of its negation. Indeed, in Habermas, difference would be worthless without this promise. Yet, even if I speak here about this difference in terms of arguments, in a 'real world' context, this does not express itself in clearly delineated conversations. For, contrary to Habermas' earliest writings,[327] he later argues that the political public sphere (which is the name for his idea of the political community) is not neatly structured with everyone expressing themselves in a similar fashion. Indeed, he rather more recently claimed that the political public sphere is "wild":

> The currents of public communication are channelled by mass media and flow through different publics that develop informally

[324] See Habermas, Jürgen, 2003, *The Future of Human Nature*, translated by: William Rehg, Max Pensky & Hella Beister, Polity Press: Cambridge, pp.101-115 for further discussions on the post-secular society.
[325] Habermas, 2006, p.10.
[326] Thomassen, 2006, pp.74-75.
[327] Habermas, Jürgen, 1992b, *The Structural Transformation of the Bourgeois Public Sphere*, translated by: Thomas Burger & Frederick Lawrence, Polity Press: Cambridge.

> inside associations. Taken together, they form a "wild" complex that resists organization as a whole.[328]

It is wild in the sense that there are many different publics that express themselves differently and do not necessarily engage in formally structured conversations, but instead "[resist] organisation as a whole". Yet, of course, the arguments must still conform to a communicative reason that is regulated by the ideals of 'democracy, publicity, inclusion and egalitarianism' that I outlined in the previous section.[329]

This conceptualisation requires that we think in a more nuanced way about what it means to 'argue' or 'give reasons'. Indeed, both civil disobedience and newspaper punditry could be conceptualised as containing reason-giving political arguments.[330] Focusing on civil disobedience, Thomassen thus argues that, to Habermas:

> Civil disobedience is an extension of public deliberation with different means, and the act of civil disobedience should, according to Habermas, be understood on the model of a public argument.[331]

This form of ideal political participation (the argument) merits further investigation, for it is the form that Habermas proposes that the political community should take. For example, an argument is different to an 'opinion', a 'belief', etc. One thing that makes 'the argument' stand out is its ability to convey rational-critical reasons. The ideal of the rational consensus thus implicitly demands that engagement with the political public sphere must take the

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[328] Habermas, 1996, p.307.
[329] It is also through these tenets that we can legitimately exclude systemically distorted communication. See Habermas, Jürgen, 2008, 'On systematically distorted communication', *Inquiry*, Vol. 13, No. 1-4, pp.205-218.
[330] For the most sustained account of Habermas' thoughts on civil disobedience, see Habermas, Jürgen, 1985, 'Civil Disobedience: Litmus Test for the Democratic Constitutional State', translated by: John Torpey, *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 30, pp.95-116.
[331] Thomassen, Lasse, 2007, 'Within the Limits of Deliberative Reason Alone: Habermas, Civil Disobedience and Constitutional Democracy', *European Journal of Political Theory*, Vol. 6, No. 2, pp.200-218, p.202.

form of arguments;[332] we can be heard and be justly evaluated in the political community if we can supply (good) reasons.

There exists some secondary literature specifically in relation to civil disobedience and the extent to which, in Habermas, "civil disobedience is simply an additional device that helps the consensus machine grind up the rough material of political life".[333] This debate is centred around the constitutional context that rational deliberation must reconstruct and the degree to which civil disobedience is a participant in this process or marks a break from this process through seeking to "interpret the system of rights better"[334] than the aforementioned 'context' allowed.[335] While engaging, this debate is beyond the scope of this thesis. Habermas also construes of civil disobedience as "a symbolic appeal to a majority which is of a different opinion"[336] – thus identifying some sort of participation in rational discourse with an expression that is symbolic and not necessarily argumentative – but civil disobedience remains an outlier in relation to the ideal function of the public sphere.[337] As such, I do not see it as an overly problematic assertion that Habermas' ideal political community is structured around reason-giving arguments emanating from a 'wild' public sphere.[338]

[332] This why Thomassen refers to this problem of the conceptualisation of the argument in relation to that of civil disobedience as a source of ambiguity in Habermas that reveals an aporia in Habermas' normative writings. See Thomassen, 2007 & Thomassen, 2006, pp.113-116.
[333] White, Stephen K. & Farr, Robert Evan, 2012, '"No-Saying" in Habermas', *Political Theory*, Vol. 40, No. 1, pp.32-57, p.40. This is a reply to Thomassen, 2007. See also Thomassen, Lasse, 2013, 'Communicative Reason, Deconstruction, and Foundationalism: Reply to White and Farr', Vol. 41, No. 3, pp.482-488; and White, Stephen K. & Farr, 2013, 'Reply to Thomassen', *Political Theory*, Vol. 41, No. 3, pp.489-491.
[334] Habermas cited in Thomassen, 2007, p.205.
[335] See footnote 312.
[336] Habermas cited in Nielsen, Torben Hviid & Habermas, Jürgen, 1990, 'Jürgen Habermas: Morality, Society and Ethics: An Interview with Torben Hviid Nielsen', *Acta Sociologica*, Vol. 33, No. 2, pp.93-114, p.108.
[337] This relates to the degree to which we should read Habermas as an agonist. See footnote 375. White & Farr, 2012 argue that even though Habermas only speaks rarely to civil disobedience, it is actually a central concept to his theory, which is why they read him more as an agonist. However, as Habermas has had ample opportunity to address civil disobedience and yet has remained relatively silent, to represent it as central to his writings seems a stretch.
[338] This is, of course, a different way of viewing argumentation than how it was portrayed in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. There, argumentation took place in the coffeehouses and salons, and in the political journals; i.e. it had a formal character. In that book, Habermas asserted that the capitalist mode of production, along with the extension of the suffrage to the working class, together with a commodification of media content, caused the public sphere to degrade and the process of rational reason-giving to be obfuscated. See Habermas, 1992b, pp.181-235.

4.4. The limit to difference

To Habermas, the human species, existing always-already within a linguistic community, is made up of individuals. These individuals then engage in arguments that are rational to various degrees and have ethical beliefs that may or may not be favoured in a Habermasian conception of rational deliberation. Individuals may have different opinions, but individuals themselves are not different. Rather, they are the parts that make up 'the people', the category that furnishes democracy with legitimacy. It may be that the conception of the human being has changed a bit from Rousseau to Kant to Habermas, but the human being remains *One*, definable and knowable qua the *a priori*. To Habermas, if it was not so, it could not fulfil its purpose as the political subject. A negation of this understanding cannot be considered rational in a Habermasian system of rational deliberation as it undermines the assumption that underpins the whole framework.[339] As such, while this definition should be democratically negotiable, the framework would collapse if it was eroded.[340] We are thus left with the only conceivably legitimate difference as being one of a difference between arguments. Those different arguments must in turn be seen as enabling their own negation through the establishment of consensus, leaving the realm of politics devoid of difference altogether.

In one sense, different ways of being are thus acknowledged, in the form of ethical worldviews, but only to be told that they must translate their reason-giving incursions into the public sphere into distinctly political reasons, while in another sense, another kind of difference is artificially erected (in the form of arguments), but only so that it can forge a *one* – in which difference disappears once again. It may be that consensuses will always need to be renewed, but the syntheses of arguments remain the goal of every discussion.

As we shall see, Left/Right, operating at the level of representation, provide a way for us to distinguish between different arguments made by people who are otherwise similar and immanently present. But this particular conception of political difference also comes with some problems, as it makes us unable to think of exclusion as constitutive – as I did with Mouffe and Rancière in the previous chapter. For insofar that the political community is *one*, it will also have an identity. To Habermas, this identity is a humanist one, yet, as William Connolly remarks, we must reject the drive to "equate concern for human dignity

[339] Framework should here be read in the softest of ways.
[340] Habermas, in a roundabout way acknowledging this, asks that we must envision a founding peace, in which the founders of this constitutional project agreed on things in a perfectly equal and free context. See Habermas, 2001.

with a quest for rational consensus",[341] as it makes us unable to think of the *other* of the representation of the identity – of which, as we shall see, rational consensus has a few.

4.5. Conclusion

In this section I discussed the two differences relative to Habermas' working on communicative reason and the democratic project embedded within it. The first difference was related to ethical worldviews. This is a difference between values and acknowledged as valid in Habermas' ideal political community, even if argues that those values must translate into political reasons in the political public sphere. The second difference is the difference between arguments that conform to the principles of communicative reason. These arguments strive for understanding and lead to engagement that ultimately engenders consensus. This is not a permanent consensus but one that changes as the contexts in which they are formed change.

5. The political public sphere as political space

5.1. Introduction

In this section, I engage Habermas' concept of the public sphere. When it comes to a conception of the public sphere, Habermas wrote the most influential book about it – the seminal *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962). This section engages this book along with his newer thoughts on the public sphere, published in 1992. I sum up his key arguments before I reconceptualise the public sphere as political space.

5.2. Habermas's political public sphere

In *The Structural Transformation*, Habermas provides a very critical account of the public sphere. Nevertheless, according to Habermas, the public sphere got off to a promising start. Following from the introduction of the public sphere of letters, the political public sphere developed. It was mostly comprised of bourgeois men, who met as private individuals in coffeehouses and salons to form a critically debating public. The main function of this gathering was for the participants to assert themselves as *the people*, demanding their concerns be judged as the legitimising function of the political order. Yet this was, of course, a fantasy, as many groups of people could not participate in this public sphere due to a lack of status. Habermas writes that:

[341] Connolly, William, 1991, *Identity Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox*, University of Minnesota Press: Minnesota, p.x.

> The fully developed Bourgeois Public Sphere was based on the fictitious identity of the two roles assumed by the privatized individuals who came together to form a public: the role of property owners and the role of human beings pure and simple.[342]

What he here remarks upon is the way in which the universality of the human is eroded through the qualification of this being as property-owning. It is in this sense that it was fictitious. However, this fiction could be excused since that public had a function in relation to the emerging democratic order:

> The acceptance of the fiction of the one public […] was facilitated above all by the fact that it actually had positive functions in the context of the political emancipation of civil society from mercantilist rule and from absolutistic regimentation in general. Because it turned the principle of publicity against the established authorities[.][343]

We thus encounter the concept of publicity again, which also features heavily in *The Structural Transformation*. As we remember from Ernst Kantorowicz, and which Habermas also highlights, the body of the king was equated with the people through his publicity, his immersion in ritual practices presented to the masses. It is in this sense that Habermas first saw a real value to the establishment of a public sphere. For it staged another practice – public deliberation – which eroded the ability of the body of the king to be identified with the conversing crowd, because the deliberation was about the common good and was conducted by members of the public, and not by the king. To be sure, this political public sphere was a deliberative space filled with private *individuals*, not communities, but it was also a sphere dedicated to asserting itself as the sole legitimizing organ.

[342] Habermas, 1992b, p.56.
[343] Ibid., p.56.

Habermas later goes on to chart its erosion as he argues that, since the introduction of expanded and then universal suffrage, what made rational-critical debate in the public sphere possible had been undermined and slowly replaced by a public sphere in which news stood in for debate; in which people were spoken to – the words of the speech consumed and consequently forgotten; in which publicity was no longer strived towards by private citizens, but rather by groups, institutions and the state in order to make institutional interests palatable to the citizenry – the mass:

> The mass press was based on the commercialization of the participation in the public sphere on the part of broad strata designed predominantly to give the masses in general access to the public sphere. The expanded public sphere, however, lost its political character to the extent that the means of "psychological facilitation" could become an end in itself for a commercially fostered consumer attitude.[344]

As a result, it became "a public sphere in appearance only",[345] where individuals would consume its products to satisfy leisurely needs, which coincided with publicity being "generated from above, so to speak, in order to create an aura of good will for certain positions".[346] As such,"[c]ritical publicity [became] supplanted by manipulative publicity".[347]

It is difficult not to think of Gauchet's concept of the citizen-voter in relation to Habermas' deprecating comments on the erosion of the public sphere. In Gauchet, the citizen-analyst emerged once the citizen, with the advent and legitimisation of political parties, became once removed from the doing of politics. Gauchet did not seem concerned about this development as we instead saw in it a move towards a more identity-based politics. Habermas, however, decries the passivity that it engendered in individual citizens.[348] As such, without a return to a critical publicity on behalf of a rational-critical debating public,

[344] Habermas, 1992b, p.169. Habermas was of course working in the tradition of the Frankfurt School, which he references frequently. For example, see Habermas, 1996, p.377, where he notes the continued relevance of the culture industry. See Adorno, Theodor W., 1991, *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, Routledge: London.
[345] Habermas, 1992b, p.171.
[346] Ibid., p.178.
[347] Ibid., p.179.
[348] Ibid., p.217.

Habermas bemoans the prospects for domination and power ever becoming completely subjected to what he deems a substantive notion of democracy – a notion of democracy that is decidedly deliberative. This difference between Gauchet (and Mouffe and Rancière for that matter) and Habermas can, however, be read also in terms of their different approach to the concept of representation. To Gauchet, who has embraced the discursive turn, identity takes the place of the human being – and identity is always a representation. As such, there is no humanist utopia in sight for Gauchet as we instead live in a world that is made of conflict and where the best we can hope for is a representational space in which difference can be allowed to express itself as free from oppression as possible. For Habermas, we must conceive of representation in more conventional terms in the form of people's representatives, as members of parliaments, or deputies of the National Constituent Assembly. He would of course not subscribe to a notion of the will of the people – as Gauchet claims was inscribed in the economy of representation that preceded the one from which the citizen-voter emerged – but his theory remains tied to the idea of consensus and the idea that difference between human beings is ultimately a misrecognition. Representation is thus seen more as a mode through which consensus can be acted upon than a part of discourse itself. In Habermas, questions of representation of identity are thus also consigned to the realm of the non-political and must not be brought to bear on political reason-giving. This is the case as:

> The identity of a group refers to the situations in which the members can utter an emphatic "we"; it is not an ego identity writ large but rather supplements the individual's identity. How we make our native traditions and forms of life our own by selectively developing them determines who we recognize ourselves to be in these cultural transmissions – who we are and would like to be as citizens. Serious value decisions result from, and change with, the politicocultural self-understanding of a historical community. Enlightenment over this self-understanding is achieved through a hermeneutics that critically appropriates traditions and thereby assists in the intersubjective reassurance

> or renovation of authentic life orientations and deeply held values.[349]

With Mouffe, we learned that the individual was a site for collective identification: the ego-identity was never autonomous from ideology. With Habermas, however, the individual has agency beyond that. As we see here, Habermas leaves a lot more room for the ability of individuals to be critical in relation to cultural traditions,[350] as the collective identity supplements the identity of the individual rather than constituting it. It is this move that allows for the possibility of the individual to enter into a deliberation that is rational in order to self-realize an understanding of ourselves as human beings.

Despite their differences, however, the subject of Habermas' political public sphere and Gauchet's citizen-voter have much in common. Notably, both recognise their partiality to an overarching system and as such acknowledge a lack of immanence to their political expressions. To Gauchet, this system is simply the political landscape of which the citizen-voter is both a part and an observer. To Habermas, this system is the political public sphere and its procedures. The point is that the procedures of Habermas political public sphere engender a similar type of political expression from its subjects as Gauchet's citizen-voter – even if Gauchet does not qualify this system to nearly the same extent as Habermas does. For in both cases, there is a recognition of a difference to one's own expression. If you forward a reason-giving argument, there is a recognition of disputing arguments. This is as necessary for the rational consensus as it is for the ability of the citizen-voter to place itself on the political landscape that the arguments fill out. It is in this sense that the expressions are not immediately immanent to the system but instead depend on expressions with a different content.

Indeed, this is why Gauchet's citizen-voter reached for Left/Right, it is why we can read Left/Right into Habermas' writings and, incidentally, also why Dyrberg used Rawls, with his focus on anti-perfectionism, to account for a politics to work with Left/Right.[351] We might argue that the subject of Habermas' deteriorated political public sphere is most akin to

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[349] Habermas, 1996, p.160. Habermas makes a similar observation in Habermas, Jürgen, 1974, 'On Social Identity', *Telos: Critical Theory of the Contemporary*, Vol. 19, pp. 91-103, p.102.
[350] See also Anderson, Joel, 2014, 'Autonomy, Agency and the Self', in: Fultner, Barbara (ed.), *Jürgen Habermas: Key Concepts*, Routledge: London, pp.91-112, for a treatment of the place of the individual in relation to inter-subjectivity and society writ large.
[351] Dyrberg, 2006, pp. 173-4.

Gauchet's citizen-voter as they are both positioned as spectators to politics – something Habermas counterposes to the rational-critical debating subject. But both the subjects of the rational-critical public and the deteriorated public recognise their partiality to a system – albeit in different ways. What interests us is the nature of these 'ways'. Gauchet satisfies himself with asserting the partiality and the lack of immanence, but in Habermas we find these characteristics expressed in specific ways. This is why I argued that he provides a particular aesthetic account of political space. We might then read Habermas into Gauchet and argue that Habermas provides us with a particular account of a type of politics that befits the citizen-voter – a type of politics that establishes political being as instantiated in reason-giving argumentation.

5.3. Habermasian rationalism

Habermas very much sees himself as continuing the project started by the founders of democracy.[352] The enlightenment tenets of reason and rationalism thus find central roles to play in his theory. However, as I have shown, Habermas does not just straightforwardly adopt them from their 18th century usage, but modifies them to account for the realisation, or the discovery, of difference. When speaking about rationalism then, difference plays a crucial part in its realisation.

In Chapters One and Two, I made the argument that a particular type of rationalism, which favours modes of expressions that recognise their own partiality to a system, is tied both historically and conceptually to the Left/Right spectrum; that Left/Right in fact help police, or prefigure, what counts and doesn't count as rational expression. With Habermas' rational consensus we can now begin to flesh out an example of this type of rationalism even further.

Let us consider the debate around marriage equality as it plays out in Australia. In 1961, the Marriage Act 1961 was passed by the Australian parliament which outlined that a marriage was between two people and to the exclusion of all others. The definition of marriage was further clarified in an amendment in 2004 which stressed that marriage was between a man and a woman and that it was not to include same-sex relations. However, as marriage equality started to gain traction across the western world, calls for actionable policy to have the Marriage Act 1961 amended once again started to appear. This translated into Kevin Rudd, the then leader of the moderately left wing Australian Labor Party, declaring

[352] Habermas, 2001.

ahead of the 2013 election that if his party was elected, they would legalise same-sex marriage. They did not win the election and same-sex marriage was not legalised until 2017. I look here briefly at the debate over the public vote about the issue in 2017 and examine a particular debate that took place on Australian national television in the popular program entitled Q&A.[353]

The debate was centred around four panellists and a moderator and the question under debate was simply whether or not same-sex marriage should be legal. This reflected the question faced by the public in the public vote. Two of the panellists were religious figures, although they came down on different sides. One panellist, Karina Okotel, representing the right wing, was a politician for the liberal party and argued against same-sex marriage, while the last panellist, Magda Szubanski, representing the left wing, was an actor, author and activist and argued for same-sex marriage. She also identifies as a lesbian. Tweets from the general public also appeared on the screen regularly and audiences fielded questions occasionally. Noticeably, even if the debate used to be marred by religious rhetoric,[354] this had largely been cut out of the debate at this point. Instead, the arguments forwarded by the panellists centred around rights rhetoric, with the no-side arguing that adoption rights lead to a conflict between this right and the right of religious freedom, freedom of speech and those of children to know their biological parents.[355]

If we view this debate as a microcosm of the larger public deliberation around this issue, and as the public vote delivered a resounding yes to the question at hand, we might conceptualise the legalisation of same-sex marriage as a rational consensus in the Habermasian sense. We can do this for several reasons. Not only is it a result of the public exposition of reason-giving arguments, but the arguments have also been largely translated from religious arguments in political arguments. Additionally, we can see how consensuses are always temporary when we view this debate together with, not only debates from a few years prior to 2017, but also with debates leading up to the 2004 amendment. And finally, we can see how this might be conceptualised as a rational consensus as it is, at least partially, brought about by the inclusion of affected people, which in the panel is manifested by Magda Szubanski.

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[353] abcqanda, 2017, 'Q&A Same Sex Marriage Debate | 23 October', *YouTube*, 23 Oct, viewed 8 March, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xgcbZbI0AKk>.
[354] See for example ABC News (Australia), 2013, 'Rudd launches passionate gay marriage defence', *YouTube*, 2 Sept, viewed 8 March, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CdU3ooAZSH8>.
[355] Karina Okotel in abcqanda, 2017, 33:20.

Habermasian rationalism then manifest itself in consensuses and requires difference in order to renew them. The arguments that make up the deliberation are thus required to be different to the other parts in order for arguments to flourish in the first place, for if they were not different, we would be dealing in absolutes and universalities: a type of unified messaging that we see in state broadcasts in the most authoritarian regimes – where this type of rationalism (being inter-subjective) could never thrive. For these different arguments to thrive in the first place, however, they must then, in turn, respect the rules of the game by acknowledging that they represent only parts of the whole and not the whole itself.[356] They accomplish this, not by their content,[357] but by the very form they take. For the exposition of arguments, opinions, beliefs, etc., when uttered in public, automatically lend themselves to contestation and as such inherently acknowledge their partiality to the system in which their exposition takes place. They acknowledge their partiality to the overarching system and, as such, they are the units of Habermasian rationalism.

We can then take from this example, insofar that it is emblematic of Habermasian rationalism, not only that rationalism requires some form of translation of religious reasons into political reasons, but also that this translation engenders a particular form of relationality. That is, sexuality and marriage become *debatable issues*. This is only the case because a certain type of rationalism governs the space: a rationalism that stresses that the different parts to its whole must be made up of arguments, opinions, beliefs, etc. I.e. forms of expression that recognise their own partiality to the whole, rather than seeking to usurp it in any way.

5.4. Exclusion/inclusion in relation to the political public sphere

There have been several critiques of Habermas' conception of the political public sphere. Perhaps most notably, Nancy Fraser argues that it relies on the constitutive exclusion of women.[358] The private individuals were not only property owners but also men, as they could only gather because women performed the unpaid labour that enabled the men to engage in political deliberation to begin with. In this sense, their exclusion was a precondition for the emergence of the political public sphere. Habermas later recognised this,[359] and one can read his more recent thoughts on communicative reason and the

[356] Habermas has of course written extensively about this through his problematisation of tolerance.
[357] Modernity is littered with examples of political actors purporting to speak for everyone.
[358] See Fraser, Nancy, 1990, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy', *Social Text*, No. 25-26, pp.56-80.
[359] Habermas, 1992a, pp.427-428.

debate around law and legitimacy as an attempt to get beyond this constitutive exclusion.[360]

We might say that Habermas is primarily concerned with a permanent move to an inclusion of marginalised groups into the political public (sphere).[361] In fact, when he erects his regulative ideals relative to communicative reason (democracy, publicity, etc.), he does so because reason stipulates that individuals from marginalised groups are equal to individuals from dominant groups.[362] We might then categorise Habermas, much as we saw Noberto Bobbio categorise himself in the previous chapter, as 'a man of the Left'.[363] Likewise, when he posits the need for always renewing the consensus emerging from the ideal public sphere, he does so not only in acknowledgement of his own fallacious position as a philosopher, but also in acknowledgement of the very impossibility of a final and perfected political public sphere. The world in which we live will always change and with this change a correction will always need to be made to allow for more inclusion. The change in context that will require the rational consensus to be renegotiated might then very well be engendered by the emergence of an *other* – an *other* that did not participate in the making of the previous consensus, and thus require a renegotiation in order for the consensus to reacquire a semblance of rationality.

Habermas' concern for 'the inclusion of the other'[364] has seen him renege on his otherwise very individualist conception of the public sphere and assert that the public sphere is, and

[360] Habermas does, however, make distinctions between exclusions that are constitutive (gender) and exclusions that are not (class). See ibid., p.428.
[361] This is the reading we must make of Habermas. See Dahlberg, Lincoln, 2005, 'The Habermasian Public Sphere: Taking Difference Seriously?', *Theory and Society*, Vol. 34, No. 2, pp.111-136.
[362] However, as we shall see in the next chapter, he cannot follow Laclau in asserting that force is a constitutive component to meaning and consensus and cannot be wished away. Geoff Eley provides a good account of how this "ideal of critical liberalism […] remains historically unattained". See Eley, Geoff, 1992, 'Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century', in: Calhoun, Craig (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, The MIT Press: Cambridge, MA., pp.289-399, p.289.
[363] Much has been written about Habermas' public engagement with the student movements in the 1960. Habermas himself wrote that, "[t]here are several signs indicating […] that the potential of the youth movement is growing. If this potential does not inhibit itself self-destructively and if we of the older generation do not react without comprehension, it may become the motive force of a long-term process of transformation that prevents foreseeable catastrophes on an international scale and makes possible a measure of emancipation domestically." Habermas, Jürgen, 1989, *Toward a Rational Society*, translated by: Jeremy J. Shapiro, Beacon Press: Boston, p. 48. While he speaks critically of the student movements and his characterisation of 'the left', he then also clearly harbours some sympathy towards their projects.
[364] Habermas, Jürgen, 1999, *The Inclusion of the Other: Studies in Political Theory*, Polity Press: Cambridge.

perhaps should be, "wild" and constituted by sub-publics rather than just individuals.[365] Importantly, however, this acknowledgement that there exist groups of people who are excluded from deliberation and whose inclusion must be strived for by the political public sphere, does not dislocate the centrality of the ideal of the political public sphere. It is wild, but it is still *one*. Difference in political reason-giving still takes place in *the* political public sphere. In Habermas, this sphere is constituted as a sphere in the singular, as opposed to the sub-spheres and counter publics that might be said to exist within the public sphere. This is the case, exactly because it is structurally related to the sphere of legislation and representation.[366] In the end, to Habermas, there can be only one conversation that is actually public and political.

It is in this sense that we can understand the objections of the hypothetical deliberative democrat to the imagined activist's means of public expression in Iris Young's staged encounter between the two.[367] There, the activist engages in "demonstration and direct action",[368] which the deliberative democrat attempts to police because it falls foul of some kind of reasoned debate. The deliberative democrat performs this policing because of the recognition that the political public sphere remains structurally tied to law. Difference within the political public sphere is allowed, but it must conform to a certain type of form, or else the political public sphere might not function to promote human dignity through an establishment of a rational consensus.

We might then conclude that, contrary to Habermas' earliest writings in *The Structural Transformation*, the political public sphere is not neatly structured with everyone expressing themselves similarly. Rather, it is now wild in the sense that there are many different publics that express themselves differently and do not necessarily engage in formally structured conversations.[369] This conceptualisation requires that we think in a more nuanced way about these different ways of giving reasons – even if they must still be taken as arguments. This is not always acknowledged by some of Habermas' critics,[370] yet this does not make him a post-structuralist. For, as I have exemplified with Young's staged

[365] Habermas, 1996, p.307.
[366] Habermas was, of course, initially criticised by Nancy Fraser, along with others, for "idealizing" the liberal public sphere and neglecting the non-liberal publics. See Fraser, 1990, pp.60-61, yet it is worth remembering the function Habermas gives this sphere in relation to the projection of publicity and its function as the legitimizing organ of democratic order.
[367] Young, Iris Marion, 2001, 'Activist Challenges to Deliberative Democracy', *Political Theory*, Vol. 29, No. 5, pp.670-690.
[368] Ibid., p.670.
[369] Unlike in the days of the salons and coffeehouses.
[370] Again, for two such readings, see Mouffe, 2005, pp.83-89; and Laclau, 1997, pp.307-308.

interaction between the deliberative democrat and the activist, Habermas' ideal political community still demands that expression take a certain form, a form that is particular. It is in this sense that modes of expression that do not conform to actions that can be read as reason-giving arguments are excluded from deliberation. There clearly is some room for civil disobedience, but this is an outlier to Habermas' theory. As I move on to conceptualise the political public sphere as a space along the lines that I outlined with Rancière in the previous chapter, I also engage exclusion more explicitly as I argue that we, with Habermas, are presented with a vision of a particular political space, the possibility of which rests on exclusions and miscounts.

5.5. The political public sphere as political space

In Habermas' normative conception of a democratically structured society, political deliberation emanates from the wild political public sphere. Although this thesis has already determined that the operable concept is *space* and not *sphere*, we should be careful not to simply collapse the two terms into one another. However, as the concept of space, which I elucidated in the previous chapter, functions to order differences by providing them with a form through which they can be counted and account for themselves, through distributing differences in a space in which they stand in relation to one another, spatialising Habermas' public sphere is not as difficult as it might seem.[371] The spatialisation of the public sphere along these lines is not native to Habermas' writings, but, as we look back to my argument that he conceives of the political public sphere as *one*, we start to see how we can make this translation of his concept of the political public sphere.

I argued that Habermas continues to place the identity of the human being outside discourse, on the basis of which he constructs his normative theory. Working within the Enlightenment tradition, he seeks to construct a vision for a political public sphere that is governed by the norms of rational consensus, on the back of which the Enlightenment project of freedom and equality for all can continue. It is because it is the human being, conceived as the animal that can participate in intersubjective communication, that is his political subject, that he can forward his normative theory in relation to the regulation of political communication.

[371] Which is why it is such a popular undertaking. Mah outlines the way in which historians have accomplished this. See Mah, 2000.

It may be that Habermas focused too much on the bourgeois public sphere[372] at the expense of, for example, the proletariat and/or women,[373] but that is not the issue here. The issue is that we can conceive of Habermas' political public sphere as a *space* because it has a theoretical origin in something that is located outside discourse. This is what gives it its normative, prescriptive bend, and it is this prescription, this structuring of differences, that allows us to conceptualise the "wild" political public sphere – that Habermas perceives as nevertheless being *one* – not as one sphere, but one *space*. It becomes a space because I – through critiquing its claims to universality – have argued that it relies on particular, not universal, modes of expression, and that this particularity engenders exclusions and miscount on the parts of those who cannot or will not express themselves through reason-giving arguments. We saw one example of this in Young's staging of an interaction between a deliberative democrat and an activist. This also means that Habermas' ideal of the political public sphere is only one space among many, even if only few would doubt its reach and influence. Conceptions of alternative political public spheres can therefore be thought of as different spaces, in which participation is structured differently. However, I must also maintain that the kind of liberal political public sphere that Habermas comes to describe has a different relationship to the making of law than those alternative public spheres.

As I thus argue that Habermas' political public sphere constitutes a space in which different reason-giving arguments can be forwarded in search of a rational consensus, the question becomes: what is its other?

There is some debate about this, as some maintain that Habermas should be read more as an agonist along the lines of Hannah Arendt, whose agonistic politics is fairly similar to Mouffe's, even if Mouffe has remarked that Arendt's agonism is an "agonism without antagonism".[374] This line of argument is especially prevalent in Richard Bernstein, whom Dana Villa takes to argue that:

[372] Eley, 1992, p.303.
[373] See, for examples of this, Ryan, Mary P., 1992, 'Gender and Public Access: Women's Politics in Nineteenth-Century America', in: Calhoun, Craig (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, The MIT Press: Cambridge, MA, pp.259-288; and Ranciere, Jacques, 2012, *Proletarian Nights: The Workers' Dream in Nineteenth-Century France*, translated by: David Fernbach, Verso: London.
[374] Mouffe, 2005c, p.160.

> Arendt's depiction of the public realm in terms of plurality and equality results in a normative conception of politics that is virtually indistinguishable from that of Habermas.[375]

Villa himself also emphasises the extensive similarities between the two,[376] and Patchen Markell argues that "Habermas's and Arendt's models of the public sphere are neither opposed nor identical, but complementary".[377] To further this, Markell remarks that, contra Villa's slightly more critical reading of Habermas:

> In a "post-conventional" society in which every settlement ought in principle to be open to further contestation and in which no issue, not even the rules of discussion themselves, can be excluded from the political agenda, it would be a mistake to interpret the "orientation toward agreement" as a standard that can justify the exclusion of "spontaneity, initiation, and difference" from a regularized and normalized public sphere. Indeed, […] the existence of a vigorous public sphere characterized by agonistic political action is among the very conditions of the possibility of democratic legitimacy.[378]

Markell argues that Habermas, not unlike Mouffe, constructs a vision of society which is in some sense always open to new incursions, and that it in fact relies upon these. This line of argument is of course contrary not only to those who read Habermas as a strict rationalist, but also to some who, while reading him with a touch more nuance, maintain that there remain *others* to Habermas' theory. We can count Young in this category, but Thomassen has also sought to make these *others* explicit. Reviewing the work of various scholars, he

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[375] Villa, Dana R., 1992, 'Postmodernism and the Public Sphere', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 86, No. 3, pp.712-721, p.714. See also the debate between James Johnson and Villa at Johnson, James & Villa, Dana R., 1994, 'Public Sphere, Postmodernism and Polemics', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 88, No. 2, pp.427-433.
[376] Villa, 1992.
[377] Markell, Patchen, 1997, 'Contesting Consensus: Rereading Habermas on the Public Sphere', *Constellations*, Vol. 3, No. 3, pp.377-400, p.378.
[378] Ibid., p.379.

argues that Habermas has several *others*, such as power, difference, aesthetics and contingency, and that:

> We can think of these challenges as Habermas's ''Others:'' those things that he has […] excluded from consideration in order that they not muddy his rationalist conceptual framework.[379]

Elsewhere, in dialogue with Young and in specific relation to our engagement with Habermas, Thomassen also addresses civil disobedience. Referring to the gap between law and legitimacy, and following Habermas, he argues that "civil disobedience gets its force from being simultaneously included and excluded",[380] but that Habermas does not take this seriously enough. In this sense, he argues that:

> A more extensive notion of deliberation […] [stresses] the importance of political culture and practices that are not only deliberative and argumentative in Habermas's sense but may have an 'actionistic' form that cannot easily, if at all, be translated into deliberative validity claims."[381]

We might then relate this particular *other* of Habermasian deliberation – 'actionistic' forms of political expression, i.e. forms of direct action, demonstrations, etc. – to my engagement with Rancière in the previous chapter. There I emphasised the aesthetic dimensions of space, which stipulate a mode of political expression that is particular. Rancière is concerned with the policing of political space, and with his concept of *the distribution of the sensible* he accomplishes an identification of theoretical tools that can describe modes of policing. He argues that the police (ac)count effects a distribution of the sensible and allows for particular subject positions to be counted and account for themselves in particular ways. 'Real politics' consists in moments of *wrong*, when those who are

[379] Thomassen, Lasse, 2004b, 'Habermas as his Others', *Polity*, Vol. 37, No. 4, pp.548-560, p.558.
[380] Thomassen, 2008, p.115.
[381] Ibid., p.115.

miscounted due to their inability to inhabit legitimate subject positions and/or express themselves in legitimate ways (i.e. the excluded), break through, showing their equality to the other subjects of the space.

With these tools, we can argue that reason-giving arguments, in Habermas, constitute legitimate modes of political expression, and that those who are capable of forwarding them also become countable by the police and vice versa. Matheson Russell and Andrew Montin also, following Rancière,[382] use this logic to exemplify miscounts due to structural inequalities that prevent certain groups of people, such as workers (in relation to bosses) and students (in relation to teachers), from participating in intersubjective communication through the forwarding of reason-giving arguments.[383] They argue that students and workers are effectively denied opportunities to engage in the process of finding a rational consensus because they are already counted as less than their teachers and bosses. In this sense, these groups of people appear "incapable of rational speech".[384]

In this example, people are denied access to rational deliberation because they are already subject to a miscount, which in turn reinforce their exclusion. But it can work the other way as well: exclusion can be engendered through an inability to participate in rational deliberation to begin with. That is, insofar that rational deliberation is the norm, those who do not participate are simply "unintelligible"[385] and unable to participate in the "achievement or production",[386] not the a priori, of the category of "the human"[387] and the place in which that category manifests itself as a political entity: the dominant political space (or Habermas' political public sphere). As such:

[382] Rancière, 1999, pp.43-60. See also Rancière, Jacques & Panagia, Davide, 2000, 'Dissenting Words: A Conversation with Jacques Rancière', *Diacritics*, Vol. 30, No. 2, pp.113-126.
[383] Russell, Matheson & Montin, Andrew, 2015, 'The Rationality of Political Disagreement: Rancière's Critique
of Habermas', *Constellations*, Vol. 22, No. 4, pp.543-554.
[384] Ibid., p.546.
[385] Butler, Judith, 2004, *Undoing Gender*, Routledge: London, p.30. This may seem at odds with our assertion in the previous chapter that, to Rancière, even the poor are subject to the count. It is, however, important to note that the poor are still only constituted through acts of politics: "when Rancière speaks of 'the poor', he points to a potential mode of political subjectivation. The poor in this sense do not exist in the order of classes prior to the interruption of politics. Thus, in one important sense, 'the poor' do not even exist at all. That is, within the police order, there may be 'poor people', but 'the poor' is (one of) Rancière's name(s) for the demos that only emerges when it makes its very claim to be counted." See Chambers, 2013, p.103.
[386] Chambers, Samuel & Carver, Terrel, 2008, *Judith Butler and Political Theory: Troubling Politics*, Routledge: London, p.126.
[387] Butler, 2004, p.30.

> Learning the rules that govern intelligible speech is an inculcation into normalized language, where the price of not conforming is the loss of intelligibility itself.[388]

That is, if you do not conform to the norms of rational deliberation, you are excluded from political space. It is because of these observations that we observe that in Habermas' political public sphere, for subject positions to give an account of themselves, they must participate in the in-common in the form of the reason-giving argument.

We can helpfully reintroduce Mette Lylloff and her advocacy for disabled people at this point. I have argued that deliberation takes place within a 'space of equals'. As we have seen, we can, with Habermas, qualify the parts proper to this space as reason-giving arguments. To what extent is there room for Lylloff in the Habermasian public sphere? In one sense, communicative reason dictates that deliberation involve everyone who is affected. And it should always be open to new incursions. As such, there might be room for her. However, as she does not engage in reason-giving argumentation directed at regulation of the in-common but instead expresses herself in terms of lived experience, to what extent is she "intelligible" to the in-common to begin with? I would argue: to a very little extent. Lylloff, and the identity she represents, are excluded, not only because of the ableist conception of the public subject, but also because of the dominant mode of 'political' expression. As such, while communicative reason *should* include her in the conversation, it simply *cannot*.

We might argue that her expressions can be *translated* into 'proper' reason-giving arguments – just as the utterings of the religious person can be translated. But to which extent does that make her a part of the count? Or does that merely create a caricature of a part? In this thesis, I not only argue that the latter is more correct than the former, but that this translation comes at a cost. We can engage this cost as we look at the rationalism in Habermas' writings. For when this translation takes place from an expression of lived experience that demands to be acknowledged and not contested into an argument that becomes contestable through its very being and thus partial to the system to which it belongs, the absolute character of the original expression which demands an acknowledgement of power and truth is lost. As such, when Lylloff's expression is

[388] Butler, Judith, 1999, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Routledge: London, p.xvii.

translated we might be able to reach some sort of consensus, but how rational will it be, when the included arguments are made to give up their being; when the inclusion is forced? In other words, to which extent is the realisation of Habermasian rationalism dependent on irrationalism? To which extent is a rational consensus only possible when the type of new incursions that it requires is regulated prior to their incursion and, as such, not new or challenging at all? While I do not wish to adjudication on the degree of rationalism in Habermasian rationalism, I, following people like Thomassen, do wish to argue that Habermasian rationalism maintains *others* and that expressions of lived experience that seek acknowledgement of some type of truth are a type of one such *others*.

Notably, then, when we read political space into Habermas, it becomes the space for different arguments that revolve around a concern for the in-common. Though it might be physically instantiated, it is constituted in argumentation. Habermas might bemoan the state the political public sphere is in, as he does in *The Structural Transformation*, but his belief in its existence and its potential remains. Notably, to Habermas, it is *one* space. It might be wild, but it is still *one*, as it exists in a structural relationship with the state and civil society and is founded on an a priori: the human being as the animal that can participate in intersubjective communication.

5.6. Conclusion

In this section, I engaged Habermas' conception of the public sphere and translated it into a notion of political space. I showed that Habermas argues that the emergence of the public sphere forced rule to legitimise itself through it, even if its claim to represent 'the people' was, and remains, fictitious. As he became concerned with the marginalisation of people and the need to accomplish their inclusion into the public sphere, a conception of political space could begin to be formulated, one that is for arguments but one that is also 'wild'. After translating Habermas' concept of sphere into space, I, with various critics, argued that Habermas, despite his concern for inclusion, still retains *others* – namely those who cannot (be heard to) forward reason-giving arguments. It is the central claim of this chapter that the Left/Right spectrum helps order this political space.

6. Left/Right in Habermasian political space

6.1. Introduction

In this final section, I articulate an explicitly Habermasian reading of Left/Right. I argue that Left/Right, through enabling a count of the subject positions proper to political space, also

legitimate a particular mode of expression. I come to the conclusion that a Habermasian reading of Left/Right would come to their defence as ordering markers that enable members of the social body to participate in the in-common in a way that codifies the political community as both wild but also saturated by arguments over the common good, made by people who are all the same: human beings 'as such'.

6.2. Political difference and the Left/Right spectrum: a recap

As we saw in a previous section, Habermas' normative project allows for two kinds of difference. Here, I focus explicitly on what might be termed his political difference and its relation to Left/Right. First, let us recap our arguments from the previous chapters. In the first chapter, I traced the emergence of the public subject with Mah. When the social body gathered to engage the in-common, the site of the individual, as Mouffe put it, was occupied by a public subject position. Then, with Gauchet, I gave a particular form to this public subject: the citizen-voter. It was this citizen-voter that grasped at Left/Right as markers of the political community after it had become once removed from the doing of politics. This was done as Left/Right enabled citizen-voters to place themselves in relation to each other and the whole so that they could analyse the relationality of the political community – something that Gauchet argued was not needed before. While through Bobbio I conceptualised this Left/Right space of relationality as being about equality, with Mouffe, I argued that there was also a constitutive exclusion from that space. Most notably, however, I engaged Dyrberg's work on Left/Right. While Dyrberg could not follow Mouffe on exclusion, he provides an account of political identification that posits that Left/Right enable other forms of identification to be channelled through them and thus allow for a political symbolic order to be freestanding in relation to comprehensive doctrines (ethical worldviews) – a politics which he used Rawls' concept of the use of public reason to qualify.

6.3. Left/Right in Habermas' normative theory

When we now look at what I have taken Habermas to argue, we can see several commonalities with these scholars. Just as Gauchet posits that the citizen-voter became once removed from the doing of politics, Habermas, in line with the Frankfurt School tradition, notes the deterioration and commercialisation of the public sphere. But, as I also showed, this does not mean that Habermas seeks a 'doing' of politics – or what we, with Thomassen and Young, can perhaps think of as a more 'actionistic' approach to politics.

Instead, Habermas seeks an establishment of regulative conditions on speech in the public sphere to engender a rational consensus.

This focus on rationality has led many to liken Habermas to Rawls, who, like Habermas, works within the tradition of liberal theory. At the end of the last chapter, however, I argued that Habermas is better placed to give us an aesthetic account of the public sphere, now conceptualised as a political space, because of his focus on regulative speech and the way in which it gives form to the political expression of subject positions. As I, through Rancière, argued that Left/Right function as categories of the police, Left/Right are then intertwined with the political expressions of subject positions in the sense that they can legitimise a particular form. This is accomplished because they enable a count of the political space itself – which always has both an arithmetic and narrative component, meaning that a count depends on a form of expression by the counted subject positions. In Habermas, Left/Right might be said to function to mark off a political space that relies on a constitutive difference. It does this because, as we saw, there must be a difference in reason-giving arguments for rational consensus to work and the rational consensus itself must always be renegotiated as more parts of the social body gain inclusion into the political space of equals. While it then does not quite constitute an engagement with 'the political', à la Mouffe, it certainly also does not indulge in the fetishization of managerialism that we see from the proponents of the Third Way. It is in this sense that Left/Right can be said to work so well in accordance with Habermas' normative project, for, as we saw, Left/Right guarantee a constitutive difference between its parts, not only because of their polarity but also due to their abstract nature, which allow left and right to signify various things at the same time. This means that Left/Right often effect misunderstandings between subjects and, as such, help prevent a closure of political space and guarantee avenues for changes inside it.

Additionally, as Left/Right also qualify a particular mode of political expression, we might say that, despite the constitutive openness of the space that they police, the openness is conditioned on the adoption of the form of the reason-giving argument, which then, at least at the best of times, ensures that the space remains *one*. In this sense, we might transpose Left/Right onto Habermasian political theory and argue that Left/Right offer a way through which the otherwise wild public space might be recognisable to itself. It becomes a meta-space within which all the 'wild' sub-publics can engage, but the wilderness is made legible through the police function of Left/Right. By hegemonizing political discourse, Left/Right thus allow for a categorisation of different kinds of rational,

reason-giving arguments. In this sense, Left/Right serve the purpose of enabling a conceptualisation of a landscape, a map of different political arguments. Left/Right allow for members of the social body to not only understand their own, and others', opinions and arguments, but also to have an opportunity to have political voice to begin with. As such, they give shape to both the political space and to the parts of the social body that engage with it. This conceptualisation of the Left/Right spectrum, as an ordering framework for political deliberation, then renders Left/Right indispensable as they secure avenues for difference and inclusion – even if the difference and inclusion is secondary to consensus. As such, within a Habermasian framework, they must be taken to be a *good* thing.

However, to what extent are Left/Right in Habermasian space only a good thing *for some*? In the previous section I noted that Mette Lylloff, identifying herself with a place of exclusion, did not forward reason-giving arguments. I argued that this only served to cement her exclusion, as reason-giving arguments constitute the form of the parts in Habermasian political space. In the previous chapter, I argued that we could not place Lylloff, in her capacity as an activist for people with disabilities, on the Left/Right scale. In this chapter, I have tied this organising capacity of Left/Right with a conception of rationalism that we get from Habermas by arguing that Habermas qualifies a mode of expression that is particular and proper to the political public sphere and in line with the rationalism of Gauchet's citizen-voter. Thus, if Left/Right function to reign in the otherwise wild public subjects by enabling them to exist within a whole, then, qua Lylloff's *othering*, I cannot place Lylloff within this 'whole' without translating her expressions to an extent that they become caricatures of themselves. In this sense, while Left/Right might have a democratic function in relation to Habermasian political space that enables some kind of recognition of difference, this comes at a price.

6.4. Conclusion

In this section I related Habermas' thoughts on communicative reason to the Left/Right spectrum. I argued that Left/Right structure a constitutively open, explicitly political, space. With this in mind, I noted that, to Habermas, political difference is a difference between reason-giving arguments. And, as I, with Rancière, remembered that Left/Right, through structuring political space, both effect a count (arithmetic) of the subject positions within it and demand an account (narrative) of their being, I argued that Left/Right construct a map in which subject positions can place themselves in relation to others (arithmetic), but in doing so also get caught up in a particular mode through which the subject positions must

give an account (narrative) of their being. Thus, when Left/Right are applied to a Habermasian account of political space, they take on a positive feature through their ability to mark out an explicitly political space that is open to inclusion, but on the condition that the included participate through the form of the reason-giving argument. Left/Right then combine the narrative and the arithmetic aspects of the police function in a way that favours Habermasian democratic deliberation.

7. Conclusion

Habermas forwards a theory for democratic deliberation that seeks to legitimate reason-giving arguments as political difference. He notes that the democratic project of subjecting rule to the good of mankind can never be completed, but that we, through the establishment of regulative ideals to political communication, can bring about temporary forms of rational consensuses. These consensuses will, however, always be limited to the context in which they are formed. As such, as more people gain inclusion into the political space within which the old consensuses were formed, contexts change, and a new consensus must be found. These consensuses are rational insofar that they adhere to the regulative principles of 'democracy, publicity, inclusion and egalitarianism' – principles that are derived from the immanence of language itself.

Habermasian political space, then, functions to distribute different reason-giving arguments that search for a rational consensus. It is a space that is constitutively open to new voices, as long as the new voices appear in the form of reason-giving arguments. I have asserted that Left/Right function as a map of the political community within which public subjects can place themselves in relation to each other and the whole. In Habermas, Left/Right thus might be said to function to order political space and, in so doing, enable a count of the subject positions that inhabit it. However, as I also asserted – with Rancière – that political space provides a form to the subject positions as well as counting them, Left/Right order not only subject positions, but subject positions appearing as people with reason-giving arguments.

First, I engaged Rousseau and Kant to establish Habermas' intellectual heritage in an Enlightenment humanism that wrestles with the concept of reason and its place in democratic rule. I established that Habermas' political subject is the human being 'as such', conceived of as the animal with access to language, but that we must reject a subject-centred philosophy that stresses the immanence of reason. Instead, we must look to inter-subjectivity for the location of reason, which can be manifested through communicative

action that adheres to the regulative principles of 'democracy, publicity, inclusion and egalitarianism'.

Next, I engaged the ways in which we can think of political difference in relation to this ideal of communicative reason. I noted that Habermas speaks of a difference between ethical worldviews that has a place in communicative action but must be translated into strictly political reasons before being subjected to democratic decision-making. This kind of difference is politically secondary to reason-giving arguments that already adhere to the regulative principles, which are the primary units for the establishment of a rational consensus. However, as the world changes, new voices become necessary for the consensus to renew its degree of rationality, and as such, difference is constitutive to Habermas' theory of democratic deliberation, even if the difference is qualified.

Having then established this conception of legitimate political difference in Habermas, I effected a translation of his concept of the political public sphere to political space. The Habermasian political public sphere is 'wild', yet it remains *one* space as it is tied to democratic decision-making and as it is founded on a conception of political difference that is particular – not universal. In this sense, it is a meta-space that brings all the sub-publics together yet forces them to adopt a particular mode of expression insofar that they want to have agency in relation to democratic decision-making. Habermas' political public sphere thus functions to distribute legitimate forms of political difference, yet only functions on the basis of a constitutive exclusion of, for example, more 'actionistic' modes of expression. In this sense, following from our account of political space in the previous section, Habermas' political public sphere constitutes a space.

Finally, I argued that Left/Right, when read together with this Habermasian concept of space, can be said to facilitate a count of the subject positions within them and enable those subject positions to express their being in a way that is particular. In this sense, I argue that Left/Right, in Habermas, function to order reason-giving arguments in a space that is otherwise wild. Left/Right guarantee its status as meta-space, by bringing a coherence to it, thus securing its status as *one* and its ability to structure a mode of difference that is explicitly political.

As we move on, I seek an account of politics that stresses the ineradicability of force (that which must not manifest itself in democratic deliberation) and its place in relation to hegemony. In that quest, I engage Ernesto Laclau and his notion of politics as hegemony. There, I seek an account of how spaces achieve hegemony in order to understand the

mechanisms through which the political public sphere, now conceived of as a space that is always, in some form or another, particular, can reproduce its dominance over society and effect a structuring of politics. Through this, I formulate an account of Left/Right that casts their function as depoliticising and obscuring political demands – the base units of radical politics (conceived of as Laclauian populism).

Chapter 4: Political space in Laclau

1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, we saw that Habermasian political space comes to be occupied by different public subjects who nevertheless all have to give an account of their being through reason-giving arguments that conform to the principles of 'democracy, publicity, inclusion and egalitarianism'. Located within the liberal democratic order, Left/Right can be conceived as enabling a(n) (ac)count of reason-giving public subjects.

In this chapter, I argue that this Habermasian political space is a *hegemonic* project. With politics constituted around a lack of the markers of certainty, Habermas attempts to reign in this uncertainty through an identification of 'difference' with 'different arguments'. As I, with Ernesto Laclau, conceptualise radical politics with an accumulation of unmet demands into a constitution of a popular subjectivity – ultimately presenting itself as 'the people' and thus effecting a radical antagonism – I argue that Habermasian political space essentially effects a depoliticization of 'the social'. As every order is founded on exclusion and identification requires radical, affectual investment, power is tied into the fabric of social practices. These are some of the reasons why many demands go unmet. Habermasian political space cannot conceptualise this instance of power and exclusion and thus fails to provide avenues for their rectification. Insisting on rational debate, it seeks to tame the ways in which rectification can come about (for example, through the development of the popular subjectivity) and, as such, works counter to radical politics. As Left/Right are caught up in this policing of Habermasian political space, radical politics will find it hard to appropriate the category of 'the Left', even if this is often attempted. I further argue that it should not even be attempted, as the emergence of the popular subjectivity entails an identification of its protagonists with the whole, with 'the people', which Left/Right cannot accomplish as they legitimise a constitutive opposition to political space.

In this chapter, I first engage Laclau's intellectual heritage, where I argue that he is a fervent anti-essentialist, who cares for identity rather than reason and who theorises a constitutive lack/void in all identity that enables an untameable 'play' with meaning and representation. I go on to theorise the lack/void more explicitly as I argue that order, located within the realm of the 'ontological', effects an institution and subsequent sedimentation of practices within the realm of the 'ontic'. This sedimentation entails a forgetting of the contingency of the practices and as such effects a closure of the ontic.

However, as the institution relies on exclusion, a lack/void opens within the identity of the ensemble of practices that constitute the order. In terms of representation, order is centred around dominant nodal points, yet the further towards the limits of that order one goes, the more the representation of order, qua lack/void, begins to break down. It is at these limits that the moments of institution can be reactivated, and it is at these limits that the excluded can find rectification through the establishment of antagonisms.

Laclauian populist politics enters at this point. Centred around demands, it brings together disparate struggles that have had their demands rejected or unheard by the system into a chain of equivalences. Yet the further stretched this chain becomes, the more it starts to lose its particularity, until it, in the end, finds itself representable only by a name for an 'empty signifier'. This is the moment of populism and the moment of radical politics. Finally, I utilise Laclau to argue that Habermasian political space structured by Left/Right effects a depoliticization of 'the ontic'. I argue that the reasons why Left/Right function so well to police this space are also the reasons why radical politics should not try to appropriate 'the Left', as Left/Right tend to kill affectual investment in politics and institute a legitimate opposition in relation to political space that is inimical to the emergence of the popular subjectivity, which must represent itself as the whole – as 'the people'.

2. On political space: moving from reason to identity

2.1. Introduction

This section functions as the first bridge from the political writings of Habermas to those of Laclau. These two very different thinkers do not speak directly to each other. However, there are interesting philosophical differences between the two concerning the theorisation of the ways in which we can engage with meaning in politics. This section shows how, contra Habermas, Laclau locates meaning within discursive structures. As such, in Laclau, one cannot ascertain the nature of a political subject apart from its discursive articulation through acts of hegemony and this is a good thing insofar as it radicalizes the scope for who or what can possibly count as political subjects.

2.2. The meaning of meaning

In the previous chapter, we encountered a political vision that sought to introduce reason into the process of communication and consensus. Noting that it is reason that dictates that we are all equal and free, Habermas reifies a particular notion of humanism that holds that the key to emancipation lies in the rational consensus. To Habermas, people are

always-already equal because all have access to language. As such, as long as language and the creation of consensuses seek a continual inclusion of disparate voices; as long as the conversations that people have about the common good and the regulation of civic life continue to reach out to ever more people, especially to those whom conversations affect; and as long as the reasons adhere to the regulative principles of 'democracy, publicity, inclusion and egalitarianism', reasonable politics is taking place. However, not every answer is to be found within regulative principles to communication. For Habermas asserts the idea that it is the human being (the animal with access to language) who is equal and free, the human being who is the object of the universalism of the Enlightenment – which he pitches his intellectual project as situated within. This acts as an a priori to his theory of communicative action.

In this chapter, I utilise Laclau to criticise the Habermasian political space centred around principles derived from the immanence of language. To kick this off, I note Laclau's somewhat different theoretical heritage. Instead of Kant and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Laclau is influenced by the Althusserian and Gramscian interventions into Marxism,[389] the post-structuralist intervention into the study of the text,[390] and Lacanian psychoanalysis.[391] This leads Laclau, following many of his post-structuralist and post-Marxist predecessors, to develop an interest in the concept of 'meaning', and assert that political meaning cannot be established extra-discursively – as it is in Habermas:

> The political meaning of a local community movement, of an ecological struggle, of a sexual minority movement, is not given

[389] This can be seen rather clearly in Laclau, Ernesto, 1977, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, New Left Books: London. In this, his first, book, he was starting to formulate his brand of post-Marxism, but as he acquainted himself more with Lacan and other post-structuralist writers, he became able to formulate his theory using both psychoanalytic and linguistic terms. He makes this ability (and possibility) explicit in Laclau, Ernesto, 2006, 'Why Constructing a People Is the Main Task of Radical Politics', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 32, No. 4, pp.646-680, p.651.

[390] He outlines the workings of this logic in Laclau, Ernesto, 2003, 'Philosophical roots of discourse theory', *University of Essex*, viewed 8 Dec, 2017, <https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/30927087/Laclau_-_philosophical_roots_of_discourse_theory.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAIWOWYYGZ2Y53UL3A&Expires=1512738516&Signature=hJtj09RUASVUFWZ1WEfoZEArjgY%3D&response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DPhilosophical_roots_of_discourse_theory.pdf>.

[391] See, among others, Laclau, Ernesto, 1987, 'Psychoanalysis and Marxism', translated by: Amy G. Reiter-McIntosh, *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 13, No. 2, pp.330-333.

> from the beginning: it crucially depends upon its hegemonic articulation with other struggles and demands.[392]

As we shall also see elsewhere in this chapter, meaning – and its representation – thus becomes the operable concept vis-à-vis Habermas' regulative ideals. Through this move, we can further problematise the Habermasian concern for the rational consensus as I highlight the degree of force that is present in all establishment and representation of political meaning. Indeed, through this move, the temporal dimension is brought to bear on meaning and representation and introduces us to a notion of politics that evolves around the hegemonic articulation of meaning. As we shall see, it is this move that allows us to conceive of, and critique, Habermasian political space as a hegemonic project that was never immanent to communication itself but always reliant on a contingent forms of representation.

2.3. Laclau in linguistics and Marxism

In linguistic terms, Laclau problematizes the concept of the sign.[393] According to Ferdinand de Saussure, meaning is embedded in the sign and as such is made to reside not with individuals but in language itself.[394] However, Jacques Derrida and his contemporaries emphasise that there is an endless deference embedded within the signifying system, meaning that the signified is always but another signifier.[395] Language is thus opened up to play as no ultimate meaning can be found. As meaning is then no longer always-already present in language, as it is in Habermas, Laclau adopts a focus, not on the way language (and discourse) begs to be understood through the use of language itself, but on the impossibility of a final understanding (the lack of essence) and the consequent possibilities opened up for (de)articulation of meaning:[396]

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[392] Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p.87.
[393] On this he follows Derrida. See Derrida, Jacques, 1966, *Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences*, [lecture], translated by: N/A, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, 21 Oct, viewed 8 May, 2018, <http://www2.csudh.edu/ccauthen/576f13/DrrdaSSP.pdf>.
[394] de Saussure, Ferdinand, 1915, *Course in General Linguistics*, translated by: Wade Baskin, McGraw-Hill Book Company: New York.
[395] Derrida, Jacques, 1968, 'Differance', *bulletin de la société française de philosophie*, translated by: N/A, Vol. 62, No. 3, pp.278-301.
[396] Laclau often compares his theory to Derrida's. See, for examples, Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p.112; Laclau, 1999; and Laclau, Ernesto, 1995, 'The Time is out of Joint', *Diacritics*, Vol. 25, No. 2, pp.86-96. See also, Calcaro, Matther R., 2000, 'Derrida on Identity and Difference: A Radical Democratic Reading of The Other Heading', *Critical Horizons*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp.51-69, where Calcaro also likens

> Society and social agents lack any essence, and their regularities merely consist of the relative and precarious forms of fixation which accompany the establishment of a certain order.[397]

This "open[s] up the possibility of elaborating [on a] concept of articulation",[398] thus subjecting meaning to "play",[399] and, in this way, "open[ing] the way to new liberating discourses".[400] In relation to Left/Right, it is clear to see that, with Laclau, we certainly cannot ascribe to them any sort of essential meaning. Yet the extent to which they open up a space for play is still unclear.

In Marxist terms, which is another way in which Laclau exemplifies his thought – and the critique of which had already been elaborated on by Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser (and others before them)[401] – the category of the proletariat is seen to harbour a special place within the broader theoretical (and theatrical) framework:

> In the structuring of this narrative, the laws of capitalist development are the plot, while the characters, with perfectly assigned roles, are the proletarian and capitalist classes.[402]

In this Marxist narrative, *real* political action is action directed against the capitalist system, which itself creates the class that is destined to usher in its own demise: the proletariat. As such, within orthodox Marxist theory, politics is seen as the privileged task of the proletariat. Meaning is thus once again constructed outside discourse as the essence of politics is established a priori in accordance with the laws of historical materialism.[403]

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deconstruction to radical democracy. To Derrida, to learn to live with ghosts amounts to learning to live with (Laclauian) limits. See Derrida, 1994, pp.xvi-xxi.

[397] Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p.98.

[398] Ibid., p.98.

[399] Laclau, Ernesto, 2007, *Emancipation(s)*, Verso: London, p.7.

[400] Ibid., p.2.

[401] For an example, see Althusser, Louis, 2006, 'Marx and his Limits', in: Matheron, Francois & Corpet, Oliver (eds.), *Philosophy of the Encounter: Later Writings, 1978-87*, translated by: G. M. Goshgarin, Verso: London, pp.7-162.

[402] Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p.50.

[403] This started changing after the second international, when the laws of historical materialism started to become disputed: "In the writings of Plekhanov and Axelrod the term 'hegemony' was

The post-Marxist intervention consists in the problematization of the privileging of the proletariat and the establishment of the class a priori to its articulation.[404] What this intervention accomplishes is to bring into question the identity of the political subject. It is no longer something that can be determined from outside discourse, invigorating politics and imbuing the radical political struggle with new energy. No longer is 'the worker' always already a member of the proletariat. No longer are the actions of the proletariat predetermined. Instead discourse, through political acts, comes to structure identities. For political space, this means that the space of the factory work floor is replaced with the discursive space in which meaning can be articulated and acted upon through hegemonic practice. This concept of hegemony is what, for Laclau in particular, comes to signify politics itself. It explicitly adopts a focus on meaning and discourse, foregoing concerns for universal laws (or consensus and communication, for that matter).

It is also here we find the repudiation of the old communist argument that Left/Right merely cover up the otherwise *real* distinction between people – class:

> Right-wing capitalists and left-wing capitalists are the same […] Behind two masks, one face: On May 11 you will not be faced with a single National Bloc: there will be two, one on the right, the other on the left.[405]

This argument is echoed in the work of George Hoare who, through Fredric Jameson, argues that, "Left Versus Right may be the capitalist political division *par excellence*".[406] The argument is beholden to the idea that *real* political action is that which is played out between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. However, as that distinction would have to be

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introduced to describe the process whereby the impotence of the Russian bourgeoisie to carry through its 'normal' struggle for political liberty forced the working class to intervene decisively to achieve it." See Ernesto & Mouffe, 1985, p.49.

[404] See DeLuca, Kevin, 1999, 'Articulation Theory: A Discursive Grounding for Rhetorical Practise', *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, Vol. 32, No. 4, pp.334-348, for an in-depth engagement with this concept of 'articulation' that is also especially prevalent in Laclau & Mouffe, 1985. Unfortunately, DeLuca fails to mention that it was Althusser who pioneered the concept.

[405] P.C.F. cited in Gauchet, 1996, p.267.

[406] Hoare, George, 2010, 'Telling Stories About Politics: the concept of political narrative and "Left Versus Right"', *CPI Graduate Workshop, 'Politics in Strange Places: Breaking the Boundaries of the Definition of the Political'*, 18 Sept, University of Oxford, pp.1-15, p.14.

arrived at from outside discourse – because it places the social relations of production as somehow freestanding from the logic of discourse – I certainly cannot assign such a reading to a Laclauian perspective.[407]

In Habermas the political subject was the human being with access to language, because reason was immanent to language. For Laclau, however, when the concept of the political subject is conceived of in this way, it goes hand in hand with the concept of essence. As such, there can be no transcendental political subject. But this is a cause for celebration, as a world without essences guarantees that any excluded part can, in principle, lay claim to politics. To claim politics then amounts to a claim to be the political subject. But this is a claim to an identity, to a representation of a meaning, and as meaning is without essence, it is a claim to represent something that is, in principle, irrepresentable. While this has led some to argue that there is a normative deficit in Laclau, the point of Laclauian politics becomes to represent the irrepresentable – or that which the dominant political order renders *other*. I look closer at this kind of politics, which Laclau names *populism,* later in this chapter.

2.4. Conclusion

In this section I argued that Laclau locates meaning within discursive structures. He is distinguished from Habermas in that he also asserts that morality and politics are products of discursive manoeuvring rather than universal categories that enable discourse to form. In the next section, I examine this difference further by engaging with the more philosophical arguments made by Laclau. I argue that Laclau outlines what I shall call 'a logic of lack'. [408]

3. The logic of lack: the constitutive openness to identity

3.1. Introduction

In this section, we see that Laclau makes a differentiation between the realm of the ontic (that which appears) and the ontological (that which is). I note that there is a gap between

[407] Laclau, Ernesto, 1990, *New Reflections on the Revolution of our Time*, Verso: London, p.25.
[408] It is a universal logic that he unveils. As Laclau humorously asks Butler, when she objects that his theory takes no account of contextual differences, "is performativity an empty place to be variously filled in different contexts, or is it context-dependent, so that there were societies where there were not performative actions?" Laclau, 2000a, p.189. See also Laclau, 1999, p.101, where he, with refence to psychoanalysis, states that, "we are no longer speaking about a regional logic but about something universally present, which systematically distorts the workings of the symbolic order. The crucial point is that this distortion is not a random phenomenon but an *orderly* drifting away: it has itself its own logic."

these two realms, which guarantees that the ontological can never be collapsed into the ontic. I conceptualise this gap as lack/void and argue that it is constitutive to all meaning. In this landscape, order anchors itself by partially fixing itself through the establishment of nodal points. This establishment also necessitates an exclusion and a representation of *others* as pure negativity. This, however, also enables the construction of 'empty signifiers'.

3.2. A matter of ontology

One of the major philosophical differences between Laclau and Habermas is Laclau's uptake of Heidegger's notion of the ontic/ontological difference, which he combines with Husserl's notion of institution/reactivation and sedimentation.[409] In a sense, it is this philosophical difference that is at the root of his subsequent disagreements with Habermas over the location of meaning and the nature of the political subject. To Laclau, the ontic/ontological difference divides the philosophical account of the experiential world into two distinct planes: the ontic (that which appears) and the ontological (that which is). This division generates an ability to think of the experiential world as *contingent* on something altogether deeper, on something that orders our engagement with the world:

> [There is a] distinction between *ordering* and *order*, between *changing* and *change*, between the *ontological* and the *ontic* – oppositions which are entirely contingently articulated through the investment of the first of the terms into the second.[410]

Much like Rancière, Laclau conceives of something (ontological) that precedes our engagement with the world (ontic). Rancière thinks of it as a (re)distribution of the sensible, while Laclau thinks of it as a simple 'ordering'. As Habermas places reason as immanent to language, he also imbues deliberation with a normative content – a move that Laclau cannot make. That is not to say that there is no normative bend to Laclau's theory, but because Laclau is a theorist of meaning and representation, and not of immanence, he must consign deliberative practices to the realm

[409] See Marchart, 2014, for a more in-depth discussion of the philosophical underpinnings to Laclau's theory.
[410] Laclau, Ernesto, 2000b, 'Identity and hegemony: The role of universality in the constitution of political logics', in: Butler, Judith, Laclau, Ernesto & Žižek, Slavoj (eds.), *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*, Verso: London, p.85.

of contingent practices. This division between the ontic and the ontological we also saw manifested in the second chapter with Mouffe, who used the term 'the political' to designate the realm of antagonism, a term that she uses in counter position to the concept of 'politics' which takes place in the realm of 'the social' – a distinction that Laclau also employs. We might think of the ontic/ontological distinction as more philosophical and the politics/political distinction as more political, but they can be read together:[411]

> […] given that the process of grounding/ungrounding must be conceived of as an intrinsically political one, and that ontology must necessarily be conceived of as political ontology, the difference between the ontological and the ontic will [in Laclau] necessarily be reframed in terms of the difference between 'the political' and 'politics'.[412]

Together with this framework, Laclau argues, through Husserl, that those practices that reside at the ontic plane are practices that have been *instituted* by the underlying ideological order.[413] To further this concept, Laclau argues that this *institution* often precipitates a subsequent *sedimentation*.[414] This sedimentation accounts for the ways in which the contingently instituted practices at the ontic plane acquire a common-sense quality, which masks the fact that they are contingent. In other words, sedimentation accounts for the way in which a 'closure' of 'the social' begins to form; it marks a fundamental forgetting of the institution:

> The moment of the original institution of the social is the point at which the contingency is *revealed* […] [However], [i]nsofar as an

[411] Mouffe of course also engages Heidegger's concepts of ontic and ontological. For example, see Mouffe, 2005a, p.8.
[412] Marchart, Oliver, 2007, p.149.
[413] The concept of ideology is used somewhat flippantly here. We do not mean to imply that there is an outside to ideology from where we can examine it. It merely refers to a set of partially fixed nodal points. For an in-depth discussion of the concept of ideology, see Laclau, 1997. I use the concept of the 'underlying ideological order' to name 'orderings'. One such name is provided by Badiou when he refers to "capitalo-parliamentalism". See Badiou, Alain, 2008, *Conditions*, translated by: Steven Corcoran, Continuum Books: London, p.166.
[414] Laclau speaks to the concepts of institution and sedimentation in detail in Laclau, 1990, pp.33-36.

> act of institution has been successful, a 'forgetting of the origins' tends to occur […] In this way, the instituted tends to assume the form of a mere objective presence […] [As] objectivity is based on exclusion, the traces of that exclusion will always be somehow present. What happens is that the sedimentation can be so complete, [that its original dimension of *power* does] not prove immediately visible.[415]

Power, then, manifests itself in relation to the institution and sedimentation of the social. This means that the practices that constitute the realm of the social and the norms that govern politics are not only *particular* but rely on an exclusion that is both inherent to the institution of the order and is effected upon, what I have called, the representation of the social body to itself as a political community.[416] This is the case as the sedimentary practices, upon enactment, are always part of the logic of the institution itself, or as Laclau takes Ludwig Wittgenstein to argue, "the instance of the application has to be part of the rule itself".[417] We can again liken this to Rancière's concept of the distribution of the sensible, which, to him, is also always a (re)distribution.[418] In short, according to Laclau, to think of radical politics, we must acknowledge the dimension of the ontological, the dimension whose engagement can effect antagonisms and rupture of instituting orders. It is from within this dimension that power and exclusion originate. However, as we shall see now, to address this power and exclusion, one cannot simply disengage from the dimension of the 'ontic', as it exists in a necessary relationship with the ontological.

3.3. Lack/void: radical negativity and its guarantees

While lack/void is a big part of Laclau's writing, especially qua his Lacanian heritage, lack/void has perhaps been engaged most systemically by Alain Badiou (who is also influences by Jacques Lacan), who claims that "void is the name of being".[419] By this, Badiou

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[415] Ibid., p.34.
[416] For a discussion of Laclau as a theorist of representation, see Thomassen, Lasse, 2019, 'Representing the People: Laclau as a Theorist of Representation', *New Political Science*, Vol. 41, No. 2, pp.329-344.
[417] Laclau in Butler, Judith & Laclau, Ernesto, 2004, 'The Uses of Equality', in: Critchley, Simon & Marchart, Oliver (eds.*), Laclau: A Critical Reader*, Routledge: London, pp.329–344, p.344.
[418] See Rancière, 2010, p.54, for a discussion on why this is the case.
[419] Badiou, Alain, 2005, *Being and Event*, translated by: Feltham, Oliver, Bloomsbury Academic: London, p.59.

effects an understanding of void as a gap between the ideological order of the ontological and the practices of the ontic.[420] This gap is constitutive of all social formation.

Laclau himself largely agrees with this as he, together with Lilian Zac, writes that,

> nothingness is the very condition of access to Being. For, if something were mere, unchallenged actuality, no ontological difference would be possible: the ontic and the ontological would exactly overlap and we would simply have pure presence.[421]

In Laclau, this gap then manifests itself in a failure of the ideological order to achieve total hegemony:

> The failure of the ontological absorption of all ontic content opens the way to a constitutive 'ontological difference' that makes power, politics, hegemony, and democracy possible.[422]

Additionally, "this moment of failure […] cannot elude the field of representation".[423] This is the case because ideological order reproduces itself through representation. The process of representation is then never entirely faithful to that which is being represented. This is a philosophical necessity as, if complete fidelity were possible, the social world would be immanent to itself and there would be no need for representation to begin with.[424] Failure in representation is thus constitutive, but it is a productive failure, in the sense that it is exactly this feature that opens up the avenues for 'play' and 'liberating discourses'. As I argued, it is through representation of sedimentary practices that exclusion is practised,

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[420] It is from within the same logic that Derrida derives a notion of the interpretive gap. See Derrida, Jacques, 1976, *Of Grammatology*, translated by: Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, The Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, pp.157-164.
[421] Laclau, Ernesto & Zac, Lilian, 1994, 'Minding the Gap: The Subject of Politics', in: Laclau, Ernesto (ed.), *The Making of Political Identities*, Verso: London, pp.11-39, p.30.
[422] Laclau in Butler & Laclau, 2004, p.338.
[423] Laclau in ibid., p.338. In Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, a floating signifier is termed an *element* while its activation – its becoming an antagonism – is termed a *moment*. See p.134 specifically.
[424] Laclau, 1990, p.35.

but it is also due to the constitutive failure of representation that the excluded possess the possibility to rectify their exclusion. This is what Laclau refers to when he notes that the failure makes "power, politics, hegemony and democracy possible": reactivation of the institution of the social necessarily constitutes an engagement with "the ontic content",[425] but does so in a way that brings into question its "sedimented forms of 'objectivity'",[426] thus effecting an engagement with the ontological. In that sense, the two dimensions are co-dependent, even if they cannot be collapsed into each other due to the constitutive lack/void that separates them.

In this sense, "void is the name of being", as it is constitutive for the possibility of contingent being. It is not a positive entity around which an ontology can form, but rather a productive absence and a failure of representation. As such the (non)existence of lack/void functions as the guarantor that the (re)presentation of the social body to itself as a political community can never be entirely faithful; or rather, it undermines the identity of the political community from within, just as it undermines all the relational identities that exist within that community. But this is then a cause for celebration, as it is this undermining that (potentially) allows for the political community to change contours and/or open itself up to the intrusion/inclusion of new identities and new ways of being – even if this failure is also constitutive of exclusion in the first place.

In relation to politics, with the (non)existence of lack, we can then establish that order is not full: exclusion is constitutive. In that sense, one cannot logically account for boundaries to (discursive) order, as the closure of the social (the forgetting of its contingency) depends on the exclusion of lives and modes of expression that do not match the particular practices governing the dominant order. Instead, Laclau (and Mouffe) contends that orders can only be thought of in terms of (a) centre(s) or (a) nodal point(s) that partially fix meaning:

> Any discourse is constituted as an attempt to dominate the field of discursivity, to arrest the flow of differences, to construct a centre. We will call the privileged discursive points of this partial fixation *nodal points*. [However] [s]ociety never manages to be identical to itself, as every nodal point is constituted within an

[425] Laclau, Ernesto, 2005, *On Populist Reason*, Verso: London, p.87.
[426] Laclau, 1990, p.35.

> intertextuality that overflows it. *The practice of articulation, therefore, consists in the construction of nodal points which partially fix meaning; and the partial character of this fixation proceeds from the openness of the social, a result, in its turn, of the constant overflowing of every discourse by the infinitude of the field of discursivity*.[427]

If we start from the bottom of that quote, "infinitude" signifies lack/void in the sense that it is engendered through it. The alternative to lack/void is a positive presence, which would serve to qualify discourses operating in the social. This qualification would, in turn, limit the scope of possible discourses, meaning that the social itself would not be open, but closed. Lack/void then guarantees an impossibility of an ultimate fixation, but it also guarantees the necessity of a fixation of "discursive points", of nodal points, to begin with. This is the case as a discursive system must be in place within which the meaning of one thing can relate to the meaning of other things. Nodal points then work as 'privileged' signifiers to a signifying system that serve to anchor the system in a terrain that is otherwise governed by lack/void; 'the name of being'. It is in this sense that a system, or order, is structured around centres and not borders. Borders, with their exclusion, must instead be conceptualised as the limits to order and encounters with them signify its contingency:

> The limits of signification can only announce themselves as the impossibility of realising what is within those limits – if the limits could be signified in a direct way, they would be internal to signification and, Ergo, would not be limits at all.[428]

However, as all order, qua its anchorage through nodal points, has a positive being, it must also ward off the constantly corroding effects of the "bottomless sea"[429] of lack/void. *Others* come into play to effect this warding off as they serve to hold and signify the place of lack/void; to signify "pure negativity";[430] to signify everything that the order is *not*. That

[427] Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, pp.112-3. Italics in original.
[428] Laclau, 2007, p.37.
[429] Michael Oakeshot cited in Marchart, 2007, p.3.
[430] Laclau, 2007, p.38.

is, *others* reside at the limits of order. However, this also allows for the emergence of empty signifiers. "An empty signifier is, strictly speaking, a signifier without a signified",[431] and emerges exactly in relation to an encounter with limits. In this sense, the empty signifier is not a simple signifier attached to the system in a differential capacity, but a signifier that has been emptied:[432]

> As […] all the means of representation are differential in nature, it is only if the differential nature of the signifying units is subverted, only if the signifiers empty themselves of their attachment to particular signifieds and assume the role of representing the pure being of the system – or, rather, the system as pure Being – that such a signification is possible.[433]

This means that it is not possible to challenge order and signification from the outside, but that a politics of the excluded and a politics of the *other* must establish itself through a subversion of the inside. In democracy, rule is for and by 'the people'. It is in this sense that Laclau can adopt a populist stance and claim that the excluded must identify itself with 'the whole',[434] for in doing so it subverts the being of democracy itself; it presents the system with its limits; it marks a moment of radical antagonism (a reactivation of the political) within which radical difference emerges and exclusion is given a chance to be rectified. To accomplish this, however, one must engage in politics, or hegemony, as Laclau calls it.

3.4. Conclusion

In this section, I introduced the 'logic of lack'. I argued that lack/void is 'the name of being' in the sense that it is constitutive to historical change. It cements the place of the social as constitutively open, which forces order to anchor itself in partially fixed discursive points: nodal points. These nodal points create the possibility for discursive systems/orders but they also create the conditions for an encounter with limits of the system/order. In

[431] Ibid., p.36.
[432] Lasse Thomassen helpfully argues that this is always a tendential emptiness and never a complete emptiness, as there is always a mutual contamination between the ontic and the ontological. See Thomassen, Lasse, 2005b, 'Antagonism, hegemony and ideology after heterogeneity', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, Vol. 10, No. 3, pp.289-309.
[433] Ibid., p.39.
[434] Laclau, 2005, p.111.

Laclauian politics, this entails a possibility for an encounter with an empty signifier which undermines the order from within through an identification with the whole.

4. Politics as hegemony

4.1. Introduction

In this section, I explain how the logic of lack translates into a political logic. I argue that Laclau, through a focus on social movements, sees the demand as the base unit and particularities arise from the articulation of demands.[435] If a demand is not met, it may give rise to an antagonism, which is an articulation of an identity that is opposed to the system. Finally, if multiple particularities, through hegemonic action, link together in a chain of equivalences, they can construct a radical antagonism, a popular subjectivity, and present themselves as the name of 'the people'.[436] I then engage an example of this logic before we finally encounter some critique of Laclau.

4.2. Articulation

In the second chapter of this thesis, I argued that order is spatial, in the sense that differences are distributed in relation to one another based on a particular rationality. Our reference to 'order' in this chapter thus constitutes an engagement with space. As we also saw in Chapter Two, order has an identity while also enabling subject positions (i.e. other identities) to be formed within it – and in relation to an exclusionary frontier/limit. To move towards a discussion of hegemony, we must start with this dynamic.

In *Emancipation(s)* (1996), Laclau outlines the way in which subject positions, or particularities, function within an order:

> A first effect of the exclusionary limit is that it introduces an essential ambivalence within the system of differences constituted by those limits. On the one hand, each element of the system has an identity only so far as it is different from the others: difference = identity. On the other hand, however, all these differences are equivalent to each other inasmuch as all of them belong to this side of the frontier of exclusion. But, in that

[435] Ibid., p.224.
[436] It is in *Emancipation(s)* that he first starts playing with the idea of the "radical" antagonism. See Laclau, 2007, p.35.

> case, the identity of each element is constitutively split: on the one hand, each difference expresses itself as difference; on the other hand, each of them cancels itself as such by entering into a relation of equivalence with all the other differences of the system.[437]

Here I operate with familiar terms. The system constitutes an order which functions on the basis of a constitutive exclusion. The subject positions within the order are however divided: in one sense, they are different to each other, and in another sense, they are the same. Laclau calls these two logics the *logic of difference* and the *logic of equivalence*.[438] Difference must exist for the identity of subject positions to exist while equivalence must also exist for order to be present in the first place (without which there would be no difference):

> This totality is [then] an object which is both impossible and necessary. Impossible, because the tension between equivalence and difference is ultimately insurmountable; necessary, because without some kind of closure, however precarious it might be, there would be no signification and no identity.[439]

One important lesson we can take from this is that the identity of a subject position (or, the subject), is constitutively divided. As such, Laclau also describes this process of the logic of difference as a process of alienation from the totality:

> What we thus have is an operation of alienation and internalization: a subject is alienated in an identity-as-objectivity

[437] Ibid., p.38.
[438] Laclau, 2005, p.78.
[439] Ibid., p.70.

> which is part of an objective system of differences, that is, the Law, which is internalized in the same movement.[440]

To further this discussion, we must bring in the concept of lack/void that I discussed in the previous section. Applied to this discussion, the lack/void comes to reside in this alienation. For, as I argued, lack/void signifies the failure of order to hegemonize the social. In terms of identity, lack/void then signifies the failure of total identification of the subject with the totality – a failure that comes about because the subject is constitutively divided between the logic of difference and the logic of equivalence. We know that this is a necessary and constitutive failure, but it remains a failure nevertheless. For with this failure, the spectre of "the subversion of objectivity (identity) becomes ineradicable".[441] We are then left with a situation in which the stable representation of subject positions is never a foregone conclusion.

If treated semiotically, we can relate this uncertainty of the representation of subject positions that is introduced by lack/void to the notion of articulation. All subject positions are in need of signifiers. In representing themselves they represent their signifiers. These signifiers are attached to signifieds and enjoy a stable relationship with other subject positions and the whole insofar that everyone knows what the signifiers allude to – this then also relates to our discussion of nodal points. Laclau exemplifies this through the example of the traditional vote of protest in France.[442] There, the signifier of the protest vote was attached to the signified of the Communist Party. However, as the Communist Party withered away, the signifier was floated (more so than it normally is), leaving it open to an articulation that was different to that of the past. "This was translated into a considerable movement of former Communist voters to the National Front", which also sought to position itself as anti-system, writes Laclau.[443] The National Front was able to articulate the meaning of the protest vote to a different "chain of equivalences"[444] than that which it was articulated to previously. While the protest vote used to be articulated together with an anti-capitalist, anti-exclusionist chain of equivalences – that is, while the protest vote (the difference) used to be located within the communist camp (the system) –

[440] Laclau & Zac, 1994, pp.31-2.
[441] Ibid., p.32.
[442] Laclau, 2005, pp.87-8.
[443] Ibid., p.88.
[444] Ibid., p.93. We return to this concept shortly.

its floating enabled the protest vote (the difference) to be articulated to another camp (the system).

This means that articulation is an ineradicable feature of politics, or, "[t]he social *is* articulation insofar as 'society' is impossible".[445] All order structures difference within it, but this is a difference that is always articulated to it. And, given that the difference will always be alienated, it relies on representation to reconstitute the initial articulation again and again, in fear that its contingent nature becomes apparent; in fear that its connection to the system – the relation between the signifier and the signified – is dislocated; in fear that the initial institution will be reactivated.

4.3. Hegemony

Laclau (and Mouffe) calls the articulation of the difference to the system the logic of hegemony. To Laclau, hegemony is politics. As I argued in the previous sub-section – and have done throughout this thesis – difference is constituted through its relation to a system. But as we have now also seen, this relation is contingent on the articulation of the difference to that system. This process in which the difference is partially fixed through reference to a system and other differences within that system is a hegemonic process. However, it is important to note that this system, while already incapable of being whole and achieving fullness, is itself a difference (a particular).[446] For if it was not, it would already be established prior to discourse. In this sense, the concept of hegemony does as much to highlight the articulatory play that is inherent to the social as it does to highlight the degree of power that necessitates the articulation of differences to a whole:

> […] there is the possibility that one difference, without ceasing to be a particular difference, assumes the representation of an incommensurable totality. In that way, its body is split between the particularity which it still is and the more universal signification of which it is the bearer. This operation of taking up,

[445] Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p.114.
[446] We have not here explicitly engaged the explanation of the paradox of order using the categories of the particular and the universal, as we have done it with other terms instead. For an engagement with the categories of the particular and the universal, see Laclau, 2007, pp.20-35.

> by a particularity, of an incommensurable universal signification is what I have called hegemony.[447]

As hegemony involves the representation of a particularity as a totality, hegemony is then also constitutive of antagonism. For as hegemony deals with an establishment of totality, and as totality relies on exclusion, hegemony not only serves to articulate differences to a totality, but also to erect a frontier inside the social whereby various elements are either incorporated into its structure or cast outside it. However, as we have seen that order (which hegemony creates) must be conceptualised in terms of centres and not borders, this frontier is blurred and open to contestation. To protect this frontier, order is required to represent the *other* as pure negativity. But this is of course more than a simple representation. For, to protect the frontier – to prevent a complete blurring – it must also prevent a disarticulation of the signifier of the particular *other*. As such:

> […] there is already a discursive organization in constructing somebody as an enemy [a particular form of the *other*] which involves a whole technology of power in the mobilization of the oppressed.[448]

The exact nature of the mobilization however also depends on the type of particularity that has assumed the function of the universal. It is not simply the case that all orders are alike. For example, a fascist order centred around, say, the nodal points of corporatism, the traditional family and the nation is different from a liberal order centred around the nodal points of "individualism, and the rigid distinction between public/private, etc.".[449] Because the discursive construction of others is different, there is then also a difference in the type of application of technologies of power that is employed against the excluded.

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[447] Laclau, 2005, p.70.
[448] Laclau in Worsham, Lynn & Olson, Gary A., 1999, 'Hegemony and the Future of Democracy: Ernesto Laclau's Political Philosophy', *JAC*, Vol. 19, No. 1, pp.1-34, p.9.
[449] Laclau in Butler & Laclau, 2004, p.334.

4.4. Laclauian politics: the construction of the people

Laclauian populism is the representation of the 'plebs as the people'.[450] This is a political construction which conceives of itself as an "ideal totality",[451] an impossibly just imaginary that seeks to negate the structuring principles of order. Or, as I argued in the first section of this chapter, it is a representation of the irrepresentable itself. It marks a moment of radical antagonism and serves to open up the central democratic category of 'the people' to 'play'. For example, in Habermasian rationalism, 'the people' is the entity that is embodied by the constellation of individuals with reason-giving arguments coming together as 'the public'. 'The people' works as a foundation for 'the public'. However, when we take difference and exclusion seriously and acknowledge that some people, for whatever reasons, cannot appear in 'the public', the excluded might seek to reactivate the foundation that the public is built upon. This reactivation essentially consists in making this foundation apparent and then turning it on its head, proclaiming that 'we are the people!' and that 'the public' is nothing but a charade for elite interests. Notably, though, this is a politics that relies on the category of 'the people' being foundational, not only to Habermasian rationalism, but to modernity. It seeks less to destroy modernity and more to imbue it with new energy. It certainly conceives of itself as an 'ideal totality', and, at least to a certain extent, it must manifest itself as some kind of concrete entity, as it cannot represent lack directly. However, it also represents itself as an 'ideal totality' because the purpose of Laclauian populism is to reactivate the concept of 'the people' itself, and to do so requires the construction of an antagonism. You cannot get this with the mere assertion that 'we are *also* the people', which seeks to remedy exclusion rather than to make apparent the contingent practices upon which the current and latent conceptualisation of 'the people' is negotiated. When we liken the construction of an antagonism with Habermasian rationalism, we might argue that the exclamation, 'we are *also* the people', can account for the reason-giving arguments of hitherto excluded peoples, while the exclamation, 'we are the people', seeks to make the practice of reason-giving argumentation as the emblem of political agency apparent in its contingent form. It is in this sense that Laclauian politics seeks to negate the structuring principles of order and represent the 'plebs as the people'.

[450] Laclau, 2005, p.86.
[451] Ibid., p.94.

The construction of 'the people', however, always has humble beginnings. It starts with the request.[452] This request is made by particular social actors to the dominant system. Laclau often uses the example of housing.[453] In the case of the request, the addressee is easily identifiable. This request is either met or not. If it is met, nothing more comes of it and the identity of the people making the request is re-articulated to the dominant relational system. However, if the request is not met, it can turn into a demand and may, insofar as the people making it see themselves as bearers of rights, turn into a claim:

> […] the frustration of an individual demand transforms the request into a claim as far as people see themselves as bearers of rights that are not recognized.[454]

This then marks the beginning of the engagement with the category of 'the people', for the claim is made based on a recognition on the part of the claimers with the democratic category par excellence: the people, itself. However, there are still two avenues that the demand can take. It can be a *democratic* demand or a *popular* demand. A democratic demand is one that remains "in isolation" from other demands,[455] while a popular demand is one that articulates itself together with other demands and thus forms a 'chain of equivalences'.

In the case of housing, people seeking a betterment of their living conditions can retain the status of their demand as a democratic demand. This enables them to identify the addressee, be that the town hall or the appropriate ministry, and thus design specific strategies to enable them to accomplish their goals. The NGO sector is placed within the realm of democratic demands.[456] However, if sufficiently frustrated, they can also look around and identify other groups of people who are equally frustrated and 'link up' with them. When this happens, the addressees of the individual demands become blurred. This means that the engagement with the category of 'the people' changes. From being a

[452] Laclau, 2005, p.73. See also Laclau, 2006, pp.653-657, for a discussion on the nature of the demand.
[453] See, for example, Laclau, 2006.
[454] Ibid., p.655.
[455] Laclau, 2005, p.77. See also Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p.131.
[456] See Choudry, Aziz & Shragge, Eric, 2011, 'Disciplining Dissent: NGOs and Community Organizations', *Globalizations*, Vol. 8, No. 4, pp.503-517, for an interesting take on NGOs and their effect of depoliticising the social.

positive claim, it instead becomes a negative claim. From being we are 'also' the people, it becomes we are 'the plebs as the people'. This negativity manifests itself as the linking up of disparate demands into a chain of equivalences and entails an emptying of the particular contents of the individual demands. In the case of housing, the people advocating for it must change the nature of their demand. For, upon entering the popular chain with, say, advocates for health care, education etc., the individual demand also allows itself to be re-enrolled in a system and, as such, must constitute itself as a divided subject (part difference and part whole). However, the popular system – the popular counter-hegemonic construction – is not a normal system. Since it is constituted negatively, it is not colonized by a particular, but instead relies on an emptying of the contents of the individual demands that enter into its hegemonic construction. The more demands that enter into this chain of equivalences, the emptier of meaning it becomes. In this sense, what starts as a demand to have better housing becomes a demand to incorporate 'the people'. Finally, this construction spills over into public places and effects a radical antagonism.[457] Famously, the Spanish political party Podemos, carrying the torch of the indignados, locate themselves within this populist theory.[458]

Laclauian populism is then not dissimilar to Rancièrian politics,[459] whose operable term is equality, as it centres around an antagonistic relationship between the system and a name which comes to stand in for the excluded.[460] Through exclusion, the people occupying certain social movements are rendered as plebs, yet, through the adoption of the popular identity, they claim "to be the populus".[461] In this sense, the excluded parts come to identify themselves as the whole,[462] but this is not a conceptual identification but a nominal one. This means that the popular identity, while being tendentially empty, is centred around a name – which is necessary as "there is no populism without affective investment in a partial object".[463] As I reviewed in Chapter Two, all identity is engendered through

[457] Lasse Thomassen, however, argues that it would be a mistake to name antagonisms either radical, normal, or simply not antagonistic. Instead, he encourages us to think of antagonisms as constituted in degree. See Thomassen, 2005b, p.305.
[458] Mouffe & Errejón, 2016, p.8.
[459] See Bowman, Paul, 2007, 'The Disagreement is Not One: The Populisms of Laclau, Rancière and Arditi', *Social Semiotics*, Vol. 17, No. 4, pp.535-545, for a comparison between Laclau and Rancière. Rancière is perhaps the contemporary democratic theorist whose work most resembles that of Laclau. Laclau discusses him both in Laclau, 2005 and in Laclau, Ernesto, 2001, 'Can Immanence Explain Social Struggle', *Diacritics*, Vol. 31, No. 4, pp.3-10.
[460] See Laclau, 2005, pp.67-128.
[461] Ibid., p.116.
[462] Ibid., p.111.
[463] Ibid., p.116.

affectual investment. The populist identity is no different. As such, a pure name – but not a concept – must remain as the empty signifier. However, this name cannot carry any sort of a priori content. Instead:

> […] precisely because that name is not conceptually (sectorially) grounded, the limits between the demands [of movements] it is going to embrace and those it is going to exclude will be blurred, and subjected to permanent contestation.[464]

The popular chain of equivalences then has no grounding and is at least in principle, 'for all'. The binding together of social movements into a popular identity then transforms into a type of universality that is defined in the negative through an expulsion of essence, rather than defined in the positive through, for example, Habermasian regulative principles to democratic deliberation derived from the immanence of language itself:

> […] in an equivalential relation, demands [of movements] share nothing positive, just the fact that they all remain unfulfilled. So there is a specific negativity which is inherent to the equivalential link.[465]

'Liberating discourses' come about through these emergences of popular identities which always bring to the fore the claim that the excluded are 'the people'.[466] In other words, the Laclauian political subject identifies itself with the democratic tradition – an identification that Habermas also seeks, but through different means – and always seeks to deepen and widen the scope and definition of liberty and equality.[467]

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[464] Ibid., p.118.
[465] Ibid., p.96.
[466] We are not talking about an origin, but about an emergence. See Foucault, Michel, 1984, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', in: Rabinow, Paul (ed.), *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought*, Pantheon Books: New York, pp.76-100.
[467] Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p.178.

4.5. The Peronist movement in Argentina – an example

Being Argentinian, Laclau often used the Peronist movement as an example to explain his logic in action. Juan Perón served as president for Argentina for three terms but saw his tenure interrupted by a coup d'état in 1955. In *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory* (1977) and *On Populist Reason* (2005), Laclau examines the hegemonic activities that enabled Peron to first ascend to power and then to return for a final term in 1973.

In reference to the turning of the demand into an antagonism, Laclau writes that:

> To the extent that Argentinian Liberalism, restored in 1955, demonstrated its complete inability to absorb the democratic demands of the masses and resorted more and more to repression the potential antagonism of popular interpellations could develop to the full.[468]

He wrote this in 1977, so before he had formulated his thoughts in regard to the demand and the claim. He was also still using the Althusserian concept of interpellation in order to refer to the articulation of identity, which would of course change with *Hegemony and Socialist Struggle*. Laclau later examines the way in which Perón lent his name to the chain of equivalences that would hegemonize the various particularities in the society and construct the radical antagonism. In particular, he stresses the way his name became an empty signifier, able to hold all the diverging demands within one signifier, because the signifier had been completely detached from its signified:

> […] there was a permanent chasm between Perón's acts of enunciations (which were invisible [because he was in exile and not allowed to make official political remarks]) and the contents of those enunciations. As a result of this chasm, those contents – in the absence of any authorized interpreter – could be given a multiplicity of meanings […] As a result, Perón's word lost none of

[468] Laclau, 1977, pp.190-1.

> its centrality, but the *content* of that word could allow for endless interpretations and reinterpretations.[469]

It was because of this that the hegemonic chain of equivalence could extend to both:

> […] the right-wing trade-union bureaucracy, on the one hand, and the Peronist youth and the 'special formations' on the other, [even though they] had nothing in common.[470]

Yet, as the empty signifier signals, the coming together of these groups in the same chain of equivalences signifies a structuring principle that is based not on a dominant particularity, but on the principle of emptiness itself. Laclau's condonement of this type of politics is why Oliver Marchart describes his thought as post-foundational.[471] But confusion also enters the picture when we conceive of this project in more 'radical democratic' terms.

4.6. Critiques of Laclau

'Radical democracy', as a concept, is developed in *Hegemony and Socialist Struggle*. There, Laclau and Mouffe describe how radical democracy can come about:

> […] through the irreducible character of […] diversity and plurality, society constructs the image and the management of its own impossibility. The compromise, the precarious character of every arrangement, the antagonism, are the primary facts, and it is only within this instability that the moment of positivity and management take place.[472]

[469] Laclau, 2005, p.216.
[470] Ibid., p.220.
[471] Marchart, 2007.
[472] Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p.191.

Here we start to see talk of management of society, which introduces some ambiguity into the language I have so far examined in Laclau's more populist writings.[473] This ambiguity between the concept of populism and radical democracy has led some, including Slavoj Žižek, to argue that "I agree with populism, but not with radical democracy".[474] But Laclau disputes this and instead argues that:

> I think that they [populism and radical democracy] coincide entirely because by radical democracy I do not understand a political system. By radical democracy I understand that the expansion of the equivalencial chain beyond the limits which are admitted by a certain political system.[475]

Laclau then contends that Žižek mistakes radical democracy as instituting a dominant particularity, when what Laclau merely wishes to account for is the logic of spatialization and identification itself, how that logic is political and how we can conceive of some sort of 'good' action in relation to it. He is not a political philosopher. However, when one looks at some of Laclau's other writings, one can excuse Žižek for being confused. For, elsewhere, Laclau, describing his ideal "democratic society",[476] writes that:

> For me, a radically democratic society is one in which a plurality of public spaces constituted around specific issues and demands, and strictly autonomous of each other, instils in its members a civic sense which is a central ingredient of their identity as individuals. Despite the plurality of these spaces, or, rather, as a consequence of it, a diffuse democratic culture is created, which gives the community its specific identity. Within this community, the liberal institutions – parliament, elections, divisions of power

[473] The difference between radical democracy and populism has of course been touched on by others as well. For examples, see Nielsen, Rasmus Kleis, 2006, 'Hegemony, Radical Democracy, Populism', *Distinktion: Journal of Social Theory*, Vol. 7, No. 2, pp.77-97.
[474] Slavoj Žižek cited in Avgitidou, Athena & Koukou, Eleni, 2008, 'The Defender of Eventuality: An Interview with Ernesto Laclau', *Intellectum*, Vol. 3, No. 5, pp.85-95, p.89.
[475] Laclau cited in ibid., p.89.
[476] Laclau, 2007, p.120.

> – are maintained, but these are one public space, not the public space.[477]

Elsewhere, he and Mouffe also maintain that:

> The alternative of the Left should consist of locating itself fully in the field of the democratic revolution and expanding the chains of equivalents between the different struggles against oppression. *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 a radical and plural democracy*.[478]

Here we start to see how populism and radical democracy run counter to one another. Earlier, we encountered a notion of populism wherein the chain of equivalences was expanded to the degree that it could be embodied by a name only, by an empty signifier. There was no talk of its relation to liberal democracy. Instead the emphasis was on the emergence of a radical antagonism between 'the people' and 'the system'.[479] Here, however, the expansion of the chain of equivalences instead functions to create a vision of "the image and the management of [society's] own impossibility",[480] which is "what every project for radical democracy should set out to institutionalize".[481] While populism and radical democracy might operate according to the same logic, they clearly put different emphases on the location of political action. In populism, the emphasis is on the construction of a popular subjectivity which must be counterposed to 'the system': it aims at the establishment of a moment of radical antagonism and as such functions at the place of exclusion. In radical democracy, the emphasis lies on constructing a Left that ties in all

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[477] Ernesto Laclau cited in Marchart, Oliver, 1999, *Art, Space and the Public Sphere(s)*, European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies, viewed 17 Feb, 2016, <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0102/marchart/en>. Here you can also find an account of the difference between Laclauian space and the Habermasian 'wild' public sphere.
[478] Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p.176. Italics in original.
[479] Or what others have termed "the event". See Badiou, 2005, for the best account – and an account that is perfectly compatible with the populist account, no matter Laclau's objections. See Laclau, 2005, p.262.
[480] Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p.191.
[481] Ibid., p.190.

the disparate democratic struggles so that it may win elections and institutionalise (not institute) a society based on the acknowledgement of its own impossibility. In this sense, radical democracy is located, not explicitly with the side of the excluded, but with the side of (a constitutively open) order. The question then becomes if an empty signifier can function not just to enable the emergence of a populist moment but also to effect an institutionalisation of the impossibility of society. It is, however, somewhat beyond the scope of this thesis to provide a systematic answer to this question, even if, as we shall see, we might be forced to look at Left/Right differently, depending on if I conceptualise radical politics as populist or radically democratic.

Furthermore, Simon Critchley has argued that there is a "normative deficit in the theory of hegemony".[482] Critchley's main question relates to the possibility for distinguishing between orders that are democratic and orders that are not:

> My objection to Laclau can be most succinctly stated in the form of a question: what is the difference between hegemony and democratic hegemony?[483]

Critchley worries that Laclau is unable to think ethics properly, which would entail an inability to act and direct action in a political manner. Or rather, his critique regurgitates the old complaint against any philosophy that breaks with Descartes – that 'relativism = quietism'[484] – but in a more sophisticated form. Critchley hints at the role that lack/void plays in Laclau, but Laclau, in answering the criticism, stresses that lack/void is central to ethics:

> For me, the notion of the ethical is linked with the notion of an empty signifier, whereby an empty signifier is that option to which no content would correspond. […] [The ethical experience] is related to the experience of the unconditional in an entirely

[482] Critchley, Simon, 2004, 'Is there a Normative Deficit in the Theory of Hegemony?', in: Critchley, Simon & Marchart, Oliver, (eds.), *Laclau: A Critical Reader*, Routledge: London, pp.113-122, p.121.
[483] Ibid., pp.116.
[484] See Thomassen, 2004a, for a response to one such claim against a particular form of 'relativism'; Lacanian political theory.

> conditioned universe. And this experience of the unconditional is the kernel of any notion of ethics. If we say that there is a radical distinction between the 'is' and the 'ought', this distance between the two is precisely what constitutes the space of ethics. But this distance is experienced through a certain breech, or gap, which cannot be ultimately filled. Because of this the transition from the ethical to the normative is going to have the characteristic of a radical investment.[485]

Unhappy to collapse normativity and ethics and instead favouring a deconstruction of the distinction, Laclau then proposes that lack/void engenders a radical investment. The normative is present in this investment and, to Laclau, what Critchley terms democratic hegemony exactly constitutes such an investment. Moreover, it is the only type of investment that itself serves to make clear the very possibility of radical investment to begin with, as it is the only type of political project that seeks an exposition of the inherent openness to the social. It is in this way that Laclauian politics is not just descriptive but also normative (a feature it shares with most of post-Marxist theory).

4.7. Conclusion

In this section, I outlined Laclauian politics. Having already engaged his 'logic of lack', I engaged the concepts of hegemony and articulation and argued that social agents construct identities through the articulation of demands. When demands articulate themselves together, a chain of equivalences emerges. Laclauian politics consists of the widening of the chain until the hegemonic particularity at the heart of it is emptied, and instead becomes representable by a pure name only, an empty signifier. This hegemonic chain of equivalences in turn represents itself as the whole, as the people, and marks an emergence of a radical antagonism between it and the system.

[485] This particularly Badiouan passage is from Laclau, Ernesto, 2002, 'Ethics, Politics and Radical Democracy – A Response to Simon Critchley', *Culture Machine*, Vol. 4, pp.N/A, viewed 17 Jan, 2018, <https://www.culturemachine.net/index.php/cm/article/view/268/253>. For Badiou's take on ethics and his prescription to "keep going!", see Badiou, Alain, 2012, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, translated by: Peter Hallward, Verso: London.

5. Towards a Laclauian critique of Habermasian political space

5.1. Introduction

In this, final, section, I first give a definitive account of Laclauian space. Having done this, I critique Habermas for constructing a meta-space where sub-publics must engage in order to be counted as political. As this meta-space is structured by the alleged immanence of reason to discourse, Laclauian politics has no place in it. Habermasian political space then depoliticizes 'the social' by insisting that demands express themselves as reason-giving arguments, no matter the extent to which they go unmet. Finally, I discuss the extent to which Left/Right can be used by radical politics. I argue that, since Left/Right, as spatial metaphors, are largely devoid of passions, they are tools used only by public subjects. As such, they effect a constitutive recognition of their opposites, and thus cannot and should not be engaged by radical politics, especially insofar that radical politics involves a part that presents itself as the whole.

5.2. Laclauian space

In the previous chapter, I made the metaphor of sphere correspond with the category of space, and in Chapter One, I engaged Mah whose account of the public subject is tethered to a concept of space that enables the public subjects to stand apart from one another. In Mouffe, we found an account of space that is a 'space of equals' and counterposed to an excluded part which does not and cannot share in that equality. With Laclau, we can tie all of these accounts together. The key to accomplishing this lies in Laclau's discussion on the emergence of 'publics' as a viable category in mass psychology:

> […] a homogenizing 'communion of ideas and passions'[486] — the equivalence that this communion brings about - operates not only in the case of crowds, but also in that of publics.[487]

Several interesting features emerge here. First is the notion of public in the plural, to which I will return later in this section. Second, which I will deal with now, is the tying of the concept of equivalence with the concept of the public. As I have already discussed, in

[486] Laclau later translates these features into a concern for identification. See Laclau, 2005, p.54.
[487] Ibid., p.52.

Laclau, the logic of equivalence and the logic of difference operate to produce a divided subject: one that both identifies with the system but also identifies as different from other subjects. Equivalence injects sameness into subjects, whereas difference injects "autonomy".[488] Laclau (and Mouffe) also relate this to the concept of political space:

> […] the logic of equivalence is a logic of the simplification of political space, while the logic of difference is a logic of its expansion and increasing complexity.[489]

We find then that the logic that governs space also governs identification. Importantly, it is here we can find our concept of the 'space of equals' – ascribed to Mouffe – elaborated in relation to the concept of equivalence and difference. Mouffe's 'space of equals' becomes a space of 'more of less' sameness. However, for that space to remain *one*, for that space to be able to institute sameness, it requires a representation of an excluded outside. In other words, equivalence depends on exclusion.

It is in this way that we can understand the emergence of populism. For the popular subject position is conditioned by the refusal of its initial democratic demands. That is, the refusal of the demands' claim to obtain *equal* rights lead the subjects making the claims to realise that they fall 'outside' the 'space of equals' – the space that is more or less complex depending on the strength of difference vis-à-vis equivalence.

But as I noted with the quotation above, the concept of publics can also be understood in relation to the logic of equivalence. This means that identification is enabled through the participation in publics, which also entails that the category of the public is decidedly spatial. To Laclau, however, there is not one but multiple publics. This means that, on the face of it, we are talking about multiple chains of equivalences and thus multiple substantially differentiated identities. However, Laclau still qualifies this difference in terms of *publicness*. All these publics then beget public subjects, even if they might somehow express their publicness in different ways.[490] The fact that all of these different spaces then fall under the same rubric (they are all qualified as 'public') then forces us to return to *one*

[488] Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p.182.
[489] Ibid., p.130.
[490] We should of course read this contra Habermas as an acknowledgement of a more radical difference at the level of the public.

space: the public. Clearly, Laclau's conception of 'the public' is different to Habermas' as Laclau is much keener to express the radical difference between identities, but the point is that an overarching concept of 'the public' is still very much thinkable within Laclauian thought.

As I noted, the logic governing space also governs identification: both can be collapsed into a subject – understood in a grammatical sense. This both spatialises identity and identifies space. In this sense, it might be best to define a Laclauian notion of space in terms that are neutral to both processes. As such, *Laclauian space is the articulation of particulars to a hegemonic chain of equivalences that is structured around partially fixed nodal points inherent to a dominant particularity that presents itself as a universality*. While Laclau's popular space seeks to negate this logic, it remains a concept of space that is not entirely dissimilar from Rancière's, who I argued posited space as a distribution of the sensible according to the police (ac)count. Rancière allows us to think more aesthetically about the exact forms the particularities articulated to the chain of equivalences can take, but Laclau allows us to think this whole process more politically.

This particular way of thinking about the process in terms of politics enters as I focus on the first (as opposed to the second) interesting feature in our initial quotation: the articulation of publics (in the plural). As 'the social' is constitutively open, discursive spaces traverse it in manners that are entirely undecidable. As I noted, publics are based on exclusion. But does this mean that, as there are many publics, that there are many exclusions and, as such, that all publics are political? For reasons relating to the way in which the public is still thinkable as singular in Laclau, I think not. For Laclau makes clear the difference between a totality that defines itself in relation to another positive element and a totality that defines itself in relation to an excluded *other*.[491] In this sense, we might differentiate between the public of, say, a small-town community and a public constituted over the internet around, say, an interest in gardening. The small-town community will relate its being, not to a constitutive outside, but to other small-town communities or those of cities or villages, just as the internet gardening community will relate its being to different internet communities or gardening communities that meet in real life, rather than a constitutive other. I therefore cannot argue that antagonisms constitute themselves in relation to these types of publics.

[491] Laclau, 2005, pp.69-70.

However, insofar that these publics can define themselves in relation to each other, they must tendentially be part of a larger structuring system. It may be that these systems are themselves also parts of larger systems but eventually we reach a system that does not define itself in relation to another positive entity but to a pure negativity. In modernity, this system is manifested in the nation state.[492] It is at this level that all the sub-publics share their publicness. As exclusion also manifests itself at this level, Laclauian politics evolves around sub-publics finding their demands unheard (demands forwarded to various instances of the state), becoming counter-publics and constructing popular chains of equivalences that bring about antagonisms.

This conception of politics, however, clearly clashes with Habermasian politics and it is indeed unclear as to how we should conceptualise the public sphere from it – insofar that the notion of 'the public sphere' carries real weight in this world. Can there be such a thing as a public sphere of demands? And if so, does it exist today? With this, I move onto a Laclauian critique of the Habermasian public sphere.

5.3. Laclauian critique of Habermasian political space governed by Left/Right

In the previous chapter, I argued that Habermas constructs a political space that consists of different reason-giving arguments. They are not necessarily neatly structured but Left/Right function to make them intelligible to each other. As such, a type of rationalism emerges from my reading of Habermas that stresses political being as reason-giving argumentation forwarded in public and aimed at regulating the common good. However, this is a rationalism that is tied together with Left/Right, as Left/Right provides the space for these arguments to constitute themselves.

The implication of this normative conception of political space is that it structures a domain for 'politics proper' and thus consigns other modes of engagement with the in-common to being apolitical. In the previous chapter, I critiqued Habermas for this move as I outlined some of the *others* to this conception of politics. Most notably, I found it hostile to more 'actionistic' modes of engaging the in-common.

As I engage an explicitly Laclauian critique of this conception of political space, we can echo this criticism. But Laclau, through his emphasis on hegemony, also opens another avenue

[492] Certainly, there are also supra- and international systems, such as the international norms of human rights and the UN, the EU, etc., but at the end of the day, the monopoly of violence still resides with the modern nation state. It may not always have to be so, but this is generally the case at the moment.

for criticism. To explicate this, I turn my attention to Marchart. Marchart, in engaging the relevance of the category of time in relation to the category of space, argues that, in Habermas:

> […] all partial public spheres, being interpermeable, refer to one all-embracing overall public sphere […] [To Habermas], there is but one "democratic" or "autonomous" public sphere that does not coincide with the public spheres of mass culture, but rather in which citizens [can] communicate about the regulation of public affairs.[493]

In this sense, Marchart argues that Habermas forwards a conception of the public sphere as a 'meta-space' and, in the process, "hypostasises" it.[494] Marchart's primary argument is that we should assert that this space is not ontologically privileged, but that we may have good reason to support it nevertheless. However, for the purpose of this thesis, the most relevant points are the fact that Habermas' political space is not ontologically privileged and that his hypostatisation of it thus constitutes not a philosophical intervention, but a political intervention. Through a Laclauian lens, this then means that Habermas, with his political theory, attempts to articulate a hegemonic project; that is, he presents a particularity as a universality. This particularity is the immanence of reason to discourse and it seeks to construct and regulate a system of particulars as reason-giving arguments; it seeks to construct a chain of equivalences in which the sameness that is embodied in the particular subject positions is their status as reason-giving beings. The point is, through a Laclauian lens, this is a political project first, and a philosophical/theoretical project second, as it becomes a hegemonic articulation to particulars that aspire to obtain a political status.

To make matters all the more urgent, Habermas works decidedly from within the liberal democratic tradition and is taught widely across universities. On Habermas' 80th birthday, Ronald Dworkin asserted that, "Jürgen Habermas is not only the most famous living philosopher on earth. His fame itself is famous."[495] It may then be the case that, far from

[493] Marchart, 1999.
[494] Ibid.
[495] Ronald Dwoking cited in Müller-Doohm, Stefan, 2016, *Habermas: A Biography*, translated by: Daniel Steuer, Polity Press: Cambridge, p.N/A.

simply taking issue philosophically with Habermas' writings, we need to treat them as a hegemonic political project that appeals to those who already consider themselves, qua Mah, as 'public subjects', and who can appropriate Habermas' writings to bestow the emblem of 'reasonable' upon themselves; who can appropriate Habermas' writings to ward off the *failures* inherent to self-representation that the public subjects would otherwise incur. In other words, Habermas, though perhaps inadvertently, effects a closure of a space in which public subjects exist. His theory then functions not only to name ideal speech situations, for it also becomes an ideal to be appropriated by public subjects.

This is arguably doubly true due to the ease with which Left/Right slot into Habermas' theoretical framework. In the first chapter, I argued that Left/Right enable the public subjects as citizen-voters to differentiate themselves from each other, while maintaining a relation to the whole. Additionally, in the previous chapter, and to a certain extent in our discussion of Dyrberg, I argued that Left/Right can be made to work quite productively in Habermas insofar that Left/Right enable a self-understanding of a deliberative public and thus help effect a closure of it. In this sense, in a world partially governed by Left/Right, it becomes easy for more 'progressive' public subjects especially to further qualify their procedures through an adoption of *the Habermasian ideal of the public sphere*.[496]

For Laclau, this is obviously problematic as this project is not based around the principle of emptiness but structured around intersubjective reason. Additionally, Laclau stresses the primacy of the demand in relation to the construction of 'the people', but Habermas' political space has no room for demands. It is a space for deliberation and for reason-giving arguments based on the principles of 'democracy, publicity, inclusion and egalitarianism'.

Habermas presents his political space as a space for the forceless force of the better argument, but to Laclau, persuasion exactly requires force.[497] Habermas presents it is a space for sincerity, but in Laclau, the concepts of the will (which to Habermas must be autonomous in order for sincerity to carry any weight)[498] must be made to give way to the concept of identification which is always instrumental in the sense that it functions to ward off failure to ego-identification. Finally, Habermas presents it as a space of openness and

[496] For a discussion about the relation between progressivism and ideology, see Freeden, Michael, 2014, 'Progress and Progressivism: Thoughts on an Elusive Term', *Political Studies Review*, Vol. 12, No. 1, pp.68-74. The point, of course, is that progressivism is not ruptural.
[497] Laclau, 1999, p.95.
[498] Habermas, 2007.

inclusivity, but to Laclau, exclusion is constitutive, so there must be something that cannot and must not be included.

Insofar that the demand is applied forcefully, be that in acts of civil disobedience, demonstrations or strikes, it finds limited space in Habermas' space. Insofar that the demand seeks not to regulate civil society but to assert a claim to equality that is being denied, it must also adopt a strategic dimension and as such is not necessarily sincere (alternatively, the demand is translated into an opinion, belief or argument and thus made a caricature of itself, in which case sincerity is also lost). Finally, as the demand is based on an initial exclusion, in the form of its populist being, it must effect an identification of itself as the whole; it must create an antagonism, which necessarily pitches itself against 'the caste', 'the power-bloc', 'the establishment' or 'the system' and thus cannot conform to the regulative ideal of inclusion and openness. Even if the popular demand itself operates in accordance with a radically democratic logic, its manifestation at the level of the state – which Habermas' political public sphere is intrinsically connected to – must be antagonistic.

In this sense, the Habermasian political space is anathematic to Laclau. In fact, if politics is centred around the demand and the possibility for the emergence of the populist empty signifier that it engenders, Habermasian political space has a function of *depoliticising* the social. Laclau maintains that politics requires and engenders affectual investment; affect cannot be subtracted from the demand. Yet, this is exactly what Habermas arguably attempts to effect: by asserting that only reason-giving arguments must be counted – arguments that must acknowledge their own partiality and fallibility – affectual expression is less likely to find expression, rendering Habermasian political space void of demands.

In Chapter One, I engaged Gauchet and found the argument that it was the citizen-voter, once removed from the doing of politics, that grasped at Left/Right to understand themselves in relation to other citizen-voters and the whole. In Chapter Two, I engaged Dyrberg and saw him use Left/Right to exclude comprehensive doctrines and guarantee an autonomy on behalf of a strictly political realm. Left/Right enable these moves because they allude to an inherent equality between different parts and because they are fairly neutral in relation to comprehensive doctrines (i.e. they are not derived from any particular comprehensive doctrine). However, in being so neutral, they also render affectual investment in them quite difficult. In my vocabulary, we might say that identification through Left/Right entails an acknowledgement of a partiality to an overarching system and as such lessens your commitment to the particular Left/Right identity. This further explains

why Dyrberg views them as a good thing, as comprehensive doctrines rely more on other modes of identification than Left/Right and are thus further imbued with affectual investment which makes the recognition of fallibility and partiality difficult. The problem is that Dyrberg throws out the baby with the bath water. For Left/Right, especially in a liberal political space that we encounter so very often in modernity, function not only to exclude religious and cultural reasons, but also to exclude many political demands, because these are driven by affectual investment; because these are forwarded with such commitment.

If I bring back the disability activist, Mette Lylloff, I note that she appeals to the in-common through the form of lived experience. She doesn't seek to regulate the common good, but lay claim to the place of the in-common to begin with. She does this because she seeks to lay claims to equal right; she seeks to be seen as a member of the 'space of equals' that is governed by Left/Right. However, in a dominant political space that relies on disinterested reason-giving arguments expressions that are imbued with commitment and that do not acknowledge their own partiality are excluded. As such, there is no room for her political being and nor is there room for the more 'actionistic' approaches she might adopt in relation to the in-common. For both the lived experience and the 'actionistic' approaches rely on and appeal to emotion and unrelenting commitment. Furthermore, as the construction of the demand entails a construction of an identity, the affective dimension and commitment only increases as the demand turns antagonistic.[499] In this equation, Left/Right not only function to effect a(n) (ac)count of reason-giving subject positions, but, as they are similarly divested of affectual investment, they also do not lend themselves to identification. As such, insofar that subjectivity is entangled in Left/Right, for to be partial to a system is still to exist within the paradoxical play of the logic of difference and the logic of equivalence, the required affect is invested with the public subject as the citizen-voter. But as I have alluded to above, Left/Right, instead of bringing out this investment, function to cover up the presence of passion and prevent its expression.

In the previous chapter, I also talked about how Lylloff's expression could be translated into an intelligible part of the hegemonic political space that Left/Right structure. We now see the costs that this entails. First, it entails a complete disentanglement of her potentially antagonistic identity, for the commitment to the antagonistic identity has to be forsaken entirely. Instead there needs to be an acknowledgement of partiality to an overarching

[499] We see this echoed in Badiou's assertion that the mantra of the militant of truth is "keep going!" See Badiou, 2012, p.52.

system. In the case of Lylloff, who makes claims based on a shared humanity, we might argue, following Bobbio, that if she is drafted into the political space in which the public subject reigns, her political being will be translated into a Left identity. But this entails a recognition of a Right identity and an overall acknowledgement that both identities belong to a system wherein expressions take the form of arguments, opinions, beliefs, etc., for only those expressions acknowledge the equality, or *equivalence*, between her identity and the Right identity. When I then argue that Habermasian political space, or the space of the public subject, is a hegemonic political space, I do this because, in seeking to incorporate Lylloff's politics, the space translates this politics and effective sucks out everything that made it potentially radical: the commitment and the forceful exclamation that power and exclusion are real, and fall outside the realm of communication. With the help of Left/Right, the space articulates Lylloff's potentially antagonistic identity to itself and thus averts a potentially threatening confrontation.

This is a problem for demands to equality. It is also a potentially significant claim, and one that has implications beyond the realm of disability activism, for it relates directly to the ability of radical politics to appropriate Left for itself, something that has been tried countless times and a practice that, as we shall see now, Laclau himself was deeply involved with.

5.4. Laclau and Left/Right

I elaborate on the way in which radical politics should engage Left/Right in the next and last chapter, where I also present a few examples to back up our arguments. However, as we are now dealing with Laclau – whose conception of populism I largely take to be synonymous with radical politics – I will first critique his approach to Left/Right. Laclau has on several occasions pitched his political project (what Critchley called democratic hegemony) in relation to Left/Right. This was most notable in some of his earlier writings. In the previous section, we already saw how he, along with Mouffe in *Hegemony and Socialist Struggle*, viewed it as a task for the Left to construct 'democratic hegemony':

> […] the Left should [locate] itself fully in the field of the democratic revolution and [expand] the chains of equivalents between the different struggles against oppression. *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 a radical and plural democracy*.[500]

In *New Reflections on the Revolution of our Time* (1990), Laclau also dedicates a chapter to a discussion of 'building a new Left',[501] after which he also describes his political affiliation, in his youth, to the left faction of the student movement and his membership of the Argentinian Socialist Party of the National Left.[502] Laclau then, at least during the early parts of his career, operated within the Left identity, but even if he since then lowered the frequency with which he spoke to his political project as located within the Left, he still did so on occasion.[503] What can be done, then, is not only to read Laclau against Habermas, but to read Laclau against himself as well; to critique Laclau on the basis of his own writings.

Mostly, Laclau uses the term(s) unproblematically,[504] simply placing radical democracy in the Left camp; that is, he utilises them as the public subject would: as a map of the political community. We know that radical democracy is an opening up of spaces and has more to do with the processes inherent to 'democratic hegemony' than to any sort of positive political project. As such, Laclau clearly does not mean to qualify Left more than to say that Left needs to mean a lot of things at the same time. It is unclear exactly how he wishes to proceed from there, though. Is the point to create antagonisms with the Right? If so, is the Left the category through which 'the people' flows and the Right the category of 'the system'? If that is the case, then I have already argued that the Left/Right dichotomy functions to secure a political space that is free from affective investment and serious commitment, which would make it difficult for 'the Left' to play a productive part in the emergence of 'the people'.

However, there are not just strategic, but also theoretical problems with radical politics seeking to appropriate the concept of 'the Left'. For, as Laclau argues:

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[500] Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p.176. Italics in original.
[501] Laclau, 1990, pp.177-196.
[502] Ibid., pp.197-8.
[503] See, for examples, Laclau, 2005, p.246, and Laclau, 2000a.
[504] In Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p.179, he and Mouffe categorise them as inhabiting the realm of family resemblances to assert that "there is not *one* politics of the Left" (italics in original). That is the closest we get to a problematization of the terms in Laclau.

> A true political intervention is never merely oppositional; rather, it is one that displaces the terms of the debate, that rearticulates the situation in a new configuration.[505]

Not only are Left/Right, as categories of the police, already involved in the 'articulation of the situation', but if "a true political intervention is never merely oppositional", then it would be difficult for the Left to facilitate this, as it relies on the concept of the Right to be meaningful, even if its concrete content is never even remotely stable. It is in this sense that the Left can never signify an antagonism, because it refers to a closed opposition. It may be that we can think of the ways in which Left relates to Right in different ways, but it remains an opposition that is already involved in articulating the situation. As such, Left/Right, far from signifying the possibility of antagonism, rather signify its negation. If that is correct, that Left/Right function to enable the political community to understand itself as *one*, then the channelling of an antagonism through the prism of Left/Right functions to prevent a 'rearticulation of the situation', and instead to preserve the present articulation. If Left/Right function to enable self-understanding on behalf of the political community and antagonisms are the rupture of that understanding, then radical politics must work to effect a rupture of the Left/Right distinction, not to reinforce it by seeking to channel the affective investment through it.

Additionally, Laclau maintains that, in populism, "we are dealing with a part that attempts to incarnate the whole",[506] yet the Left, by definition, does not attempt to incarnate the whole, but only a part of it, the rest of which must be seen to be a legitimate adversary. Therefore, Left/Right may function to secure some kind of agonistic/radical democratic institutionalised order, but as Laclau specifies that this is not the trajectory that radical politics must follow, then we do not see how radical politics can successfully appropriate the Left/Right dichotomy.

To a certain extent we can understand that if it is true that Left/Right structure our political self-understanding, then it is also true that we must work within Left/Right to effect a dislocation. But, clearly, the strength of Left/Right is that their "ontic content"[507] is very malleable. As I explained in three previous chapters, Left/Right function mainly to enable a

[505] Laclau, Ernesto, 2014, *The Rhetorical Foundations of Society*, Verso: London, p.176.
[506] Ibid., p.N/A.
[507] Ibid., p.115.

count of the subject positions in a political community that is forever changing contours, while they, in the process, become intertwined with modes of expressions that are also particular. As such, I am not sure exactly how much 'ontic content' there is to them, which means that the extent to which they structure our self-understanding is more *procedural* than it is *substantive*. This means that (at least in a Habermasian ideal of political space), primarily, they enable an understanding of certain kinds of differences; reason-giving arguments, while they only secondarily enable an understanding of the specific content to those arguments. This means that an advancement of a new argument can never constitute an antagonism in itself and that the very dislocation of the place of the argument in relation to the in-common is needed. Laclau, of course, understands this perfectly, but he does not see that the place of the argument is guarded by Left/Right. In other words, Left/Right function as the confused attempt by public subjects to understand themselves in relation to each other and the whole. However, as they must do this within 'the social', which is constitutively open, this is a very difficult task. Left/Right accomplish this understanding because they enable a subsumption of substantive differences under procedural differences: you can *be* whatever you like, as long as you can express it is in reason-giving argument.

Because Laclau primarily seeks to problematise the substantive signification to the Left, he fails to develop an understanding in relation to their procedural capacity. Laclau, in his eagerness to break from orthodox Marxism, chastises the Left for essentialising 'the social' through economisation and thus failing to link up struggles that cannot be perceived through the prism of the economy.[508] But in doing so, he fails to grasp that 'the Left' is the operable term of public subjects only and that people who think of themselves as falling outside the 'space of equals' in which the public subjects are constituted have little use for them. To link up their struggles to 'the Left' then amounts to an insistence that they express themselves in reason-giving arguments only, for this is the type of expression that Left/Right, in their capacity as markers of the police, provide for. In other words, we might argue that Laclau seeks to name a populist chain of equivalences 'the Left' – a name that stands in for the lack/void of the counter-hegemonic chain of equivalences. But it is impossible to engender affectual investment and commitment in that name, not only because it is partial (and thus at least partly conceptual), but also because it would force the protagonists of the counter-hegemonic chain of equivalences to express themselves in

[508] Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p.177.

terms of arguments directed at other public subjects rather than in terms of a popular demand. This would not constitute a radical politics as the subject positions that would be articulated to that chain, would necessarily have to be people who already have a part in the public. The idea of a Left populism is thus an oxymoron.

Before we move onto the last chapter, where I will forward a performative theory of political space so that we can see Left/Right at work more directly, we might then give a tentative answer to my principal research question: How should radical politics engage with Left/Right?

The first thing to note is that I have argued that Left/Right are both conceptually and historically linked to a particular type of rationalism which codes political being as expressions that recognise their own fallibility and partiality, i.e. as opinions, beliefs, arguments, etc. I qualified one such version of rationalism as Habermasian which has allowed me to offer a conception of the public sphere which, in most democratic societies today, is linked to the state. The gist of the argument is then that in these societies Left/Right structure partial and fallible expressions by public subjects as citizen-voters that, ideally, allow the participants in the discussion(s) to regulate the in-common, including the state and the material reproduction of society that it, and only it, has the means to enforce. In this sense, Left/Right are thus intertwined the state.

However, insofar that radical politics necessarily entails "a part that attempts to incarnate the whole", radical politics can never emerge through the Left/Right spectrum: "Left" can never become the empty signifier. This is the case as, while parts of its 'ontic content' may be emptied, its form, which also remains particular, ties it together with a recognition of another, relational, entity. Furthermore, as I have also argued that Left/Right have a specific function in modernity, which is to ensure an evacuation of radical investment in politics from the in-common, the likelihood of a successful appropriation of 'the Left' is very low. Finally, as 'the Left' is a category native to the public subjects and not to the excluded parts, the insistence on its use amounts to a betrayal of the place of the "organic intellectual" in radical politics – which radical politics must remain tied to.[509] Radical politics consists in the linking up of disparate struggles to effect a radical dislocation of the dominant political space. But as the dominant political space is intrinsically tied to the state

[509] Laclau, 1990, p.195.

in most democratic societies, the radical dislocation must also interfere with the running of the state and the way in which it effects and enforces the material reproduction of society.

While Left/Right are categories of the police in relation to this space, they do not saturate the in-common. There are other ways to engage it, be that through notions of equality, freedom or comradeship, etc., all of which provide much better and more natural avenues for constructing 'the people'.

To be clear, this does not mean that I am advocating for some sort of return to a pre-political era à la Rousseau. In the age of post-Marxism, radical politics is not a political philosophy, but practices effecting ruptures in political space. Radical politics manifests itself in moments in time. It relies on an account of hegemonic space, but it is not spatial in the sense that while it relies on a construction of counter-hegemonic space, in its final stage it expresses itself as historical rather than spatial; as an emergence of the excluded parts as 'the people'. In this sense, when the counter-hegemonic chain of the excluded parts seeks to represent itself as the whole, this is not an anti-democratic gesture, but an attempt to embody the very paradoxical nature of democracy itself. It is not the establishment of a new regime; it is a rupture of the old. In relation to my previous discussion of the state, radical politics then seeks a rupture both with the dominant political space and the state, as the two are intrinsically tied together. The state, then, in its current configuration, relies on the dominance of the public subject as the citizen-voter and the Left/Right political space to which the citizen-voter belongs, to account for its democratic being. This means that radical politics, in seeking to effect a rupture of the existing regime, necessarily seeks to effect a rupture not just with the state and its capacity for material reproduction but also with the dominant political space and the subject that is articulated in relation to it (the public subject as the citizen-voter). As such, and perhaps most importantly, radical politics cannot be practised from the perspective of order, which seeks only to effect (ac)counts. It can only be practised from the perspective of exclusion, which seeks to manifest the democratic deficit in all such (ac)counts.

5.5. Conclusion

I first outlined Laclauian political space and argued that it is constituted in a chain of equivalences that is structured around nodal points inherent to a dominant particularity. I used this to critique Habermas for seeking to construct a space to structure how 'politics' should be conducted on the basis of reason-giving arguments. I argued that this conceptualisation functions to depoliticise 'the social' as it insists that excluded parts must

engage with the in-common through forceless reason-giving argumentation, even if force is constitutive to their exclusion. Finally, I contended that radical politics should not engage the Left/Right spectrum as, not only is it tied up in this situation, but also because Left/Right legitimise a constitutive opposition between parts occupying the same space.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I outlined the main tendencies in Laclau's political writings. I argued, with Laclau, that there is a constitutive lack/void to all identity and space and that this necessitates an exclusion from within the subject to signify its radical negativity; to signify everything that it is not. With Laclau, I furthermore argued that radical politics is engendered by this 'logic of lack'. The subject, by which I mean to refer to both space and identity, is held together through a dynamic between a logic of equivalence and a logic of difference. It is tied together with a system and as such is equivalent to other subjects within that system. However, qua being a distinct subject, it is also different from other subjects. As such, the subject is always divided. This division at the heart of the subject is caused by lack/void and enables a rearticulation of the degree of equivalence that the subject has to a particular system. Precisely, radical politics is conceived as a manifestation of a subject that exists at the limits of a particular system. Finding itself excluded, it seeks to construct a popular subjectivity that pitches itself against 'the system'. To do this, it attempts to articulate itself to other subjects and create a chain of equivalences between it and them, thus creating a rival hegemonic system. The further this chain of equivalence stretches, the more individual subjects will have to empty themselves of their particular content to the point where they become empty. At this point the popular identity is achieved. The particular subjects present themselves as the whole, as 'the people', and thus constitute a radical antagonism vis-à-vis the system.

From within this logic, I also discussed the prospect for radical politics to channel itself through 'the Left'. I noted that Left/Right function to police Habermasian political space, which is very much conceived of from within liberal constitutional order. Because of this, I argued that we should conceive of Habermasian Left/Right structured political space as a hegemonic project that seeks to demarcate a political space in which subject positions are constituted as different reason-giving beings – in the next chapter I look to find examples of performances of these ideals of Habermasian political space. I argued that Left/Right function much as Dyrberg and Gauchet contend: to remove the subject from the doing of politics and to defuse affectual investment in politics. However, based on this, I argued that

radical politics should *not* seek to appropriate 'the Left'. For not only is it a category of the already included within the 'space of equals' and thus functions to effect a depoliticization through a removal of affectual investment in the political space that it helps police, but, perhaps most crucially, because it also legitimises a constitutive division between opposites, between a Left and a Right, when the popular subject emerges on the condition that it identifies itself with the whole, with 'the people'. It may be that in a left-wing institutionalised liberal democracy, Left/Right can engender some sort of constitutive openness to 'the social', but Laclau explicitly argues that this is not what he has in mind with his populist project. To tentatively answer our principal research question, then: radical politics should *not* channel itself through the Left/Right spectrum.

In the next and final chapter, I look to exemplify some of the arguments made in the thesis thus far. As I do this, I develop a performative theory of political space. I tie in the relevant arguments that I have made in relation to the function of Left/Right in Habermasian political space before I engage Jeffrey Alexander and argue that the Habermasian political space is ritualistically performed, primarily by the figure of the journalist. I then engage a few examples of these performances to bring the structuring capabilities of Left/Right to the fore. This situates our argument not just in, and as a friendly critique of, democratic theory, but also as a form of ideology critique.

Chapter 5: Left/Right and the performance of the public subject

1. Introduction

I have argued that Left/Right function to depoliticise the social. With Ernesto Laclau, I argued that radical politics entails an affective investment in an empty signifier that represents excluded parts as the whole. Left/Right depoliticize because they rely on dispassionate expressions that recognise the legitimacy of competing perspectives. In this chapter, I outline this argument in more detail and consider some examples showing how this depoliticization takes place and demonstrating why radical politics should refrain from channelling itself through 'the Left' metaphor.

To do this I first outline the exact ways in which Left/Right function in political space. I argue this function is twofold. They enable a formation of subject positions that can be counted in relation to the whole and they qualify the expression that those subject-positions can make. To make this argument I place the 'citizen-voter' front and centre. This citizen-voter is once removed from the doing of politics and as such can express itself in a number of ways, be that in forms of opinions, arguments, beliefs etc. But what those modes of expressions have in common is that they all conform to a mode of doing politics that recognises that one opinion, argument, belief, etc. is relative to other, different, ones. I exemplify this by engaging an example from the 'left-wing' blogger Thomas Clark who attempts to change the ontic content of 'the Left'. Clark identifies with 'the Left' and thus reproduces the category amid his intervention into its ontic content. However, I also note that Clark seeks to economise the Left/Right distinction, but in a way that relates it to beliefs about the proper management of the economy rather than to reflect a partition of the social in terms of class. In this sense, even if Clark attempts to further polarise the social, he does not engage the public subject as the citizen-voter and thus does not engage the realm of the ontological – only the realm of the ontic.

On the basis of this illustration, I make the argument explicit that Left/Right function to connect the ontic content to an ontological form. The ontic content is the different types of beliefs, opinions, arguments etc., that one can have, whereas the ontological form are the beliefs, opinions, arguments etc. themselves. This means that there is no room for modes of expression that do not conform to the nature of the citizen-voter in the Left/Right-ordered hegemonic political space. Left/Right then both function to ensure that no issues can, in principle, be excluded from the political space, and to call upon the whole to debate the issue in a manner consistent with the nature of the citizen-voter. I argue that this also

explains why parts of the Green movement is so difficult to place, as they, rhetorically, aligns themselves with scientific truth, which means that it does not recognise its own partiality.

Finally, upon noting that the hegemonic political space can be staged, I argue that this staging takes the form of a ritual performance. With Jeffrey Alexander, I outline the features of ritual performances and then show what a Habermasian Left/Right political space (one kind of political space native to the citizen-voter that is centred around arguments) would look like. I also argue that this performance is always an extension of the performance of the identity of the figure of 'the journalist'. Noting this, I engage two examples where panels are assembled. There we see how they ensure an exposition of a variety of arguments but delimit the role for the excluded parts to evidence their lived experiences, their subjective truths. Instead, when they find expression, they are made to forward dispassionate arguments that recognise their own parity to other arguments, which means that they cannot effect a dislocation of the category of the citizen-voter through a participation in the performances of the Left/Right-ordered hegemonic political space, by channelling its affectual intensity through the category of 'the Left'.

2. Left/Right and the politics of the social/ontic

2.1. Introduction

In this section, I reintroduce the concept of the ontological difference and emphasise our argument that Left/Right constitute subject positions and a mode of relations that is centred around the citizen-voter. To make this point I engage an example from the blog, *Another Angry Voice*, that seeks to economise the social but nevertheless order it via Left/Right.

2.2. Politics of the social/ontic

As we saw in Chapter Two, Chantal Mouffe conceptualises a realm of 'the political' which, we later learned, she counterposes to a realm of *the social*. As we saw in Chapter Four, Laclau, following Heidegger, conceptualises a realm of *the ontic* and a realm of *the ontological*. Both Mouffe and Laclau aim to distinguish conceptually between spatial politics and temporal politics. The realm of the social, or the ontic, is the realm of sedimented practices. Disputations can occur in this realm but none that can shake the foundations of those practices. Antagonisms, on the other hand, can shake these foundations. As such, they are different to mere disputations. While disputations then take

the form of sedimented practices, antagonisms call into question sedimented practices. While antagonisms are then *of* the social, they nevertheless function to disrupt it. The disputations of the social, while potentially important in relation to the emergence of an antagonism, are disputations that serve mostly to reproduce society and thus beget a forgetting of the contingency of society's practices. As we saw more clearly in Laclau, the politics of the social still contains differences, but it is a difference that falls within the confines of the hegemonic discursive system, within which individual differences are meaningful in relation to the system itself. One of the central claims of this thesis is that I consider this system in terms of spatiality, or, rather, I equate 'the system' with the concept of a discursive, political, space.

In one sense, we can thus think of difference within a discursive system in terms of subjectification. For, insofar as that space enables a count of different parts, it also enables an identification of persons with those parts. However, through Laclau, we cannot think this via the Althusserian concept of 'interpellation', where subjectification entails a hailing by ideology.[510] Rather:

> Interpellation is the terrain for the production of discourse, and […] in order to produce subjects successfully, the latter must identify with it […] Interpellation is [thus] conceived as part of an open, contingent, hegemonic-articulatory process.[511]

Mladen Dolar encapsulates this difference between Louis Althusser and the theorists of lack as he argues that, "for Althusser, the subject is what makes ideology work; for psychoanalysis, the subject emerges where ideology fails".[512] This means, as I argued in the previous chapter, that identification is always failing, but that this is a constitutive and productive failure. Failed subjectification is thus a constitutive feature of discursive space.

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[510] Althusser, Louis, 2012, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', in: Žižek, Slavoj (ed.), *Mapping Ideology*, Verso: London, pp.100-140, pp.128-136.
[511] Laclau, 1990, p.210.
[512] Dolar cited in Žižek, Slavoj, 2000, 'Class Struggle or Postmodernism? Yes, please!', in: Butler, Judith, Laclau, Ernesto & Žižek, Slavoj (eds.), *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*, Verso: London, pp.90-135, p.115.

In short, this means that the concept of subjectification remains an ineradicable feature of ideology, even if we must nuance it in order to account for its constitutive failure.

In another sense, subjectification entails a mode of relation between subjects/subject positions. So, as I have argued, there is a count of subject positions where they are named, and there is an account of subject positions, where they are to express their relationality. Let us first look at the count in relation to Left/Right.

2.3. Left/Right in relation to subjectification

I have argued that Left/Right are categories of the police count, providing for a way in which subject positions can be counted and are enabled to give an account of themselves. Left/Right might not be the only categories of the police, but that they are largely hegemonic in relation to the ordering of political space is beyond dispute.

We see one such example of the way in which they order political space in the writings of Downs, the political scientist that I engaged in the first section of Chapter One. In Downs' writings, Left/Right mark out an ideological marketplace, in which vendors (political parties) can set up shop and attract consumers based on their location within the spectrum. In Downs, then, Left/Right constitute and order political space in a manner that allows for vendors, but also consumers, to identify each other.

As Gauchet argues, Left/Right provide a map of the political community in which people can place themselves and be placed in relation to other members of the political community. What we saw with Laclau, however, is that such placing, such representation, also becomes a reconstitution of a political identity. In other words, when we define ourselves in relation to Left/Right, we also reproduce our own identities as structured by Left/Right. It is in this sense that Left/Right, as markers of a political space, enable subjectification – on the basis of which the space and its subject positions also reproduce themselves.

We see this logic at work in the many problematics surrounding the meaning of 'the Left'. For example, in a piece on Another Angry Voice – one of the extremely popular blogs supporting Jeremy Corbyn, current leader of the UK Labour Party – Thomas Clark explains why he is "proud" to be a "lefty".[513] First he qualifies the Left/Right distinction:

[513] Clark, Thomas, 2017, 'Why I'm a "lefty" and proud of it', *Another Angry Voice*, 26 Oct, viewed 26 Oct, 2017, <https://anotherangryvoice.blogspot.com/2017/10/why-im-lefty-and-proud-of-it.html?fbclid=IwAR2K2kDHijQKIbkJ7rwrvAVKoABWiVLrHfFIPtFCy9NqxAfUXESOjNZvj4M>.

> "The more left-wing a person is the more they believe in public ownership, and the more right-wing a person is the more they believe that private individuals and corporations should run everything for their own profit."[514]

Having qualified the distinction through an economisation, he moves on to running specific issues through Left/Right, arguing that a left-wing position entails a support for the democratic organisation of public services, but not for a planned economy. Beyond that it entails a support for workers' rights and for social liberalism in general. Mostly, though, it is a defence of the concept of 'the Left' and functions as a call to wear the name Left proudly.

What Clark accomplishes is a representation of 'the Left' as a subject-position – a 'hegemonic-articulatory' operation as he seeks to qualify the content of 'the Left'. In this sense, he is attempting to effect a subjectification of his readers in order to make them identify with 'the Left'. However, this identification is also tied up in a mode of relation between the different parts of the Left/Right space. I turn to that now.

2.4. Left/Right in relation to deliberation

In this example, Clark argues that Left/Right relate to the economy and that if you are on the Left, you support public ownership etc. and vice versa. He attempts to articulate the hegemonic category of 'the Left' to his brand of social liberalism and thus effect a subjectification of his readers. However, as there is also a mode of relationality involved in subjectification, things take an interesting turn. For while he seeks to economise the distinction – he seeks to 'make it about' the economy – he does not seek to replace it. He is not saying that the social is really divided in accordance with the social relations of production; rather, he is saying that the social is divided in relation to arguments and opinions over the proper place for the state in relation to the economy.

If we look at the quotation above, we see that the operable word is not, then, 'public ownership' or 'profit', but the word 'believe'. Human beings, in this example, are constituted as individuals with beliefs. Clark attempts to qualify the contents of those beliefs, but the category of 'belief' has a foundational role and functions to relate the different parts of Clark's political community to each other.

[514] Ibid.

Here, then, we start to see some of the qualities that Left/Right have. With Gauchet, I argued that they are constitutively open to new meanings. The fact that Clark can even attempt to qualify their content is testament to that. However, with Jacques Rancière, I argued that space not only names and counts parts, but also effects a mode of relationality between parts that is *particular*. We can now cement my argument that Left/Right function as Torben Dyrberg described.

Clark seeks an economisation of the political community. However, by constituting the political community through Left/Right, he effects a *form* of the parts (the subject positions) of the community as centred around the concept of belief. I have engaged others who have sought to effect an economisation of the political community, but they have simultaneously sought to constitute the political community explicitly around the markers of class. There, the relationality is centred around objective interests and the immanence of the social relations of production, but in Clark, it is centred around 'the belief'. Clark pens his piece in the context of 'lefty' being used as a slur, as a style choice or an affectation. As such, he does not strictly seek to articulate his intervention to an explicitly deliberative stance. However, the effects are the same, by invoking Left/Right, he channels the interests relating to the social relations of production, into beliefs.

In other words, the concept of class, which Dyrberg contends alludes to the strong up/down mode of identification, is neutered once it is channelled through the Left/Right spectrum as its subjects become opinionated members of a public rather than, for example, striking militants. As I described in the previous chapter, the demands inherent to the subject positions constituted around class then also lose their political edge, as they are instead made to take the form of the belief/opinion.

Finally, once we translate the notion of 'belief' into the notion of 'opinion', we start forming the building blocks for 'arguments'. This is the end point for the political community envisaged by Clark's attempted subjectification of 'the Left': a political community constituted by Left/Right in which different subject positions engage in reason-giving argumentation and deliberation. We might then reiterate the argument I forwarded in the previous chapter through Laclau: Left/Right effect a depoliticization of the social. Left/Right may enable a constitutive openness to their meaning, their content, but they also function to suck out passion – which is a necessary feature of the emergence of the popular subjectivity particularly and identification more generally – by subjecting the content to a particular form that corresponds to the nature of the citizen-voter. In other

words, Left/Right subjectification is a partial subjectification in the sense that it primarily begets an identification with the public subject as the citizen-voter, who it is that determines the relationality between Left and Right subject positions. The passion necessary to sustain identification is then invested in the identity of the public subject, rather than in a 'lefty' identity, meaning that no popular subjectivity can emerge from the category of 'the Left'.

We can now also tie in some of the other scholars I have engaged thus far. First, we can note how our transposition of a Left/Right meta-space onto Riker's work on issue-spaces now makes perfect sense. In Clark, we see an identification of issues – public ownership, workers' rights, etc. – in relation to which individual preferences can be formed. In Chapter One, I argued that, counterposed to this, there must be a meta-space onto which issues can be mapped and I qualified this meta-space via Left/Right. Clark briefly attempts to teach heresthetic techniques, as he argues that, "it's actually highly likely that the person trying to insult you for being a lefty has economically left-wing views too",[515] insinuating that left-wingers, rather than trying to change a preference strictly in relation to Left/Right, could attempt to change it by tying it to another issue. However, the important thing here is that Riker's mode of relationality is tied to the concept of 'preference', which is not miles apart from Clark's concept of 'belief'. Riker, and some of his political science colleagues, clearly understand something about the work that Left/Right do in modernity – they might even have assisted in effecting it – even if exclusion remains elusive to them.

We might also relate this example to the writings of Gauchet. Gauchet notes that a different economy of representation allowed for the citizen-voter to take the form of part participant and part observer of the political process. While his account is particular to French history, it speaks to an economy of representation in which the public subject becomes once removed from the political process and takes on the particular form of the citizen-voter. I have already likened this economy of representation to Habermas' account of democratic deliberation structured around the reason-giving argument. With Clark, we can now see how this conceptualisation of the public subject plays out today. It entails Clark – writing for a blog that has had a major role in the 're-polarisation' of the political community[516] – embodying a particular public subject position constituted by Left/Right

[515] Ibid.
[516] Guardian Staff, 2017, '25 most-shared articles about UK election are almost all pro-Labour', *The Guardian*, 1 June, viewed 1 June, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/jun/01/25-most-shared-articles-about-the-uk-election-labour-jeremy-corbyn>.

and telling of a relationality between Left and Right conceptualised in terms of 'the belief', and in doing so, advocating a mode of politics that effectively removes the subject from the more 'actionistic' approaches to the in-common. In other words, Left/Right are caught up in a matrix of practices that centre around the ability of subject positions to represent themselves as belonging to political space through acting as citizen-voters.[517] Left/Right enable a rearticulation of the content of arguments (ontic), but they also tether the in-common to a particular form of expression (ontological).

2.5. Conclusion

In this section, I engaged an example in order to show how Left/Right enable subjectification of citizen-voters.

3. Left/Right in time, in space and in 'stagings'

3.1. Introduction

In this section, I argue that Left/Right are dependent on Claude Lefort's conception of modernity; they structure a political space that is constitutively open to new issues, but also effects a closure of the social. As such, Left/Right are historical categories that connect the contingent practices of the social with an underlying order of the political. Finally, I argue that we can think of political space in terms of 'staging'.

3.2. Left/Right in political space

Left/Right were not always discursive markers for political space. Political space itself owed its emergence to the political event that was the French Revolution. Left/Right are then contingent upon the existence of a certain type of order. In particular, they are contingent on the democratic order that revolves around Lefort's empty place of power.

In the Chapter Four, I considered Laclau's logic of lack. This logic stresses that the material world cannot be immediately grasped by the faculties of understanding but must instead be channelled through discourse, through representation – which in turn structures materiality. Relatively stable representation is guaranteed by a dominant system, a universal, in relation to which particularities can relate their difference to each other. The problem is that, as the universal cannot relate its identity through deferral to a higher authority, it must instead eject one of its parts and treat it as its own radical negativity – as

[517] This is what Badiou refers to as he argues that opinions are the mode through which order is reproduced. See Badiou, Alain, 2005, *Metapolitics*, translated by: Jason Barker, Verso: London, p.24.

everything that the system is not – in order to represent itself. To Laclau, this logic manifests itself most clearly in political space.

Political space is of a categorically different nature to other discursive spaces. This is the case as it is tied to the state and thus constitutes the enforcement of the means of social and material reproduction: it regulates the legitimate use of violence. Being political space, it also revolves around the empty place of power and must insist that design for rule be justified through allusions to the abstract category of 'the people'. This is why the political public sphere is, to Habermas, infinitely more important than other types of public spheres, for it seeks to embody 'politics'. We saw this when I first engaged Harold Mah and Gauchet to note the emergence of the political public subject and with Habermas as he asserts that the bourgeoisie attempted to 'fill' the concept of 'the people' through its immersion in the political public sphere. There the embodiment of 'the people' was accomplished exactly through an alignment of particular beings with the public. This is why the democratic issue par excellence, for Habermas, regards regulatory principles to ensure inclusion, sincerity, etc. in public deliberation. The point is, in our democratic order, to embody 'the people' and bestow democratic rule with legitimacy, you must exist in the political public sphere.[518]

As such, political subject positions are identities insofar as they can be embodied in something that exists in the material world. However, when political space needs something to represent itself in relation to, this form of representation also must be embodied by something. It is here that the question of exclusion gains its prominence in relation to political space. For, we all depend on the system:

> […] as located beings, we are always elsewhere, constituted in a sociality that exceeds us. This establishes our exposure and our precarity, the ways in which we depend on political and social institutions to persist.[519]

To Judith Butler, we are all precarious, depending on the system for our persistence, but political space bestows agency onto ourselves and thus lets us master our own precarity.

[518] Laclau, Ernesto & Mouffe, Chantal, 1987, 'Post-Marxism without Apologies', *New Left Review, No*. 166, pp.79-106, pp.82-3.
[519] Butler, Judith, 2015, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA., p.97.

The problem then comes for the excluded – especially the ones who function as a representation of the radical negativity of the identity of the political space – as they are not only denied that agency but find their precarity exposed through deliberately constructed apparatuses of oppression designed to (d)eliminate the existence of the *other*. This is why the concept of political space is so important, because it is there that the system, the sociality, manifests itself.

In this thesis, I have argued that Left/Right function to represent this political space (to itself), to police the distribution of sensibilities and the (ac)count of subject positions within it. This is a space that functions in accordance with the logic of lack and, as such, while things may be excluded at any one point, they can, through hegemonic struggle, secure inclusion. The empty place of power ensures that no system is ever locked in time, but that it is always viable to change. As we glimpsed with the example in the previous section, Left/Right might then be said to facilitate this logic, because they are always open to new meanings. As such, we can read Clark's intervention as an attempt to secure a place for certain beliefs about the economy within the dominant political space, to represent a person with those views as a political public subject. But Clark's intervention constitutes a preoccupation with the social/ontic, and as I have argued, while Left/Right might facilitate a change in content, they also become intertwined with a mode of expression that befits the nature of the citizen-voter – a problematic which Clark fails to engage.

3.3. Left/Right in relation to form and content

This mode of expression that is particular is then conceptualizable as *form* whereas the particular utterances are conceptualizable as *content*. Content belongs to the realm of the ontic whereas form belongs to the realm of the ontological. Using the terms that I have operated with thus far, we can conceptualise content as particularities and form as the universal; content as particular practices and form as the system which makes those practices both legible and imbued with legitimacy. With Mouffe, we might then say that a dispute over content is a dispute of politics whereas a dispute over form is a dispute over the political. This has the purpose of designating the site of antagonism in relation to form.

The point of radical politics is to bring forth the failure to representation, to expose the ways in which the ontic is overdetermined, to reactivate the moment of institution. It is situated within the democratic revolution as it relies on an emergence of 'the people'. However, we have learned that Left/Right are involved with the closure of the social. In that sense, they are both constitutive of modernity and function to reign in its more radical

nature. They enable a closure of the social because they (1) seek to account for the whole and (2) enable a mode of relationality between the parts of the political community that is particular. They are constitutively open to new meanings and contents, but on the condition that the content takes a form compatible with the citizen-voter.

Radical politics, however, engages form, not content. It is in this sense that it must turn its back on Left/Right. For Left/Right function to prevent a reactivation of a particular type of political space – a political space that is thoroughly hegemonic. They might facilitate an ever-increasing amount of opinions, beliefs, arguments, etc.; they might seem to be paired so well with the radical impulses of modernity, but they run counter to the ideals of democratic hegemony. They police *others* – like Mette Lylloff (the disability activist from the previous chapters) – who are excluded from the sociability of the system because its mode of relationality is simply not for them. Subject to oppressive practices, Lylloff appeals to a discourse of equality by evidencing her truth, her lived experience. But such mode of expression is not heard. Instead, in the Left/Right space, she is told to be a citizen-voter or simply not be. Truth, subjective or objective, has no currency in this space.

A politics that engages form, then must engage the mode of relationality that this space engenders, and which Left/Right play a part in enabling. But, as I have argued, it is not Left/Right that constitute this form in the last instance – that is the citizen-voter. Radical politics then must engage the citizen-voter, but not necessarily Left/Right. Left/Right, function to bestow a common-sense quality to the space that they police. In their capacity as spatial, orientational, metaphors Left/Right constitute this space, but in the last instance the mode of relationality is determined by the citizen-voter. They then function to deepen the sedimentation of this particular political space. But, like the space they police, they have a past (the early days of the French Revolution), they have a present (whatever we wish to call the current ideological order centred around the citizen-voter), and they will have a future – they are not timeless. Something came before Left/Right and, some day, something will come after them.

A question however arises as to whether this 'after' will only come about when the empty place of power is no more, and political space dwindles back into the nothingness, or if it is possible to construct a different political space with room for more 'actionistic' expressions of 'the people'? I will not answer this here, but whatever the answer may be, this political space, constituted around the citizen-voter who is once removed from the doing of politics, is so thoroughly hegemonic that it is unlikely to happen anytime soon. As such, the many

hollow claims that Left/Right are a topology of a bygone era will continue to be proven wrong, just as the protagonists of The Third Way look remarkably stupid today:

> Crudely put, the left – and most liberals – were for modernization, a break with the past, promising a more equal and humane social order – and the right was against it, harking back to earlier regimes. In the conditions of developed reflexivity which exist today, there is no such clear divide.[520]

Seeing only content in Left/Right and not form, they confuse the issues that come and go with the fundamental ways in which we relate to one another as political beings – and the exclusions that engender. In other words, they cannot see beyond the citizen-voter. Interestingly, we can in this example also see why parts of green politics is so hard to relate to Left/Right. Anthony Giddens argues that a politics beyond Left/Right should embrace green politics[521] and we can see the affinity. For Giddens, the point is to adopt a pure managerialism – in other words, to sever the tie between the public subject and politics even further. Parts of green politics can be thought within such a framework, because they constitute themselves through evidence and the category of truth (a bit like Lylloff).

One example of this we find in relation to the movement known as extinction rebellion, which was founded in 2018 in the UK. This movement engage in direct action, but also has representatives that go on tv to explain their motives and demands, one of which is the establishment of a citizen's assembly on climate and ecological justice. On 9 October, Rupert Read, one of Extinction Rebellion's spokespersons, appeared on the BBC Politics Live talk show, where the topic of conversation involved extinction rebellion and climate change.[522] Among others, a politician from both Labour and the Conservative party were also present. Facing hostility for the types of political expression that extinction rebellion had adopted (direct action), Read was asked if his approach would bring the two politicians 'on board'. To this Read replied that, "we are here to tell the truth … you can't negotiate

[520] Giddens, 1994, p.49. Badiou, and Sartre, incidentally, also do not look too good. See Badiou, Alain, 2008b, *The Meaning of Sarkozy*, translated by: David Fernbach, Verso: London, p.25.
[521] Giddens, 1994, p.211.
[522] Extinction Rebellion, 2019, BBC Politics Live | Dr. Rupert Read | Extinction Rebellion, *YouTube*, 9 October, viewed 2 Jan, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zl0qMuF6ec0>.

with the atmosphere".[523] In other words, Extinction Rebellion's politics, much like that of the advocates of the Third Way, seeks to do away with division and refuses to subsume itself as but another partiality beholden to an overarching system. It is a politics of (scientific) truth that does not acknowledge legitimate difference and its own partiality, as what is at stake is our survival as a species.[524]

To be clear, then, the politics of this particular green movement is not one of negotiation; of compromise; of talk and reasoned debate. It is not a politics that values the peculiar dialectic in which competing arguments generate enlightened resolutions and rational consensuses. Its basis lies beyond the argument, opinion, belief, etc., for those expressions not only presuppose an inherent fallibility on behalf of its subjects but also a belief in the amelioration of that fallibility through inter-subjective exchange. Its basis lies instead with (scientific) truth and thus lies outside public discourse itself. It is located within the world of academic discourse, which has produced conclusive consensuses on the trajectory of the planet. This is why this politics cannot be thought within Left/Right political space, as Left/Right structures public expressions that recognise their partiality to the space of the citizen-voter, and thus cannot make sense of expressions that refuse to do so.[525]

3.4. Left/Right as channelling issues

I have argued that Left/Right function to order the political community. As such, they represent the whole. However, as the relationality of the space that it orders often centres around deliberation, this 'whole' manifests itself in relation to issues. I exemplified this in Clark's intervention into the meaning of 'the Left', which I explained through Riker's thoughts on issue-spaces. Insofar that we can also conceptualise parts of green politics as an issue, then, rather than an attempt to represent the whole without acknowledgement

[523] Ibid., 11:36.
[524] See Swyngedouw, Erik, 2011, 'Whose environment?: the end of nature, climate change and the process of post-politicization', *Ambiente & Sociedade*, Vol. 14, No. 2, pp.69-87; and Alain Badiou cited in Feltham, Oliver, 2008, *Alain Badiou: Live Theory*, Continuum: London, p.139.
[525] While scientific truth rarely features in mainstream politics, we recently saw another attempt at bypassing politics through rhetorical alignment with scientific truth in the case of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020. During this time, the British Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, repeatedly justified his government's decisions by claiming that it was just doing what science told him to do. As such, he sought to do away with politics (this, of course, also enabled a forgetting of the fact that the scientific method exactly relies on conflict and division to form). Incidentally, the Danish Prime Minister, Mette Frederiksen, explicitly said that her government's decisions during this same pandemic were political decisions, which invited opinions to be formed about them and dissent to manifest itself legitimately.

of its own partiality, it can be located both on the Left and on the Right,[526] depending on how it is articulated.

We can understand this by going back to Dyrberg. Dyrberg argues that Left/Right are spatial, orientational metaphors that function to channel other modes of identification, such as Up/Down, In/Out and Front/Back. Specifically, Dyrberg notes how issues engender the activation of one or more of these other orientational metaphors[527] (i.e. immigration is In/Out). As, to Dyrberg, Left/Right channel these other modes of identification (which can then be conceptualised as relating to issues), into a political symbolic order that is 'freestanding', they also engender a specific space within which issues are addressed. In reference to parts of green politics, then, insofar as it is an issue that seeks to articulate itself to the Left/Right dichotomy, it lends itself to a reconstitution as something that people can have an opinion or belief about and thus surrenders its claim to truth. To reiterate, then, to place on the Left/Right spectrum, you must recognise your own partiality to the system, which engenders modes of expression native to the citizen-voter. When partiality is not recognised, and a truth value is instead assigned to the expression – be that scientific truth or some form of subjective truth – the expression cannot place and thus cannot be intelligible.[528]

We can further explain the dynamic between issues and the whole through reference to the concept of debate. In Habermas, I noted the prolificacy of validity claims in communication and if we conceptualise Left/Right, not as a spectrum but as a polarity, we can see that Left/Right, beyond enabling a form of deliberation, specifically enable debate – debate organised around propositions (validity claims). Left/Right enable politics to be thought in terms of divisions. Insofar that Left/Right channel Up/Down etc., they accomplish a representation of various divisions within society as *issues* for debate – where Left/Right mark out sides that subject positions can both identify with and reproduce through the expression of arguments, opinions, beliefs, etc. In other words, we see that we can perhaps qualify the concept of deliberation further by noting the prevalence of 'the debate' – which in turn also allows us to align this idea of the function of Left/Right more

[526] See Gray, John, 1993, *Beyond the New Right*, Routledge: London.
[527] Dyrberg, 2006.
[528] Interestingly, we might also conceive of the work of truth and reconciliation commissions as somewhat other to Left/Right as they are about "acknowledgement" of 'subjective' truth rather than debate aimed at consensus. See Tutu, Desmond cited in wildebees, 2009, 'Tutu and the TRC', *YouTube*, 10 Dec, viewed 26 Aug, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ujOL8FS2wv4>.

closely with Habermas' concern for the consensus, as debates often have propositions that are voted on by the end of the session.

3.5. The 'staging' of political space

From the coffeehouses and the salons, it is now Left/Right that, in some way, instantiate the politics of the social. It is now the deliberative practices that can, in principle, be had anywhere, that bring political space into being. Certainly, there are various attempts to undermine Left/Right as markers of political space through the staging of publicity in manners that do not conform to deliberative practices. We might find one such example in Butler's *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (2015), where she, in a very Laclauian vein,[529] argues that publicity is always embodied, and thus can be played around with through alternative movements of bodies:

> […] acting in concert can be an embodied form of calling into question the inchoate and powerful dimensions of reigning notions of the political. The embodied character of this questioning works in at least two ways: on the one hand, contestations are enacted by assemblies, strikes, vigils, and the occupation of public spaces; on the other hand, those bodies are the object of many of the demonstrations that take precarity as their galvanising condition.[530]

Examples of these types of 'stagings' of publicity were perhaps most on display in relation to the occupy movements,[531] but they have a rich history. While they may then seek a disruption to the orderly function of the capitalist system,[532] they also challenge the hegemonic political space that Left/Right police. As such, they are interesting attempts at constructing counter-hegemonic political spaces. We might conceptualise these events as

[529] Butler, 2015, p.4.
[530] Ibid., p.9.
[531] Žižek, Slavoj, 2011, 'Occupy first, Demands come later', *The Guardian*, 26 Oct, viewed 7 Aug, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/oct/26/occupy-protesters-bill-clinton>.
[532] See Oliver Marchart cited in theevent asca, 2013, 'Oliver Marchart, The Breach: Art, Dance, and Political Intervention, Part 1', *YouTube*, 6 Dec, viewed 8 March, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lcAujtXOKY0>; and Marchart, Oliver, 2013, 'Dancing Politics. Political Reflections on Choreography, Dance and Protest', in: Siegmund, Gerald & Hölscher, Stefan (eds.), *Dance, Politics & Co-Immunity: Thinking Resistances*, Diaphenes: Zürich.

'stagings' of counter-hegemonic political space, as artistic happenings taking place in a particular time and place.

But this has the effect of designating a place for stagings of the hegemonic political space as well. In fact, we can see multiple examples of stagings of the hegemonic political space online. In some places, such as in Facebook comments, debate takes a somewhat trite form and rarely escapes the expressions of 'beliefs' coupled with mockery and insult. In other places, the citizen-voter comes to a, perhaps, fuller expression as arguments are exchanged and systemically categorised. One such place is Kialo – an online debating platform. There, people can make propositions, based on which others can chime in and respond either in the negative or the affirmative – responses that can in turn be answered either in the negative or the affirmative.[533] The European Union, finally heeding Habermas' call for a European public sphere,[534] has also established an online portal to facilitate debate between different people,[535] and in various places, people can even challenge each other to debates via webcam, which other people can view and judge.[536] These stagings all have in common a compatibility with the mode of expression of the citizen-voter – beliefs, opinions, arguments, etc. All fall under this category. It may be that Habermas stresses the importance of engaging in rational-critical argument and bemoans the 'current' state of the public sphere,[537] but the point is that all conform to a basic mode of expression by the citizen-voter – the dominant form of the public subject.

Through Laclau, I argued that this has an effect of depoliticising the social. We can qualify this depoliticization even further with Alain Badiou:

> What do the sovereignty of the spectator and the absolute primacy of public debate actually mean? That 'politics' is the name of what concerns, not determinant judgement, but reflexive judgement […] [Politics comes to be found] in a public judgement

[533] For one such example, see Kialo, 2018, 'Is undocumented immigration into the United States a problem?', *Kialo*, 17 Oct, viewed 5 Aug, 2019, <https://www.kialo.com/is-undocumented-immigration-into-the-united-states-a-problem-21749?path=21749.0~21749.1&active=~21749.1&action=comments>.
[534] Habermas, Jürgen, 2001b, 'Why Europe Needs a Constitution', *New Left Review, No*. 11, pp.5-26.
[535] European Youth Portal, 2019, *Online Debates*, N/A, viewed 5 Aug, 2019, <https://europa.eu/youth/erasmusvirtual/activity/online-debates_en>.
[536] For one such example, see, Edeb8, 2019, 'Debate Now', *Edeb8*, N/A, viewed 5 Aug, 2019, <http://www.edeb8.com/debate>.
[537] Habermas, 1992b.

> which states whether *this* – which is not an object, but an appearing, a taking place – pleases me or displeases me, and is exercised in the debate of such judgements.[538]

In relation to Left/Right, while these debates always revolve around issues – such as immigration, the economy, education, etc. – they can take place only on the basis of a discursive landscape wherein they are all part of the whole. As I have argued, it is Left/Right that account for this whole and thus enable the debate to take place to begin with. While Left/Right are only occasionally referenced in these debates, they thus help structure the agonistic relationship between the participants, enable the audience to make sense of the terrain and the players in the debate, and, finally, facilitate a form of adjudication based on reflexive judgement.

These stagings can take place wherever and whenever. I have used examples from the internet, but they happen regularly in various setting when people get together, be it within the confines of their homes or in various communal setting. They morph their participants into citizen-voters and instantiate the hegemonic political space that always-almost lays claim to the empty place of power.

3.6. Conclusion

In this section, I argued that Left/Right function to effect an openness of content but a closure of form. In this sense, they function to reign in some of the more radical tendencies of modernity. They accomplish this by channelling issues into topics for debate.

4. The performance of Left/Right political space

4.1. Introduction

In this section, I engage the cultural pragmatics of sociologist Jeffrey Alexander to make the argument that stagings of political space can be conceptualised as ritual performances of the Left/Right hegemonic political space. I dissect the hypothetical features of such performances and note how they are often an extension of the performance of the identity of the figure of the journalist.

[538] Badiou, 2005, p.16. Italics in original.

4.2. The theory of (ritual) performance

Alexander has developed a sociological theory that he refers to as "cultural pragmatics".[539] It relies on many of the more theoretical insights that were forwarded by the proponents of the 'discursive turn', but, being sociological, also enables us to identify texts, with which pure theoretical contributions rarely concern themselves.

To Alexander, (Western) society has undergone a change during the last few hundred years. "Contemporary societies revolve around open-ended conflicts between parties who do not necessarily share beliefs," he writes.[540] He stresses that while what came before this was often conceptualised as being heavily imbued with ritual communication, it would be a mistake to think that we now live in a world devoid of this. Instead, echoing Lefort, he argues that, as society has become more complex, the symbolic realm has become "de-fused".[541] De-fusion is then a defining feature of our time and assigns a feeling of contingency and artificiality to social practices that always threatens to undermine stable representation of the world.

When we read this with Lefort, this de-fusion becomes the de-capitation of the body of the king. In Alexander, the way in which this is ameliorated is through the proliferation of ritual performances that seek to "re-fuse" the symbolic realm. We can easily square this with some of the theory that I have engaged so far. For example, the Laclauian concept of representation accounts for how identity can beget a forgetting of its own contingency and *fuse* itself into an easily comprehensible being. The Rancierian concept of the (re)distribution of the sensible also functions to suppress 'void and supplement'.[542] The point is, to continue with these more sociological terms is not to depart from the theoretical work that I have already done. It is simply to complement it with work that enables us to identify and categorise concrete texts of political space in a more systematic manner.[543]

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[539] Alexander, Jeffrey C., 2004, 'Cultural Pragmatics: Social Performance Between Ritual and Strategy', *Sociological Theory*, Vol. 22, No. 4, pp.527-523.
[540] Ibid., p.528.
[541] Ibid., p.529.
[542] Rancière, 2010, p.36.
[543] Alexander himself traces his work back to that of Durkheim, who was of course also occupied with the way in which society could become possible. See Alexander, Jeffrey C., 2016, 'Performance and Politics: President Obama's Dramatic Reelection in 2012', *The Drama Review*, Vol. 60, No. 4, pp.130-142, p.131.

To move on, then, the goal of the ritual performance in modernity is to fuse the otherwise fractured symbolic landscape, to create performances that re-instil a confidence in authenticity (of political space). To explain this, Alexander also engages Habermas, but he derides him for begetting a misrecognition of political space tout court with one of its stylized expressions: the public sphere. Alexander argues that modernity has given rise, not to a public sphere, but to a public stage and that this is a symbolic forum in which social actors can perform their reasons:

> Rationalist philosophers (Habermas 1989 [1962]) speak of the rise of the public sphere as a forum for deliberative and considered debate. A more sociological formulation would point to the rise of a public stage, a symbolic forum in which actors have increasing freedom to create and to project performances of their reasons, dramas tailored to audiences whose voices have become more legitimate references in political and social conflicts.[544]

While this is a rather unsophisticated reading of Habermas, the diagnosis is true, insofar as social actors can engage politically in all kinds of ways that they might deem advantageous. Importantly, however, their performances must seem authentic in order for them to effect a 're-fusing' of the symbolic space. As such, we might say that the emergence of this public stage is what prescribes the possibility for articulation and hegemony. It is what makes deliberation possible, just as it is what makes strikes and occupations possible. But this does not mean that we can all exist in radically free ways and perform however we would like. For not only must performances seem authentic to be effective, but, as, Laclau reminded us in the previous chapter, there is nothing outside ideology; there is nothing outside the social. We must work to subvert ideology through engaging its limits, through engaging its 'interpellative failures'. As such, the manner in which we can 'perform our reasons' is also circumscribed by the nodal points proper to the hegemonic Left/Right political space – nodal points that converge around the citizen-voter.

However, as I showed in the previous section, there are also other ways to perform political space; there are other traditions that centre around more 'actionistic' modes of expression.

[544] Alexander, Jeffrey C., 2011, *Performance and Power*, Polity Press: Cambridge, UK, p.49.

Radical politics must embrace those spaces and work to get more people to participate in them. As I shall exemplify, to perform reasons within the hegemonic political space is to surrender the part of oneself that is radical. It is a self-defeating endeavour. It is to participate in the modes of exclusion that render the lives of *others* precarious.

4.3. Beyond the performances by social actors to performances of the political community

So, social actors can perform their reasons on the public stage – a stage which they are free to instantiate because of the nature of modernity. In our vocabulary, such a performance would be a performance of an identity.[545] However, in the previous section, I argued that Left/Right are markers of the whole political space. As such, through staging communicative practices with the aid of Left/Right, a dominant conception of political space can itself be performed, within which individual subject positions can be free to express their differences (in relation to the system). As we will see later, this performance is itself often an extension of a particular performance by a particular social actor – the journalist – whose identity is tied to notions such as impartiality and objectivity,[546] but it remains a ritual performance nevertheless.

We can see this as we look at the elements that Alexander uses to identify a ritual performance. These elements are (1) actor, (2) collective representation, (3) means of symbolic production, (4) *mise-en-scene*, (5) social power, and (6) audience.[547] A ritual performance is made of up (1) actors, in that it must be embodied in some sense. It also contains (2) a language or a mode of appearance that the actors can use to signify various ideas and movements. After this, it requires (3) actual material objects – props – that are themselves infused with meaning. It also possesses (4) a sense of direction – the actions are not just random but planned. This means that the physical and discursive space within which the performance takes place is imbued with a sense of *direction*. Penultimately, (5) social power is a factor, in that one not only sometimes needs material wealth in order to produce a fused performance, but one also needs hermeneutical access to the system of

[545] Alexander's theory is not far from Butler's theory of performativity and he speaks to her on several occasions. See, for example, Alexander, 2011, p.54. For Butler on performativity, see her first, and best, intervention into the matter at Butler, Judith, 1988, 'Performative acts and gender constitution: An essay in phenomenology and feminist theory', *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 40, No. 4, pp.519-531.
[546] Bogaerts, Jo, 2011, 'On the Performativity of Journalistic Identity', *Journalism Practice*, Vol. 5, No. 4, pp.399-413, pp.407-409.
[547] Alexander, 2011, pp.83-84.

signs that enables one to enact a mode of appearance that is understandable to many. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the performance must have (6) an audience. If there is no audience, Alexander maintains, it is not a performance.[548]

Here we thus have the building blocks for ritual performances. I have argued that the dominant political space requires performance in order to re-fuse the symbolic forum. With Laclau, we might conceptualise the performance as a representation of the hegemonic political space. From this, we can argue that this is an inherently hegemonic-articulatory practice as it seeks to place subject positions within it through actively featuring them in the performance. In a very literal sense, the performance of the political space embodies the subject positions and makes them very apparent. I have argued that the dominant political space is structured around the citizen-voter. That is, the hegemonic political space effectively bars its subjects from 'actionistic' political expressions and instead structures 'politics' around what Badiou refers to as reflexive judgement. In Chapter Three, we looked at one such account of political space – Habermas'. There we understood political space as centred around reason-giving argument. But I also argued that, even though Habermas worked from within liberal constitutional theory, his political space should be read as an ideal, an ideal that can be invoked and performed. With that in mind, let us look at what a performance of a Habermasian space might look like.

(1) In terms of actors, it requires human beings who engage in reason-giving arguments. Insofar that Left/Right structure this performance, they function to separate bodies that present different arguments to each other.

(2) In relation to language and appearance. The Habermasian space is a place for dispassionate argumentation undertaken in accordance with communicative reason. This means that it requires quite a formal setting in which participants have equal access to the resources, hermeneutic or otherwise, in order to make their points. There is no swearing. Importantly, subjects do not interrupt each other and back up their words with reasons. Being a performance of an essentially liberal space, subjects also speak as individuals, not as representatives of groups. Subjects also acknowledge their own partiality.

[548] This is one aspect where Alexander breaks with Butler, who adopts the Arendtian notion of the "space of appearance" which can be called upon in even the most obscure circumstances. See Butler, 2015, pp.72-98 and Arendt, Hannah, 1958, *The Human Condition*, University of Chicago Press: Chicago, pp.199-206.

(3) Insofar that it is, in a substantial sense, an audio-visual performance, one also needs props. As this performance is often undertaken in association with the journalistic media, these include microphones and name tags, although items that indicate that people are debating each other in a rational-critical manner also feature, such as notepads and visual manifestations of statistics.

(4) It is in relation to direction that we can start to locate the actual performers of the public sphere, for it is with this that we see that the people who embody the subject positions within the space that is now performed as public are not the people who also direct it. The directing instead exists in the total production of the ritual and thus also manifests itself in the work that has been done prior to the actual performance, work that most importantly frames the conversation and identifies relevant perspectives. Actors can possibly assume direction during the performance through strategic interventions,[549] but they will need to be identified as relevant actors before they can accomplish that. This direction/production is embodied by the moderator or interviewer.

(5) As power is one of Habermas' *others*, the access to material and hermeneutic power that enables an authentic performance of his ideal political space must necessarily be hidden. The Habermasian political space can in principle be performed by anyone; the whole can be brought together in communicative reason anywhere, but a "[s]uccessful performance depends on the ability to convince others that one's performance is true".[550] It is thus normally only performed by those who have material and hermeneutic power, i.e. big news corporations.

(6) Finally, in terms of audience, as Habermasian political space idealises inclusion, it is likely to feature audience participation. This participation should be structured in terms of reason-giving arguments. However, insofar that the performance is hegemonic, what matters is that the performance reaches as many people as possible. The more people who bear witness to the performance, the more people are likely to recognise the mode of

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[549] Hall, Stuart, Connell, Ian & Curti, Lidia, 2007, 'The 'unity' of current affairs television', in: Gray, Ann, Campbell, Jan, Erickson, Mark, Hanson, Stuart & Wood, Helen (eds.), *CCCS Selected Working Papers, Vol. 2*, Routledge: Oxford, pp.326-364. Jonathan White, whom we would be amiss not mention, thinks of Left/Right as discursive resources to be employed by social actors to forward their interests. In this sense, they enable actors to assume direction as well. See primarily White, 2011, but also White, Jonathan, 2012, 'Community, transnationalism, and the Left-Right metaphor', *European Journal of Social Theory*, Vol. 15, No. 2, pp.197-219; and White, Jonathan, 2010, *Left, Right and Beyond: the Pragmatics of Political Mapping*, LEQC Paper No. 24, viewed 12 April, 2019, <http://www.lse.ac.uk/europeanInstitute/LEQS%20Discussion%20Paper%20Series/LEQSPaper24.pdf>.

[550] Alexander, 2011, p.28.

expression as legitimate and see themselves in one of the actors in the performance and in relation to the whole structured by Left/Right.

Having identified these criteria, we can now look at examples of performances of the hegemonic political space. But first, I would be remiss not to expand on the role of the figure of the journalist in relation to this performance – even if an incursion into journalism studies is beyond the scope of the thesis. Not only does the figure of the journalist often manifest itself in big news corporations and thus has access to power and resources, but the very identity of the journalism is geared towards a performance of the whole. In the critical journalism literature, Nico Carpentier, relying on Laclau and Mouffe, has outlined different modes of doing journalism. Common to the dominant (liberal) modes is that:

> […] media organizations are deemed to be crucial in the distribution of information, which enables citizens to exercise formal (through elections) and informal (through 'public opinion') control over the state as a watchdog or fourth estate.[551]

He argues that, on the basis of this function, the journalistic identity is constituted around four nodal points, one of which is objectivity.[552] Nevertheless, as objectivity is a difficult thing to prove, it is sometimes sold as impartiality instead.[553] In other words, as the figure of the journalist sees itself as a vital cog in the "democratic process",[554] it falls to the performance of this identity to ensure that 'the whole' is represented within their coverage of events/issues. Impartiality, then, functions to give all parts of the political community an equal say. It functions to ensure that there is no bias towards one part over another.

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[551] Carpentier, Nico, 2005, 'Identity, Contingency and Rigidity: The (Counter-)Hegemonic Constructions of the Identity of the Media Professional', *Journalism*, Vol. 6, No. 2, pp.199–219, p.202. See also Vos, Tim P., 2012, '"Homo Journalisticus": Journalism Education's Role in Articulating the Objectivity Norm', *Journalism*, Vol. 13, No. 4, pp.435–449; Carpentier, Nico & Trioen, Marit, 2010, 'The particularity of objectivity: A post-structuralist and psychoanalytical reading of the gap between objectivity-as-a-value and objectivity-as-a-practice in the 2003 Iraqi War coverage', *Journalism*, Vol. 11, No. 3, pp.311-328; and, of course, Bogaerts, 2011.

[552] Carpentier, 2005, p.201.

[553] See Zelizer, Bonnie, 2017, *What Journalism Could Be*, Polity Press: Cambridge, UK, p.84; and Tuchman, Gaye, 1972, 'Objectivity as Strategic Ritual: An Examination of Newsmen's Notions of Objectivity', *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 77, No. 4, pp.660-679, p.666.

[554] Unsworth, Fran, 2019, 'Critics of the BBC should stick to the facts', *The Guardian*, 1 June, viewed 10 June, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2019/jun/01/bbc-news-coverage-has-faults-but-its-not-broken>.

However, as I have been at pains to describe in this thesis, this performance then also necessarily glances over the part that "has no part".[555]

The performances of the hegemonic political space are thus often extensions of the performances of the identity of the journalist,[556] which is why I look at journalistic programmes for our examples. Also, we might further elaborate on our choice of examples by categorising them as belonging to the particular genre of "structured panel discussion[s]",[557] which function most vividly to give form to impartiality and inclusion, while also clearly separating different perspectives.

4.4. Conclusion

In this section, I engaged Alexander who supplied us with the tools to dissect ritual performances of the Left/Right-ordered hegemonic political space. I then noted how this performance is often an extension of a performance of the journalistic identity. This performance puts a particular focus on the norm of impartiality, which enables a count of the whole at the cost of the 'part that has no part' in the whole.

5. Examples and findings

5.1. Introduction

In this section, I engage two examples of performances of the Left/Right ordered hegemonic space. I argue that radical politics should *not* seek to channel itself through the category of 'the Left', as this makes it seem as if excluded parts share in the equality of the political space on the basis that they must surrender their ability to evidence their exclusion by making their expression dispassionate and by recognising that their exclusion is not in any way a truth, but merely one perspective among many.

5.2. Example 1: KCRW's 'Left, Right and Centre'

We are now finally at the place where we can exemplify the function Left/Right have in political space. First, I take a look at one of the most obvious examples: the very popular American radio show and podcast 'Left, Right and Centre'. I have identified this program on the basis of its conformity to ritual performances of Habermasian space and because it

[555] Rancière, 1999, p.9.
[556] Over concerns for brevity and focus, we have not engaged Butler's concept of performativity here – which is what Bogaerts relies on. See Butler, 1988. She popularised the approach in her most famous work. See Butler, 1999.
[557] Patrona, Marianna, 2012, 'Journalists on the news: the structured panel discussion as a form of broadcast talk', *Discourse and Society*, Vol. 23, No. 2, pp.145-1962, p.147.

most vividly exemplifies the work Left/Right do. Pitching himself as occupying the centre, journalist Josh Barro invites guests to represent the Left and the Right, in order to stage a "civilised yet provocative" confrontation.[558] I here look specifically at an episode that addresses whether Left or Right 'does freedom best'.[559]

First, I note the ways in which it conforms to a Habermasian performance. There is an inclusion of voices based on the Left/Right spectrum. Felicia Wong and Gene Sperling represent the Left and Kenneth Hersh and Rich Lowry represent the Right. Wong appears to be the most Left whereas Lowry appears to be the most Right. The conversation they have is also largely uninterrupted, and all the actors provide reasons for their arguments. It is furthermore quite professionally set up and performed live at a conference. Barro moderates the discussion, through which the principles of communicative reason find some expression. However, while it does not seek a consensus, even if one of the panellists would prefer it if it did,[560] the discussion remains centred around some sort of acknowledged parity between perspectives and various participants often oblige the nature of the citizen-voter by qualifying their arguments with "to me",[561] "I think",[562] "I feel",[563] etc.

The discussion itself centres around freedom. However, as this is not a neutral discussion but instead one framed by the journalist (both through the questions that Barro asks and qua his choice of guests), discussions of freedom quickly start to revolve around the difference between negative and positive freedom and how issues around "economic freedom" fits into it.[564] Thus, economic freedom, with its assignation of the human being as a consumer, eventually comes to qualify the discussion, to the detriment of other ways of conceptualising freedom. For, there are of course many other ways of conceptualising freedom,[565] but few can be placed so solidly within the liberal constitutional tradition,

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[558] KCRW's Left, Right and Centre, 2019, 'Left, Right and Centre', *KCRW*, N/A, viewed 15 July, 2019, <https://www.kcrw.com/news/shows/left-right-center>.
[559] Barro, Josh, 2019, *Bonus Episode: Right or Left — Who's Best For Freedom?*, 3 May, viewed 15 July, 2019, <https://www.kcrw.com/news/shows/left-right-center/bonus-episode-right-or-left-2014-whos-best-for-freedom>.
[560] Hirsch in ibid., 47:00.
[561] Hirsch in ibid., 14:45.
[562] Wong in ibid., 21:55.
[563] Sperling in ibid., 16:00.
[564] Ibid., 38:48.
[565] See, for example, Lacan, Jacques, 2001, *Écrits: A Selection*, translated by: Alan Sheridan, Routledge Classics: London, p.5, where "freedom [...] is never more authentic than when it is within the walls of a prison".

which is caught up in the performance. It is also noteworthy that the word 'poverty' does not feature even once.

As their conversation turns onto the topic of choice in relation to health care provision – and the implication of freedom in relation to that choice – something interesting starts to occur. Both Lowry[566] and Sperling[567] (neither are black) start talking about what black people would 'prefer', which goes unchallenged by Barro. This is interesting, as we can read Habermas' emphasis on inclusion as an argument that those who are affected by the conversation should have voice. As such, we might argue that the conversation takes an anti-Habermasian turn. However, Left/Right function to disguise this seemingly obvious example of exclusion. They do this by presenting the political community as fractured, but a fractured whole, while constituting its parts as arguments, opinions, beliefs etc. In that sense, one does not need black people to construct arguments about what 'black people want', as people are not constituted through their lived experience, but through arguments. What is important then, from the perspective of inclusion, is that all arguments are presented – and a panel consisting of representatives from the Left and the Right functions to make this appear to be the case, as all the fractured parts of the whole can presumably be represented through it.

We might further elaborate on this critique by examining KCRW's promise to perform "civilised" confrontations. One critical reading of Habermas, assigned to Rancière, stresses the degree to which various people, through being immersed in power structures, are deemed "incapable of rational speech".[568] We might argue that this is the work that the concept of the "civilised" is doing in relation to the exclusion of black voices in this example: Barro seeks to qualify a conversation that is aloof from the petty disputes taking place in, for example, Facebook comment threads, but in doing so enforces a restrictive embodiment of 'the civilised' which is linked to those people who are deemed to already understand how to construct dispassionate reason-giving argumentation – people whose lived experiences do not engender demands around which affectual investment takes place; people whose commitment to the debate out trumps their commitment to the excluded. In other words, as Barro performs the dominant political space with the aid of Left/Right, he also relies on a mode of expression that is particular to the citizen-voter – a mode of expression that assumes an absence of force and its structuring effects. As such,

[566] Lowry in Barro, 2019, 27:48.
[567] Sperling in ibid., 44:25.
[568] Russel & Montin, 2015, p.546.

he invites bodies onto the stage who are already fluent – and perceived to be fluent – in this type of expression. Importantly, they are already fluent in this type of language because they have training and experience in embodying the public subject. They have been included in this category for a long period of time and do not experience any systemic violence or force around which a political identity can form. In that sense, we are in a realm that depoliticises the social. Had KCRW dared to invite poor black people onto the panel, these guests could have evidenced their lived experiences and laid claim to the space of equality that Barro performs. But Left/Right enable KCRW to avoid this daring in their function to identify the relevant citizen-voters to mark a democratic debate.

To sum up then, KCRW's 'Left, Right and Centre', performs the dominant political space in which the common good is discussed dispassionately and in a 'civilised' manner. This performance is only possibly because it takes place through the Left/Right metaphor, as Left/Right, both historically (as I showed through Gauchet) and conceptually (as I showed through Dyrberg) is linked to the exact type of (dispassionate) rationalism that prescribes a structured difference in order to realise the rational (albeit always imperfect) consensus. As I argued in Chapter Two, Left/Right, as concepts of the police, enable a count of the different parts of society, thus forming an appearance of a fractured whole, by constituting a space where different parts can be compared with one another, from the extreme Left to the extreme Right. Additionally, they enable an account to be given by those parts, which, crucially, must acknowledge their partiality and thus express themselves in terms of arguments, opinions, beliefs, etc.

5.3. Example 2: BBC's 'Question Time'

If we look at another example of the performance of the dominant political space, we can see the dynamic at play even more clearly. In one sense, BBC's Question Time is not as good an example of the structuring role of Left/Right in relation to the count of subject positions as 'Left, Right and Centre', as it does not explicitly identify the participants as Left/Centre/Right. However, as the BBC is exposed to an incessant flow of criticisms for being either too left-wing or too right-wing, the producers (subsumable under the figure of the journalist) are perfectly capable of picking participants based on this categorisation.[569] In any case, there are instances of people counting participants in Question Time on the

[569] James Harding in Plunkett, John & Martinson, Jane, 2015, 'BBC news chief derides allegations of leftwing bias', *The Guardian*, 2 June, viewed 10 June, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2015/jun/02/bbc-news-chief-politicians-funding-james-harding>.

basis of their positions on the Left/Right spectrum, so it does not always matter how the performer envisions it,[570] in relation to Left/Right's capability to structure political space.

BBC's Question Time is also a panel discussion programme. It takes place once a week. To ensure inclusion, the show frequently has members of the BAME community on the panel and representation from people affected by the topic under discussion. The show also changes location every week to ensure geographical inclusion, as audience members participate in the staged deliberation. There is also a moderator. In some ways it is then more Habermasian than the previous example, as, for example, arguments about 'what black people want' are arguably more sincere and honest when coming from a person who is also black. However, there are also more interruptions so, by emphasising inclusion in relation to representation more so than the previous example, the discussion also becomes less streamlined.

The specific example we concern ourselves with here is broadcast from 4 October 2018 and concerns the degree to which 'the UK is racist'. After George Mpanga (GM), who is from the BAME community, asserts that he thinks many British people 'carry xenophobia in their hearts', the microphone goes to an audience member (AM1), before another audience member (AM2), who is from the BAME community, chimes in. David Dimbleby (DD), the moderator, is also present, and you hear various shouts from other audience members (OAM) as well. I reproduce the exchange here:

> AM1: George, have you actually looked at the numbers? The UK is one of the least racist societies actually across Europe.
>
> GM: Oh Phew! Thank you so much. So I didn't get stopped by police, sitting outside my mum's house earlier this year – that didn't happen to me? Oh thank you! I should have just explained that to the police officer who accosted me...

[570] For one such example, see Burton-Cartledge, Phil, 2015, 'Is there left or right-wing bias on BBC Question Time?', *New Statesman*, 17 Sept, viewed 10 June, 2019, <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/media/2015/09/there-left-or-right-wing-bias-bbc-question-time>.

AM1: But they are talking about ending preferential treatment for Europeans, so we can take people from Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand to come in…

GM: Oh Phew. Thanks, bro.

DD: The woman waving there… Then I'm gonna take two more points and then we will go to another question.

AM2: It's funny that you are a white man saying that. It is actually hilarious. You are a white man saying that there is no racism in this country…

AM1: I never said there was no racism…

AM2: How are you going to experience it? You're a white man. You are saying that British people are the least racist…

OAM: Racist!

AM2: Hold on. How am I racist?

OAM: You're being racist…

AM2: How am I racist? You're not the one walking down the street and being screamed at. That's not happening to you. You're not a young black man walking across the street being stopped by the police.

OAM: Calm down!

AM2: Don't tell me to calm down. I don't need to calm down, because you're not experiencing that, and that's why you don't… [blurry][571]

There are a few things worth noting here. First, we can see that the two modes of expression used by GM and AM1 are different. AM1 makes an argument that is based on statistics. It is dispassionate and reasoned. On the contrary, GM and AM2, like Mette

[571] Fun Factory, 2018, 'Racism in UK debate gets heated', *YouTube*, 5 Oct, viewed 10 June, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hz7W5j6paVw>.

Lylloff, offer arguments based on lived experience. They are claims to a kind of subjective truth. They are impassioned. They are not open to refutation. This is especially clear in the arguments of AM2, who is told to 'calm down'.

We can here find some of the features of the hegemonic political space on naked display. To re-cap, to Laclau (and Mouffe), identity is necessarily impassioned. Passion, or commitment, is an intrinsic component to identification. However, as I argued with Dyrberg, Left/Right function to suck out the appearance of passion in expression. This is why the public subject, as the citizen-voter, has adopted them to (ac)count (for) its being – because the public subject is once removed from the doing of politics. It is once removed from the doing of politics because it has a home within the hegemonic political space. It does not suffer the yoke of objective violence.[572] Its precarity and reliance on sociability is not immediately apparent. In Laclauian terminology, the requests of citizen-voters are most often met, which means that political identities (identities articulated in opposition to 'the system') – which exactly entail affective investment and commitment to some kind of demand – are not generated from them. Affectual investment in that identity is of course a given, but this is only apparent when its hegemony is threatened.[573] In other words, when the hegemonic political space is not threatened, the subject positions that belong to it can account for their being in ways that are completely understandable to the other subject positions who also belong. However, when the hegemonic political space is threatened and these subject positions now, in some form or another, must engage *others* who do not understand them, their commitment to that political space, which secures their being to begin with, necessarily shows as the inclusion of those others would change the nature of the political space and thus change them. As much as the citizen-voter is then wedded to this peculiar type of dispassionate rationalism, it betrays itself when having to justify the rationalism upon the display of its contingency.

Now, obviously, the less accommodating the hegemonic order, the more political identities can arise, but that is not the point here. Rather, the point is that the performances of the hegemonic political space are not the place where this lack of accommodation expresses itself directly. Instead, they constitute attempts by the hegemonic space to 're-fuse' the

[572] I borrow this concept from Žižek. See Žižek, Slavoj, 2008, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*, Picador: New York.
[573] See , for example, Greenwald, Glenn, 2019, 'Beyond BuzzFeed: The 10 Worst, Most Embarrassing U.S. Media Failures on the Trump-Russia Story', *The Intercept*, 20 Jan, viewed 8 Sept, 2019, <https://theintercept.com/2019/01/20/beyond-buzzfeed-the-10-worst-most-embarrassing-u-s-media-failures-on-the-trumprussia-story/>.

social.[574] In other words, these performances do not function to expose their own contingency, but to hide the fact that it is contingent to begin with.

Insofar that these performances then constitute attempts to 're-fuse' the whole, Left/Right become entangled in them. As we saw elsewhere, the Left/Right spectrum assumes an equality between Left and Right[575] – an ideal that is intrinsic to the liberal constitutional order. Left/Right tell a story about our world that is palatable to the public subject.[576] Indeed, the story constitutes the public subject. This is why the expressions of GM and AM2 are so problematic. They do not acknowledge a parity between arguments, and they are impassioned. They do not acknowledge parity because they are attempting to lay claims to the political space, the 'space of equals' itself. They thus engage this space in a different way to the citizen-voter. Additionally, they express themselves passionately because their identity is not constituted in terms of Left/Right but in terms of exclusion, injustice and unfairness. Their identity is constituted through a lived experience of disempowerment and oppression. They are acutely aware of their exclusion from the sociability of the system. As such, they have the potential to disturb the performance of the hegemonic political space because their mere presence undermines the identity of, especially, the Habermasian variant of the citizen-voter. This is the case as they can attest to the fact that equality, per Mouffe and Schmitt, is always substantial. While performances are thus carried out to re-fuse political space, we might argue that they can be appropriated and made to serve other purposes. If we relate this to our discussion of the difference between ontic/ontological, and Laclau's insistence that 'there is nothing outside ideology', we might even say that these kinds of subversive performances which refuse to conform to the norm, provides the only platform for a politics that is concerned with the radical exposition of (the mechanisms of) exclusion.

We might also argue that GM and AM2's appearance on Question Time shows that the hegemonic political space is changing or not as rigid as I have laid out here; that subject positions within it can account for their own being in a myriad of ways and that GM and

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[574] If we read this in relation to the example from Another Angry Voice, we can see that the 'mainstream media' currently has a problem representing the Left/Right-structured hegemonic political space authentically. See also Wright, James, 2017, 'Someone counted how many right-wingers appear on BBC Sunday Politics. Bloody hell.', *The Canary*, 19 Dec, viewed 28 March, 2018, <https://www.thecanary.co/uk/2017/12/19/someone-counted-many-right-wingers-appear-bbc-sunday-politics-bloody-hell-tweets/>. As alternative Left media tries to appropriate 'the Left' and economise it, the journalists are failing to keep up, which leads to allegations of bias. This is a different problematic than the one we are pursuing here, though.

[575] To Bobbio, they are even *about* equality.

[576] Hoare, 2010.

AM2 far from being excluded from it actually belong to it. However, it should be noted that while GM and AM2 make claims to subjective truth, they feature within a context where those claims to truth are counterposed to other arguments. They are acknowledged as participants in deliberation, but through that very participation their expressions are rendered partial to other expressions and thus robbed of their value as subjective truths. They appear on Question Time, but when they attempt to perform their identity fideliously they are told to 'calm down'. The question then becomes one of how they are represented within this performance of political space. For if participation entails a 'calming down' and a recognition of equality between participants, even if they are differentiated by power, to what extent do they lose their radical expression? To what extent does the fact that equality is substantial become apparent through the performance? In other words, if GM and AM2 surrender their particular performances to the laws of intelligibility (the laws dictated by the citizen-voter), to what extent does that constitute an articulation of a potentially political identity to the hegemonic system and thus constitute a denial of the mechanisms of power – rather than their exposition – that beget their precarity to begin with?

We might here recall my argument from Chapter Three on Mette Lylloff's predicament. While her example is not from a panel deliberation, like the two examples in this section, like GM and AM2, Lylloff seeks to lay claim to the hegemonic political space through the exposition of some sort of truth. In that chapter, I argued that her inclusion into this space was a faux exclusion, based on a translation of her expression into an expression that recognises its own partiality; based on a translation of her demand into an argument.

The examples in this section serve to clarify exactly how this translation, and subsequent depoliticization, takes place. Both Lylloff and GM and AM2 seek to beget a recognition of a truth of their situation. However, as GM and AM2 immerse themselves in performances of the hegemonic political space, rather than being simply caricatured into the debate (or 'the conversation') by others (much like black people are the first example of this section), we see the mechanisms of the translation more clearly. AM2 is actively told to be quiet, as this is a space for strictly 'civilised' debate and GM is having his reasons derived from lived experience contested by statistical reasons, which essentially equates the two and leaves them both partial to each other and to the overall logic of argumentation. The result is that the radical potential of the identities that Lylloff, GM and AM2 represent is neutered and made to appear as equal to the other identities involved in the debate.

The point I have argued is that this apolitical articulation happens when radical politics seeks to channel its demands through 'the Left' metaphor. Notably, GM and AM2 appear in the space, but they only seek to make their expression intelligible to a certain extent.[577] They speak in a dialect that is understandable to people, but they do not position themselves as public subjects: they do not speak on the basis of a shared belonging and history and they do not seek to take up 'the Left' metaphor. Indeed, there is not a single mention of 'the Left' in any of Mpanga's political podcasts.[578] He understands perfectly that his being is excluded from the hegemonic political space.[579] As I have already noted, he shares in this observation with Lylloff. The point for radical politics is the linking up of these kinds of struggles. And this cannot play out in performances of the hegemonic political space, as the formation of a popular subjectivity relies on processes that are *other* to the hegemonic space.

5.4. Left/Right depoliticise the social

The two examples above indicate how Left/Right function in political space. As I argue that they function to depoliticise the social, let us first remember the radical politics of Laclau, which I use to counterpose to the function of Left/Right. Laclauian populism revolves around the empty signifier. It consists in the unmet demands of various groups, which, as they start to see themselves as excluded from the system, link up and transform their disparate *democratic* demands into one *popular* demand: to represent 'the people' tout court and re-establish democracy. This is a process of articulating different demands together and thus creating a counter-hegemonic chain of equivalences. What marks out a populist chain of equivalences (as opposed to a 'normal' one), however, is that it does not centre around a dominant particular that poses as a universal, but that it instead leaves the place of the universal empty. It is then this emptiness that is injected into the identities of the groups making the demands. Importantly, this emptiness is represented by a pure name (Laclau uses the example of 'Peron'), which enables affectual investment in the identity of the popular demand. This investment leads to the forceful attempt by the popular identity (an excluded part) to represent itself as the whole: the popular identity represents itself as the embodiment of 'the people' in its totality and counterposes itself

[577] George Mpanga understands perfectly what is needed to be intelligible. See Channel 4 News, 2019, 'George the Poet on youth violence, representation, and limitations of government', *YouTube*, 24 July, viewed 12 Aug, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pKwpjsWN80w>, 26:00.
[578] George the Poet, 2019, 'Have You Heard George's Poetry', *George the Poet*, N/A, viewed 12 Aug, 2019, <https://www.georgethepoet.com/podcast-library>.
[579] Mpanga in Channel 4 News, 2019.

only to power – the phenomenon that seeks to delimit and restrain the people from self-government. To Laclau, after the populist moment has materialised, there is no utopia in sight. Laclau is not a political philosopher. As such, he has never categorised a regime as *populist*,[580] adopting a focus on movements instead.

We have counterposed this ideal of populism to the current hegemonic liberal constitutional order, which constitutes political space on the basis of specific practices. I have argued that this constitution centres around the public subject as the citizen-voter – who both participates in and observes politics – and to whom Left/Right are invaluable markers of the political space. To qualify this space even further, I have engaged Habermas and argued that he presents us with one ideal of a political space that is situated around the citizen-voter. I have argued that this political space is saturated by reason-giving arguments, which Left/Right function to order so that they can conform to the principles of 'democracy, publicity, inclusion and egalitarianism'. Left/Right purport to accomplish this as they allude to an equality between participants while also being fairly neutral – which means that it is difficult to invest passion into an identification with Left/Right; which means that it is difficult to engender political commitment in an identity that must consider itself as partial to identities that have their demands met. I have thus argued that the hegemonic political space functions to depoliticise the social in the sense that it, through employing Left/Right, makes gestures towards representing 'the whole', while insisting on a relationality between subject positions that is particular and unhelpful for the investment of passion.

We can specify the problem with this gesture when we relate it back to our discussion on the relationship between radical politics and the state. In the previous chapter, I argued that radical politics necessarily must relate itself to the state, because demands are most often material and the material reproduction of society is enforced by the state. However, when excluded parts appear (or are caricatured in) on performances of the hegemonic political space, their demands are turned into partial arguments in which they are equal parts to other arguments, which is how the political subject position is configured within this space. In other words, these performances beget an appearance of political equality without ever problematising the role of the state in the material reproduction of society.[581]

[580] This has not stopped others from applying Laclau's work to so-called populist regimes. See Waisbord, Silvio, 2013, 'Democracy, journalism, and Latin American populism', *Journalism*, Vol. 14, No. 4, pp.501-521.

[581] In relation to Marx's critique of Hegel, for this political space, not only does the state become "*of*" civil society, it is dissolved in it. See Artur, C.J., 1970, 'Editors Introduction', in: Marx, Karl, 1970, *The*

The state becomes dissolved into the debate in which only the forceless force of the better argument supposedly prevails. This makes the exposition of the exclusionary power wielded by the state impossible to conduct as power, insofar that it rests with the state, is expelled from the conversation.

Our research questions revolved around the extent to which radical politics should seek to channel itself through 'the Left' metaphor. On the basis of this description of Left/Right's function in the hegemonic political space and on the basis that Left/Right allude to a recognition of parity between Left and Right, I argue that radical politics should *not* seek to take up the Left metaphor, because radical politics consists in a part that represents itself as the whole. When seeking to channel its impulses through Left/Right, radical politics is thus made to give up the things that make it radical.

In this chapter, I have, with the help of Alexander, argued that the Left/Right-ordered hegemonic political space can be performed (as an extension of the performance of the identity of the journalist). On this basis, I have engaged two examples. Both examples conform largely to the Habermasian ideal of political space – most notably because both examples seek an inclusion of reason-giving arguments. Left/Right are articulated explicitly in the first example, which thus most vividly exemplifies the notion that Left/Right enable a representation of the political space as a representation of 'the whole'. Arguments are presented as either left- or right-wing. There is nothing beyond the two markers. Yet, there are two people representing 'the Left' (one of whom even talks about Hannah Arendt[582]) and two people representing 'the Right', evidencing a concern to include different arguments within both camps. In the second example, the emphasis on the representation of the whole lies more on Question Time's movement around the country and the programme's constitution of a panel, even if, as I mentioned, others do read Left/Right into the performance. Inclusion, on the other hand, is brought to the fore more vividly as people directly affected by the issues being debated are given a voice, and through the input from the studio audience. Furthermore, in the Question Time example, we saw most clearly the way in which the expressions within the performance must conform to the dispassionate and partial, reason-giving argument – as I noted that subjective truths

German Ideology: Part One, Lawrence & Wishart: London, pp. 4-34, p. 11. Habermas, of course engages Marx and Hegel in some detail in Habermas, 1992b.

[582] Wong in Barro, 2019, 12:45.

uttered by GM and AM2 were made partial to other expressions and that AM2 was told to 'calm down'.

Here, we experience directly the way in which equality, upon application, must be substantial. For, as the excluded parts are included, they must give up something of their own particularity in order to absorb the particularity posing as a universality – in this case, they must express themselves in certain ways. In other words, for GM and AM2 to be equal to the others on the panel and in the studio audience, they must become something else, something specific; they must absorb the substance of equality. This then also has an effect on how we might conceive of difference. In Chapter Three, I argued that Habermas conceives of political difference in terms of reason-giving arguments only. Both examples show this logic at work, but the second especially shows how a radical difference between identities is tamed through the appearance of the different within the performance of the hegemonic political space.

This is also where it becomes most interesting in relation to the depoliticising function of Left/Right political space. Radical politics starts with an unmet demand and a subsequent identification with a place of exclusion. We know, from looking at Mpanga's political podcasts, that he very much views himself, as a black man from the London estates, as excluded. He does this because his demands (in the very specific example that I engaged here, this might relate to the stop-and-search powers of the police, which are part of a "whole technology of power in the mobilization of the oppressed")[583] have gone unmet. He can then see that the state upholds the equality of certain identities, but that this equality is not for him. As he is invited into the performance of the hegemonic political space, it is with a promise to effect a rectification of the exclusion. The performance, and the Habermasian citizen-voter, must have inclusion. The identity of the Habermasian citizen-voter demands it. However, as the inclusion is premised on the adoption of a particular mode of expression, the inclusion also curtails a possibility to evidence the 'technology of power' that effects the exclusion to begin with. Instead, Mpanga can appear as forwarding a belief that this technology of power exists, but he must accept that others are of a different opinion. He must give up his identity and become the public subject, even if he, as soon as he leaves the building, will experience that the substantial equality is not for him. The state, then, cannot be made to appear in the conversation as the state has been dissolved into it. This is the power of the hegemonic political space: it makes itself

[583] Laclau in Worsham & Olson, 1999, p.9.

immanent to the state. Mpanga, of course, knows better. He knows full well that the bodies of the excluded feel the power of the state in other ways than through forceless arguments, but the material sensation of objective violence cannot feature as a political expression within the hegemonic political space without at least incurring the gesture of translation.

It is in this sense that the Left/Right-ordered hegemonic political space depoliticises the social, because, through its insistence on inclusion, it articulates itself to the excluded parts and invites them to identify with it in order to enjoy being equal to all the other parts. In other words, it uses inclusion to effect an illusion of a complete count of all the parts of society (even if we know that society is always betrayed by a constitutive lack). However, this is a faux equality that is based on the excluded adapting their expressions to those of the hegemonic political space and a forgetting of the fact that their demands go unheard – the importance of which they cannot evidence due to the very nature of the expression that they are made to adapt.

To be clear then, radical politics must not channel itself through Left/Right and the dominant political space that they police, not only because radical politics seeks a representation of a totality and not a partiality but also because radical politics necessarily engages the power of the state. However, simply adding voice within the hegemonic political space does not beget such an engagement with the state, as that voice is not only unable to evidence the objective violence of the state, but also begets an appearance of equality for all where there, in any meaningful way, is always only an equality for some.

5.5. Left/Right and a Laclauian critique of Mouffe/Laclau

Mouffe has recently contended that there are three different kinds of politics of 'the Left':

> Within the spectrum of what is usually understood as 'the left', one could […] differentiate three kinds of politics. The first is a 'pure reformism' that accepts both the principles of legitimacy of liberal democracy and the existing neoliberal hegemonic social formation. Second is the 'radical reformism' that accepts the principles of legitimacy but attempts to implement a different

> hegemonic formation. Finally, 'revolutionary politics' seeks a total rupture with the existing sociopolitical order.[584]

Mouffe pitches radical politics as belonging to the category of radical reformism, specifying the way in which it is multi-pronged and manifesting itself in various "public spaces".[585] Yet, it can be argued that her juxtaposition of these kinds of politics is lacking. One Mouffean, and perhaps also Laclauian, objection to what I have written thus far might be that, as there is nothing outside ideology, we can never contest a hegemonic formation from the outside. As such, our insistence on the corrosive effects of the participation of radical politics in performances of the Left/Right-ordered hegemonic political space is misplaced. Instead, the point should be to participate, but to do so in such a way that brings about a crisis in the ego-identification of the citizen-voter – so that groups of people can be articulated to a counter-hegemonic project instead.

But the type of politics that Mouffe proposes – radical reformism – suggests that it can be carried out only by people who already have a part in the system. Otherwise it would not be categorizable as 'reformism'. This is why it can be assigned to a type of politics of 'the Left' – because 'the Left' has a part in the whole. Yet, we are hard pressed to ask the excluded to conduct the reform, which is what this is doing once we connect 'the system' to the being of the citizen-voter (and not just to neoliberalism)[586]. A 'reformist' agenda of the excluded parts would entail a subversion of the performance of Left/Right-ordered hegemonic political space. However, the fact of the matter is that the ritual performances of the Left/Right-ordered hegemonic political space curtail specific performances by specific identities that are designed to bring about a crisis in the ego-identification of the citizen-voter. The specific performances instead feed into the ego-identification of the citizen-voter as it demands inclusion and thus co-opt the otherwise radical potential of the excluded parts.

Laclau and Mouffe forwarded their own conception of radical democracy in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, in which the point, as I argued above, is to appeal to people in many different public spaces and in many different ways. This is in order to effect a recognition of

[584] Mouffe, 2018, p.46.
[585] Ibid., p.47. It is worth noting that Habermas also called for a "radical reformism". See Habermas, 1989, p. 49.
[586] Ibid., p.11.

radical difference and a lack of ontological foundation to order. To further this project, Mouffe has also sought to speak to the performers of the hegemonic political space, in her venture into critical journalism studies. In an interview, she thus argues that:

> Ideally, the role of the media should precisely be to contribute to the creation of agonistic public spaces in which there is the possibility for dissensus to be expressed or different alternatives to be put forward.[587]

Mouffe qualifies this further as she argues that:

> There are always different interpretations, different aspects, and different perspectives. It is important for journalists to be able to show those differences, to make people think by themselves, and not telling them: this is what you should think. It is important to give them enough elements to be able to see the complexity of the situation and to think by themselves. For that you need to have as much facts as possible, but at the same time you also need to be aware of the different positions that one can take with respect to those facts and events.[588]

Mouffe problematises the journalistic norm of objectivity,[589] but in doing so only reinforces the norm of impartiality.[590] As such, when she argues that journalists must make audiences aware of the "different positions that one can take with respect to those facts and events", she asks for nothing that the performers of the dominant political space do not already do. For when adopting a focus on impartiality, they exactly do seek out the representation of the different parts of society. As I have argued, Left/Right enable this representation as they constitute a political space of differences that are nevertheless part of a whole. This

[587] Carpentier & Cammaerts, 2006, p.974.
[588] Ibid., p.974.
[589] Ibid., p.974.
[590] Zelizer, 2017, p.84; and Tuchman, 1972, p.666.

begs the question of the degree to which radical democracy does in fact engender the emergence of new differences.

I have argued that Left/Right, as they are tied to a form of rationalism, prefigure specific differences, namely arguments, opinions, beliefs, etc. as rational, political expressions. I have also argued that the dominant political space that Left/Right structure seeks out inclusion and orders the included on the basis of Left/Right *as* arguments, opinion, beliefs, etc. As such, when Mouffe calls for the journalist to identify new 'positions', she asks for something that the journalist already does and thus fails to account for the fact that what she calls for only functions to reproduce the dominant political space, rather than to undermine and subvert it. In this sense, far from effecting an engagement with the ontological realm, which is what the pluralism of radical democracy strives for, it merely reproduces the practices of the ontic realm. That is, it merely further saturates the space with arguments, opinions, beliefs, etc.

To her credit, Mouffe of course stresses that hegemony plays out across the field of culture and that the journalist, while important in the operation of hegemony, is not the only gatekeeper to 'the public'. However, radical politics, or democratic theory, must develop a stronger understanding of performances of the hegemonic political space, how they are conducted and on what premises. If it does not, the radical tendency that we find with the discovery of the logic of lack risk going unexploited and the plight of the oppressed unaddressed. Democratic theory must remember that the oppression experienced by the excluded is an oppression that is material and ultimately reproduced by the state. Just adding hitherto unheard opinions or arguments to public discussion will not do the trick. It will not engender an "ethical experience"[591] and it will not enable any form of popular demand to emerge. Radical politics must focus on the state, which is where demands are either met or denied. Of course, there will always be the need engage culture in order to extend the counter-hegemonic chain of equivalences, but when inclusion into the dominant political space is only an inclusion of arguments and opinions, radical politics should be conscious about how it engages culture and in which particular mediums it seeks to articulate unmet demands to it.

We might now, then, tie this back to my opening claims in the introduction, where I position this thesis as a friendly critique of democratic in its many shades. I have now argued that radical democracy necessarily fails to do what it sets out to do; to enable

[591] Laclau, 2002. For a discussion on the ethical experience, see pages 170-1 in this thesis.

ontological difference to emerge; to foster a post-foundational political space in which different people can express their difference and ameliorate their lived conditions. I have argued that radical democracy fails to accomplish this because not enough light has been shed on public subjectivity and the structuring effects of Left/Right. At the end of the day, the difference enabled by the Left/Right hegemonic political space in which public subject as the citizen-voter reigns supreme, is a limited, prefigured type of difference. This is the case as it enables rational, political expression but also prefigures it and, as such, polices and casts aside expressions that do not conform to its ideal of rational, political being.

Radical politics, understood in the populist Laclauian sense as the emergence of the popular demand and the radical antagonism, and despite being itself based on post-foundational order, cannot satisfy itself with a quest to make the citizen-voter more reflexive. It must work towards the forwarding of the popular demand. This necessitates an engagement with the state, not the journalist, whose relationship with the state it subsequently calls into question. Only this way can the plight of the excluded be addressed, as only this way do we disrupt the practises of the ontic. Just as Laclauian populism then needs radical democracy to construct its own counter-hegemonic chain of equivalences, so too must the proponents of radical democracy learn from Laclauian populism and the role of Left/Right and the hegemonic political space that it orders. For, upon ignorance of these processes, radical democracy is simply not radical enough and can too easily be co-opted by the hegemonic political space.

Finally, then, if I am correct, then performances of Left/Right-ordered political space are ritualistic performances aimed at 're-fusing' the social. They occur because the social is constitutively open, because the lack/void between the ontic and the ontological always prevents a closure. In order to beget a forgetting of this lack/void we require representation and performance. The ritual performance then constitutes this attempt at closure, at 're-fusing'. If radical politics is to bring about the emergence of 'the people', it must effect a dislocation of the identity of citizen-voter. Yet, this cannot be done directly within the ritual performances wherein the citizen-voter (always-almost) re-constitutes itself. Instead, it must happen in all those space that are not patrolled by the figure of the journalist, whose own performance begets the ritual performances to begin with. As Mouffe and Laclau have done so much to point out, radical politics must manifest itself in all kinds of discursive spaces – local, regional and national, online and in real life, etc. (all of which exists because the social is constitutively open) – and it must take all kinds of

expressions.[592] But it must refuse to be directly recognisable to the citizen-voter and it must refuse to play its games of faux inclusion performed on the basis of a forgetting of institutionalised oppression. Because of this, it must refuse to channel itself through 'the Left', which is the category that the citizen-voter uses to directly recognise the parts of society and thus constitute them as arguments, opinions, beliefs, etc.

5.6. Conclusion

In this final section, I engaged two examples of ritual performances of the Left/Right-ordered hegemonic political space. I argued that they exemplified our thesis that Left/Right function to depoliticise the social by granting inclusion to dispassionate, reason-giving arguments only, while expressions of lived experience are translated into partial statements. However, as radical politics forms through passionate demands on the basis of claims that refuse partiality and asserts that the claimers are excluded from the 'space of equals', participation in the Left/Right hegemonic political space only functions to take the energy out of politics and make it appear as if the excluded are in fact equal – even when they are not. Radical politics should then avoid channelling itself through the category of 'the Left'.

6. Conclusion

Central to the Left/Right-ordered hegemonic political space is the public subject as the citizen-voter. I traced its emergence in Chapter One and have since sought to find the ways in which exclusion is constituted in relation to it and how Left/Right is caught up in it. In this chapter, I have argued that Left/Right function to constitute the social so that it is always open to content amenable to the nature of the citizen-voter. Specifically, this means that Left/Right enable a variety of arguments, opinion, beliefs, etc. to be formed about any number of issues. Exclusion constitutes itself in relation to this mode of expression. Specifically, this means that modes of argumentation that seek to attest to some kind of truth, such as evidence of lived experience, are inadmissible or translated into partial expressions. This represents an irreconcilable conflict between radical politics and the Left/Right hegemonic space of the citizen-voter.

I used two examples to show this dynamic at work. In the first, we were presented with arguments from 'the Left' and arguments from 'the Right'. This gave the impression of the

[592] George Mpanga's poetry is a good example of another form of expression. See George the Poet, 2019.

presence of 'the whole' of the political community constituted in arguments, which allowed the panellists to speak about the perceived wants and needs of groups of excluded people without featuring them. In the second example, Mpanga was present on the panel, but his expressions were made partial to other arguments and AM2 was told to 'calm down' as she sought to evidence her lived experience, perfectly exemplifying the dispassionate nature that deliberation in the Left/Right-ordered hegemonic political space must take.

I argued that the result of this was that their opportunities to rectify their exclusion were stripped from them through their participation in this performance. This is the case because the performance gave the sense that they were already equal to the other panellists and studio audience members, simply because they were heard on an equal footing. However, as soon as those people left the building, the cameras stopped filming and the journalists went home, the excluded would once again have found themselves in precarious situations, whereas the others would not.

This is how Left/Right and the political space that they order depoliticise the social. Through featuring the claims of the excluded but insisting on their participation through argumentation, they articulate the excluded to the hegemonic space in a manner that channels what should be a demand into an argument made on unequal footing. It constitutes a faux inclusion that may enable the citizen-voters to sleep better at night but does very little to ameliorate the conditions that the excluded parts experience. This is why radical politics should refuse to let itself be co-opted by Left/Right. It should refuse to portray its proponents as public subjects when they do not share in the equality that public subjects enjoy. Instead, it should engage all the spaces that exist around the hegemonic political space that are beyond the purview of journalistic performances and work to articulate disparate demands together.

I have then not used this thesis to outline exactly how radical politics should forward its aims. Due to the dearth of literature on Left/Right and their function in modernity, the focus of this thesis has been to first help develop such a knowledge and on the basis of this provide some recommendations as to how radical politics should engage Left/Right. Based on our arguments I have recommended that protagonists of radical politics should *not* seek to channel themselves through the category of 'the Left'. The follow up question necessarily reads, 'what then?' Sadly, I cannot answer this here. This is partly because hegemonic-articulatory practice is complex and constituted in a myriad of realms that are all different and thus require different strategies which simply cannot be dictated by a

single person, and partly because our focus has been on contributing to a broadening of our understanding of Left/Right rather than delving too deeply into debates around the constitution of radical politics. Radical politics has a rich tradition with a vivid imaginary constituted around strikes, occupations etc. These types of happenings might prove much more fertile breeding grounds for the emergence of the popular subjectivity, than performances of the Left/Right-ordered hegemonic political space.

Conclusion

1. History revisited

On 26 August 1789, as the deputies of the National Constituent Assembly organised themselves from left to right in St. Louis Church in the Versailles, they created a spatial dichotomy that would come to constitute political discourse in societies of universal suffrage. Unbeknownst to them, their voting on the Rights of Man and the Veto of the King – the subject matter at hand – was not the only important feature of their gathering. The form that the body of the assembly had taken was to become just as influential.

This is a good story. Left/Right, such important features of political modernity, were birthed in the fires of the democratic revolution. It is also a true story. But perhaps people put too much emphasis on the specific gathering in St. Louis Church. If the deputies had not organised themselves from left to right, would Left/Right not define political space as they do today? Would modern politics be decidedly different? As I noted in the Introduction, it made sense for the deputies to organise themselves from left to right because the democratic revolution was based on equality, which would not be well represented through an Up/Down or Front/Back ordering of deputies. It also made sense for the newly constituted public (as an extension of the National Constituent Assembly) to organise itself this way. When it comes to the origins of Left/Right in modernity, we should thus focus less on 26 August 1789 and more on how basic features of Left/Right connect with and perhaps express the main tenets of the democratic revolution. That is why I have argued that Left/Right structure a hegemonic political space that is centred around a public subject, which I call, after Marcel Gauchet, the citizen-voter.

2. Left/Right and their *other*

The argument of this thesis has been that spatial metaphors would always have been needed to order public subjects in a relationship to each other imagined to be one of equality. However, from the perspective of democratic theory, we also know that no thing, including equality, is ever complete. All things are haunted by a lack. The deputies ordered themselves in accordance with Left/Right, rather than Up/Down or Front/Back. But another spatial metaphor is also applicable. For while Left/Right ensured a signification of equality between the deputies, they were all inside that building, making decisions, while most of the nation was outside. The 'space of equality' was for some and not for others. I named this 'some' public subjects. And, as I have argued, while the public subjectivity is, in

principle, available to everyone, its mode of expression, as Gauchet shows, is centred around opinion, argument, belief, etc. and a recognition of its own partiality to a system. Gauchet then shows us that Left/Right are historically tied to a type of rationalism that stresses equality between different people, while enabling those people to function as *one* people. To further this line of thought, I also engaged Torben Dyrberg, through whom I forwarded the argument that Left/Right are not only historically tied to rationalism but also conceptually tied to it. In other words, the form of the citizen-voter is particular and political public being is only intelligible through it. I have argued that this effects an *othering*, primarily of modes of political expression that are more 'actionistic' and modes of expression that seek to evidence exclusion through a collective acknowledgement of a truth of precarious being – modes of expression that typically arise from subjects who do not share in the equality of the public subjects.

Radical politics, inspired by Laclauian populism, is located in relation to the phenomena of exclusion that manifests itself in relation to the fact that all things are never complete. The question then emerges as to how radical politics should relate to the Left/Right spectrum that orders the political space of the citizen-voter.

3. Research questions and answers

My principle research question was:

- How should radical politics engage with Left/Right?

I argued that I could only answer this question once we became aware of how Left/Right effect a count of subject-positions and enable them to give an account of their being that is particular. As such, a second research question was:

- How do Left/Right create a political space and what kinds of political expressions emerge from it?

As radical politics is concerned with exclusion, another question that I posed was:

- How are things excluded from the Left/Right political space in which the public subject is constituted, and on what grounds does this exclusion take place?

Answering these questions necessitated a larger engagement with theories of Left/Right and with critical theories of democracy.

In Chapter One, through reflecting on Anthony Downs, William Riker, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson and others, we saw how Left and Right are devoid of ultimate meanings and,

as spatial metaphors, structure the way we think and thus also enable identification. I also engaged Claude Lefort, Harold Mah and Marcel Gauchet. In Lefort, we found an account of political modernity as centred around the empty place of power. With Mah, I argued that this gave birth to a public subject who embraced the empty place of power and sought to embody the politics that emerged through it. Finally, with Gauchet, I characterised the public subject as the 'citizen-voter' – a subjectivity that is once removed from the doing of politics and that relies on Left/Right to understand both itself and other citizen-voters in relation to each other and to the whole. Through Gauchet, I also argued that Left/Right are historically tied to a particular type of rationalism that stresses equality in difference but also resolution of differences through the constitution of political being in terms of arguments, opinions, beliefs, etc. I thus argued that Left/Right create space through their quality as spatial metaphors and create a political space through their adoption by public subjects in accounting for their political identities.

In Chapter Two, we saw how Noberto Bobbio's 'space of equals' does not contain everyone and read Chantal Mouffe against Torben Dyrberg to find a place for exclusion in relation to Left/Right. With Mouffe I argued that all identification is imbued with affectual investment and commitment and has *other(s)* that represent(s) its own radical negativity. However, Dyrberg, who, perhaps together with Gauchet, is the only person to have written about Left/Right in relation to democratic theory, instead focuses on the ability of Left/Right to channel other orientational metaphors that engender more affectual investment (such as Up/Down, In/Out and Front/Back), effectively enabling those who identify through Left/Right to communicate in a manner that subtracts affect and passion. Through Dyrberg, I thus showed that Left/Right are not only tied to rationalism *historically*, but also *conceptually*. I then argued that Left/Right are not a primary means of identification, but secondary to the identity of the citizen-voter. While identification thus takes place through Left/Right, Left/Right belong to the citizen-voter. The place of exclusion then comes to be in relation to the citizen-voter, rather than to Left/Right directly. With Jacques Rancière, I then conceptualised Left/Right as categories of the police count, in the sense that they enable a count of subject positions within a given space. However, as the police count also dictates a relationality between the counted, discursive space takes on an aesthetic component. While I then had some idea of how to think exclusion in relation to the aesthetic qualities of the discursive space, I lacked an account of this space.

In Chapter Three, I sought an aesthetic account of the type of political space, of the type of rationalism, that the citizen-voter engenders through the writing of Habermas. Habermas

popularised one spatialised form of political space: the public sphere. I complemented this account with his writings on communicative reason to produce an account of political space that I called Habermasian. I argued that this space, conceived of from within the liberal tradition, is a space for reason-giving arguments aimed at consensus – even if it can never be final. Such consensus is rational insofar as it has been arrived at through ideal speech situations that regulate communication in accordance with the principles of 'democracy, publicity, inclusion and egalitarianism'. However, I also argued that modes of expression that do not correspond to partial, reason-giving argumentation lack a place within this Habermasian political space and are thus, in effect, rendered *other*. Using this, I can provide answers to research questions two and three.

In answer to the question 'How do Left/Right create a political space and what kinds of political expressions emerge from it?', I can now say that Left/Right constitute political space in modernity through their allusion to an equality between different public subjects conceived as citizen-voters. As Left implicitly recognises a Right and vice versa, they enable subjects to identify as different to other subjects while still remaining within one overarching system. Political expressions emerge from this space that acknowledge their own partiality to the system and the lack of immanence to politics. Examples of expressions are opinions, reason-giving arguments, beliefs, etc., and one particular space native to the citizen-voter is the Habermasian political space. Left/Right are thus categories of the police (ac)count.

That leads us onto Research Question 3 which asked 'How are things excluded from the Left/Right political space in which the public subject is constituted, and on what grounds does this exclusion take place?' I can now answer that things are excluded from this space, not on the basis of content (issues), but on the basis of form (modes of expression). Specifically, this means that modes of expression that do not acknowledge partiality are either excluded or translated into partial expressions. This not only *others* more 'actionistic' ways of doing politics (such as strikes, occupations etc.) but also expressions that seek to evidence exclusion and lived experience. This is the case as those expressions, which seek to assert the truth of power, are translated into arguments, opinions, beliefs, etc. In this space, unequal parts then have no recourse to rectify their inequality through Left/Right as they instead cover up the facts of power and inequality.

In Chapter Four, I turned to Laclau for an account of radical politics and a critique of Habermas. Laclau outlines a 'logic of lack', whereby meaning is always only partially fixed –

always excluding something to represent as its own radical negativity. All meaning (or identity) is then always lacking something. But this is a productive lack as it enables play and contestation of meaning/identity. All identity relies on a tension between a logic of difference and a logic of equivalences: for identity to exist, beings must be partially the same and partially different. However, as identity is betrayed by a constitutive lack, exclusion is inevitable. Laclauian populism articulates excluded parts, constituted as demands to the state, to a counter-hegemonic chain of equivalences, but it leaves the place of the universal empty – representable only by the name of an empty signifier. This manifests itself in a moment when the populist chain of equivalences comes to incorporate so many disparate demands that it spills over into the streets and starts to represent itself as the whole of 'the people' – counterposed only to power, 'the system', 'the oligarchy', etc.

Radical politics, then, relies on the articulation of unmet demands to its popular chain of equivalences. However, as we saw in Chapter Five, this is frustrated by the Left/Right-ordered hegemonic space of the citizen-voter, which obscures power and exclusion by granting inclusion of voices on the condition that they cannot speak the truth of power and exclusion. By dissolving the state and the way that it reproduces the material conditions – on the basis of which demands are made in the first place – into the supposedly rational discussions between different Left/Right ordered citizen-voters, the demands, which are inherently powerful and imbued with affective investment and commitment, are turned into arguments that acknowledge their own partiality. This move effectively subtracts power, and the state, from political being, as its evidencing is rendered a mere opinion, argument, belief, etc. But power is real as it is inherently related to the universal logic of lack. Politics cannot, and must not, treat it as if power and the state are only topics for discussion. This move which the Left/Right ordered hegemonic space then effects amount to nothing but the depoliticization of society and the depoliticization of demands. it is on the basis of these arguments and observations, that I can now answer my principal research question: 'How should radical politics engage with Left/Right?'

Radical politics should *not* seek to engage Left/Right. To seek to channel radical politics through 'the Left' is to engage the Left/Right-ordered hegemonic political space. Radical politics requires affectual investment in a popular subjectivity. It requires serious political commitment. However, the type of identification that Left/Right enable is one that acknowledges parity between different subjects in an overarching system. Affective investment then goes into the identity of the citizen-voter, rather than into Left/Right.

Laclauian politics does not recognise its own partiality to an overarching system. In the name of the people as the plebs, it seeks to mark the rupture of the system. As such, Laclauian politics would simply cease to be through an engagement with 'the Left'. Furthermore, as I argued in Chapter Five, Left/Right-ordered hegemonic political space, through a qualified focus on inclusion, co-opts the potential for radical politics. It is these arguments that lead me to claim that radical politics should *not* seek to engage Left/Right.

To further qualify and be absolutely clear about the relationship between Left/Right and Laclauian populism that I have advocated, I read Laclauian populist politics as the establishment of a radical antagonism between an amalgamation of parts – conceiving of themselves as excluded – and the principle of power itself. This is a momentary occurrence and thus cannot constitute a political philosophy. Fundamental to this politics is a recognition of a structuring logic that is universal. I have called this 'the logic of lack'. This politics is then established through a particular reading of the universal logic.

I have argued that Left/Right-ordered hegemonic space constitutes subjects that acknowledge their partiality to a system and recognise that politics is not immanent to them. This is a problem for radical politics, not because radical politics seeks a return to some pre-modern religiously informed unity or to reify some sort of Third Way managerialism, but because this stylised denial of immanence itself obscures the universality of the logic of lack. For, as the logic of lack is universal, then so is exclusion and the power that beget it, and while there are many different politics that engage with this problematic, I take Laclauian populism to effect the most forceful evidencing of this universality. As I argued in Chapters Four and Five, this is a politics conceived of from the perspective of exclusion that not only promises rectification of that exclusion, but also a clear exposition of the logic of lack.

However, as it is not a political philosophy, it does not concern itself with the establishment of constitutional order. It concerns itself with the exposition of power and the lack/void that betrays it. While we might then say that political modernity is better than the pre-modern, that has nothing to do with Laclauian populism, and when I then argue for radical politics to disengage from Left/Right, this is not to establish a unitary political order, but to effect a break from it. This is the case because I take Left/Right themselves to constitute a form of unity that is centred around the citizen-voter. This unity begets its own exclusions, and Laclauian populism, perhaps more so than most politics, makes this exclusion its starting point. Co-dependent on power as it is, it is a politics that will always need to be

renewed and one that never stops. It takes difference and division far more seriously than Left/Right ever could, but it does not seek to replace them.

4. Contribution

The two theorists who have explored Left/Right with reference to democratic theory most thoroughly are Gauchet and Dyrberg. The work of both has been central to this thesis. Yet both accounts are limited and, in some sense, also only peripheral to democratic theory. Gauchet's work is primarily historical and Dyrberg's politics is Rawlsian – even if he situates his intervention in more critical democratic theory. Gauchet's work helps us relate Left/Right to the citizen-voter, but it does not touch on the relationality between the citizen-voters. Dyrberg helps more with this, but his Rawlsian politics prevents him drawing the appropriate conclusions. At the intersection of the literature on Left/Right and democratic theory, this thesis has, I hope, provided a clear contribution to reflections on the function of Left/Right in modernity (the legitimising of the posing of which is a contribution in itself) and their place in relation to radical politics.

Furthermore, I mean for this thesis not only to offer a contribution to democratic theory but also to provide a friendly critique of the type of political theory that seeks a pluralism with acknowledgement of radical difference, such as Laclauian and Mouffean radical democracy. Following a Laclauian conception of populism I establish 'the demand' as the base political unit, but I also note that the Left/Right hegemonic political space constitutes the argument, opinion, belief, etc., as the base political unit. This circumstance, and Left/Right's role in relation to it, has not been accounted for adequately in democratic theory, which risks the co-optation of the radical tendencies of democratic theories that revolve around 'the demand' and the logic of lack. As such, hopefully this thesis can make a contribution to research in the Laclauian tradition and to radical politics itself, showing how Left/Right, and the hegemonic political space that they order, are dimensions that restrict the potential for emancipatory movements to effect radical antagonisms.

5. Moving forward

While I have attempted to put specific points across, I do not claim to provide definitive answers. This is partly because of the lack of work that has been undertaken in relation to Left/Right, both in general and from within democratic theory. This absence of work on Left/Right is regrettable and means that I have had limited support to construct my arguments. There should be an established tradition of Left/Right scholarship, but on the

basis of its lack I can only hope to contribute to its establishment. While I thus hope that the reader will find some measure of insight in this thesis, it is my most ardent hope that the reader will find inspiration. It is undoubtable that there are misreadings, incongruences, contradictions and many other faults in this text, but I hope that they encourage the reader to think beyond this text and take the study of Left/Right in modernity forward, so that we can develop more resources for practitioners of radical politics.

Additionally, it would be amiss not to comment on the now not so recent changes to political modernity that started to manifest themselves in relation to the public subject in 2016 with 'Brexit' and 'Trump'. This text, although situated in democratic theory in relation to Left/Right, undoubtedly also provides a critique of liberal democracy and the idea of the public sphere. However, with Trump and Brexit, I think it has become apparent to particularly Habermasian types of public subjects that their hegemony is not as strong as it appeared to them to be. I doubt it ever was particularly strong, but no counter-hegemonic constructions had been articulated with such force until recently. The question then becomes if what we are witnessing today is of a different order to what I am describing in my thesis. In other words, does the citizen-voter no longer qualify the public subject? However, I do not think this is the case. If anything, I think the opposite is true. To be sure, the Habermasian variant is under threat even more so than it already was, but I think that the reign of the opinion and the reflective judgment is upon us with an ever-increasing ferocity. Indeed, today the Right to an opinion seem to trump most other rights. Left/Right do and will continue to thrive in such an environment as a means to categorise different opinions and their holders. The problem with the prolificacy of 'the opinion' is that it is even more blind to power and exclusion than 'the argument', enabling power to manifest itself more discriminately. Indeed, this shift emboldens the agents of power to reject an increasing number of democratic demands, knowing full well that they cannot evidence their exclusion through the hegemonic political space constituted around 'the opinion'.

I do not think, then, that the citizen-voter is losing its hegemonic strength and/or that the relevance of this thesis is somehow diminished by the recent changes to political modernity. I do not think that Left/Right will soon be a thing of the past as the immanence of 'the people' is asserted once again. On the contrary, I think Left/Right will be alive as ever before. Left/Right always effected depoliticization, which is also the exact role of 'the opinion' as political being. If 'the opinion' is then to be the unit of our measurement, Left/Right, which has endured for so long – and despite countless eulogies – will endure a

lot longer still, and it is time that radical politics developed some knowledge about the work they do in political modernity.

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