

Political Freedom after Economic Freefall and Democratic Revolt

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Can globalisation lead to more democracy? And if so, what concept of freedom lies at the basis of this development? Steven Winter's paper is a challenging attempt to answer these questions. During the 1990s, an overly optimistic liberalism seemed to have taken the lead in a post-ideological era.¹ But in this post-Cold War and post-9/11 era new questions arise, because, in spite of a continuous spreading of capitalism, the promise of globalized and peaceful liberal democracy has not been materialized. Winter distinguishes two different developments. Firstly, there is the association of liberal democracy with the spread of market economies, e.g., in Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Berlin Wall. Here liberal democracy can be associated with free market economies in the sense that both stimulate individual preference. But is this liberal concept of individual freedom tenable, Winter asks? A second development is removed from the ideal of freedom as being free from others, namely recent civilian protests, e.g., the Egyptian revolt against Mubarak, or the Occupy Wall Street movement. In both cases, Winter critically assesses the original liberal concept of freedom, in order to arrive at a better concept of freedom that could help the modern world evolve into a more free and democratic place.

In general, I subscribe to Winter's critical remarks concerning the ideal of liberal freedom, supposedly exercised by the autonomous, rational individual: such a conception can hardly serve as a starting point for democracy as collective action. I equally agree that finding a new way of interpreting self-rule beyond self-interested choice is a crucial aspect of regenerating a democratic spirit. Winter elaborates on postmodern concerns and the current lack of a firm ontological basis for the foundations of freedom, which make reinventing a path to freedom a delicate task.

The liberal confusion seems to amount to the following: the description of the liberal individual subject presupposes aspects of a political theory that fall beyond the liberal framework. Put differently: 'we' can all agree to liberal principles precisely because that 'we' is something else than what a liberal description of the autonomous subject allows for. In fact, we are socially situated beings, constituted by factors like history, social context and culture. What makes us appreciative of liberal ideas and values falls beyond the scope of the liberal concepts of the individual.

The question then becomes whether, and if so, how we can solve this paradox, while keeping a normative argument for democracy. In politics, people have par-

1 See e.g., Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: Penguin, 1992).

ticular, specific views and preferences that cannot be reduced to rational, factual arguments. Self-governance is the result of several processes. It is not just at the disposal of the individual.

Occasionally, Winter refers to psychoanalytic theory and practice to reinforce his claims that the rational self is an illusion, and that the hypothesis of a rational self cannot offer a normative theory of democracy. Freud has shown that reason is not a master in his own house. Winter also draws from phenomenology to underline the impossibility of liberal assumptions. I consider the contribution of psychoanalysis to cultural theory valuable in itself. However, I have some doubts concerning the explanatory use of terms like 'narcissistic' when making a political analysis. I endorse the profound criticism on the modern experience of the subject. But it seems to me that a term implying a psychopathologic deviation contributes little in terms of clarification when applied to society as such. Let us look at how the term narcissism makes sense in a clinical setting: in a narcissistic delusion, for instance, a patient suffering from paranoia can think the newsreader on the television is making comments on his personal life, even though in reality the journalist is talking about the state of the economy. The term 'narcissism' derives its meaning from the comparison with a sense of normality: a 'normal' viewer should realize that the newsreader is reporting an event irrespective of a viewer's personal life. But if consumer capitalism implies that the consumer is turned into a narcissistic person, and almost everyone is a consumer, it becomes unclear how the term allows for distinguishing between norms and deviations. What would a 'normal' modern subject look like? What is a non-narcissistic pattern of consumption? Especially when assuming a postmodern interpretation of subjectivity, these questions need some clarification.

As the paper is very rich in content, I have chosen to present but three main comments. The first comment concerns the growing resemblance between the attitudes of the consumer and the voter. I agree that this development has not contributed to more reasonable and democratic political action. I will take Winter's critical remarks a step further and focus on the specificity of the modern economic system and its political consequences. I will offer further reasons why the consumer-voter attitude contains less than ever before the promise of an autonomous, rational self-interested choice by citizens in the long term, and also why it undermines a 'free' political process.

My second comment concerns Winter's depiction of the Enlightenment. The interest of my remarks lies in the possible heritage I believe the Enlightenment *does* offer for reflecting on the social, united constitutive moment of self-governance. Thirdly, I will elaborate on the recent Tahrir Square protests and other movements, and on why they are less successful than expected in recreating a lasting moment of democratic action. This last aspect also includes reflections on the republican civic tradition, of which Machiavelli is a predecessor, as Winter mentions.

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1 Modern Subjectivity and the Market

According to Winter, the similarity between democracy and the free market is a blurred one: democracies become dysfunctional when they introduce market-like practices and processes. Winter shows how the political sphere has taken over free market strategies and practices. At first, a link between the political and the economic seems instructive: both markets and the democratic process allow for individual choice.

This structure, however, has contaminated subjectivism, and profoundly disrupted the political system. Winter emphasizes the effects of this development on the subject, on the experience and the behaviour of the voter, once the political process is turned into a free market offer of choices. These offerings can even contain propositions that are unrealistic or mutually exclusive. In fact, the voter who behaves like a consumer takes on an irrational and unrealistic attitude, while holding contradictory expectations. This is well illustrated by the contradictory claim of a Tea Party activist, who insisted that the government should keep its hands off his Medicare, apparently disregarding the fact that the government organizes his Medicare. So without government intervention and planning, that person would not even have a health care opportunity to refer to.

As a result, voters even tend to penalize politicians who make reasonable and constructive suggestions or propositions. The result is the reduction of a vivid and strong democracy to a more Schumpeterian model: elites propose options for the masses to choose, leaving each individual the illusion that he follows his own self-interest. But market preferences do not arise entirely out of the free will of the individual, according to Winter. Advertising and social trends also influence the choices buyers make. We live in a socially, psychologically and industrially driven system, which produces a kind of consumerist subject. Winter turns to Baudrillard to deepen the different meanings in which the subject is far from rational. Consumerism is a strong impediment to a strong democracy, rather than being congruent with it. Political campaigns reflect PR stunts and campaigns for other products. Besides, the interchangeability of objects, and of producers, profoundly alters the possibility of choice, since producers/workers can be replaced. Although the abundance of certain products gives the impression of an overwhelming freedom, the choice remains limited.

However, after painting a quite gloomy picture, Winter concludes neither against free markets, nor against the liberal state. Instead, he insists that the modern, narcissistic subject is at stake.

The relationship between free market and politics is even more negative, I believe, than Winter describes it. Freedom is even more of an illusion, as is self-governance or self-determination. Globalization and new developments in capitalism have de-politicized the realm of the political. These developments make the attitude of citizens as voters on the national level even more superfluous. I consider three aspects to be defining. A fourth element would be the inefficiency

of a totally free market: the free market cannot function perfectly well all by itself. State intervention is needed to guide a certain number of exchanges. In other words, the image of atomic individuals, acting rationally according to their preferences leading to an optimal exchange between those who offer and those who want to purchase, can be contested from within economic theory. According to Stiglitz, for instance, there is no such thing as an invisible hand regulating free markets.² But I will leave these considerations aside.

Firstly, the economic role of nation state governments has declined: regulations concerning trade and finance are made internationally, currencies are more internationally dependent or linked (e.g., many European currencies have joined the Euro), investment funds and insurance companies operate internationally. In short, global markets function widely beyond the grasp of local or national governments. States remain important, but they act multilaterally: both on a supra-state and an interstate level. Sometimes the private sector takes a lead in the governance of global finance.³ Secondly, over the last few decades the nature of capitalism itself has changed. Commodification has spread to many new areas, like finance and healthcare.⁴

Commodification, together with accumulation of capital, is a central characteristic of a capitalist market system. The main reference for judging the value of commodities is their value on the market. What is the value of a fine piece of art, a fresh breath of air, a good television program, fine and healthy food? All these products are seen as ways of accumulating capital. The production and exchange of these products creates surplus value. The main aim is to maximize profit. Not only does the finished product no longer reflect the qualities of the craftsman. More and more products become part of the free market game. And when objects become commodified, any other interpretation or attribution of value becomes secondary to the market value. Even basic products have become the object of this development, like clean air and fresh water (think of the recent struggles concerning water between the Bolivian government and private companies), but also healthcare products. The spread of commodification and accumulation have intensified capitalism over the last decades. Manufacturing no longer concentrates on steel, chemicals etc., but recently on articles for immediate personal consumption. Consumerism has a new definition. Even finance has been commodified in specific ways. This means that financial products do not only serve to assist capitalist production (which is what the main purpose of investments used to be about), but these products have become means of capitalist accumulation in their own right, independent of how they stimulate economic growth. Other side

2 See Stiglitz on information asymmetry, in Bruce C. Greenwald & Joseph E. Stiglitz, 'Externalities in Economies with Imperfect Information and Incomplete Markets,' *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 90 (May 1986): 229-64.

3 Jan Aart Scholte, 'Globalization and Governance: From Statism to Polycentrism' in *Globalization: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Jan Aart Scholte (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 185-223, 214.

4 Ibid., 160.

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effects are the focus on short-term speculation, rather than long-term investment.

Why is this politically relevant? And how does this reflect on the consumer/voter? Here the third element comes into play: the game of politics is increasingly determined by economics. Some financial players have become so powerful and the lucrative appeal for short-term investments so persuasive, that speculation against currencies, or against foreign investors, has destabilized currencies or even countries. A good example is George Soros betting against the pound in 1992. Recent developments in Europe show the devastating influence of such market mechanisms, which are in part a result of deregulation, privatization and liberation of the market, in combination with a growing lack of transparency and clarity of financial articles (such as credit default swaps). In short, deregulation and new financial products have altered the nature of investments and financing of states. Today, the withdrawal of investments (based on rankings by financial agencies) can lead to the bankruptcy of a country. Whereas governments used to raise money, partially, through borrowing money from their own population, many Western countries have large international debts. This debt-driven and consumerism economy has driven Western countries into a huge economic crisis, undermining the welfare state (since governments have to cut down on expenses, and social programs are very often the first to go). The consumer comes into play, because it is totally unclear how more debt and more consumerism could offer a way out of the growing economic instability. Additionally, the world is facing increasing ecological problems, combined with the diminishing of cheap fossil fuel and other natural resources. These aspects will equally alter the relation between consumerism and politics.

Apart from arguments to assume that individual autonomy is already putative, these economic changes have an additional political relevance, since they undermine the possibility of individual autonomy even further. Instead of supporting the freedom of the individual, citizens become increasingly limited in their political effectiveness as voters. More than ever, only united and combined forces can try to find answers for these immense challenges. The recent development of further commodification takes the alienation of the subject further than a break between the modern world and the past.

So, globalization has eroded the political power of nation states.⁵ Consequently, political parties are no longer considered as the force capable of introducing (economic) change. This too is quite a recent development: before the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, diverging views on economic change, for instance, were mostly a matter of political action within nation states. Citizens could express their criticisms or their preferences on free market policies through formal political mechanisms, such as political parties. There was a clearer distinction, for instance, between what Jimmy Carter, as a Democrat, and Ronald Reagan, as a Republican candidate, stood for during the 1980 presidential elections. But after

5 Ulrich Beck, *What is Globalization?* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2000), 21.

the ideological collapse of communism, both left- and rightwing parties accepted free market strategies like deregulation and privatization. Since the 1990s, political parties represent mere 'variations on a free market theme.' Most deregulations of financial markets, for instance, happened under 'leftwing' politicians. The repeal of the Glass-Steagal Act, for example, was a decision made by the Clinton administration. This 1933 Banking Act was voted in order to control speculation (which had led to the 1929 Wall Street crash), for instance by separating commercial and investment banking. Should there still be a political expression of either resistance against this free market strategy or agreement with it, then it has shifted away from the national political scene. Actions of citizens against the economic crises, bail-outs and the like, are hardly picked up by national politics in terms of party politics. Only the personal preferences ('would I like to have coffee with this guy?'), attitudes, and backgrounds of politicians seem different. But it is unclear to what extent the different candidates will sustain fundamentally different policies. More than ever, the freedom of the free choice of citizens is at stake, even for different reasons than Winter suggests.

In other words, the growing influence of the logic of capitalism (logic of accumulation of wealth as driving force for investment) has de-politicized society. Not only do we live in a consumerist society, not only is political action presented as a consumerist act, but consumerism and its counterpart – debt – have left the West in an economic, political and ecological crisis of unprecedented measure. All the disadvantages and pay-offs have been projected to a moment in the future. The present time, however, seems to be catching up with that future moment.

2 The Historical Roots of the Liberal Subject

Winter stands by the postmodern critique of the modern subject. It is, indeed, hard to see how the decentralized ego can be flatly denied and replaced with a renewed belief in the integrity of the rational self. Winter seeks to formulate a critique of the modern subject, which will lead to a conception of life in common with others. This requires a critique of the conventional view on freedom, that is, on the individual subject taking autonomous and rational decisions in his or her best interest. Winter thus challenges the negative concept of freedom: that no constraints keep the subject from following his or her own path. In liberal theory, this freedom of not being constrained is projected onto an image of the government as a preferably non-intervening entity in the life of citizens. Winter traces the roots of this metaphor of freedom to the tradition of the Enlightenment as such. Winter mentions merely Taylor's description of the utilitarian, atomistic and mechanistic objectification of nature as the main accomplishment of Enlightenment philosophers. But did all Enlightenment philosophers seek the pretension of the Olympian view by separating the subject from the very grounds that could lead to its comprehension? And has the Enlightenment tradition 'sloughed off' social context? This claim seems untenable. As a historic movement, the Enlightenment is wide and differentiated, in time, location and content: from

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Spinoza in the Netherlands during the seventeenth century to Voltaire or Rousseau in France a century later, and Lessing in Germany in between. Winter's description fits the criticism of reason as instrumental reason, which can be found in Francis Bacon's work. And atomistic individualism is the basic assumption in Hobbes' mechanistic anthropology. But these philosophers are hardly representative for the Enlightenment movement as such. Neither do Enlightenment philosophers describe human reason as perfectly rational. Even Descartes, in *Des passions de l'âme*, does not consider the capacities of human reason to be sufficiently strong for totally conquering the passions.⁶

By reducing the Enlightenment to the liberal tradition that Winter criticizes, he is prevented from finding interesting references from within that tradition in favour of the project he pursues. I shall only mention one philosopher, who places democracy at the heart of his political project: Spinoza. In his *Political Treatise*, Spinoza rejects the idea of social contract in a Hobbesian sense⁷ (although he did vaguely allow for that image in the chapter 16 of the *Tractatus Theologico-politicus*). Contrary to Hobbes, Spinoza notes that man is a social being (*Political Treatise*, chapter 2, 13-15), thus placing himself in the tradition of Aristotle and the Scholastics. In fact, Spinoza's ontology generates a conception of the individual that is far removed from a liberal atomistic view. Ontologically speaking, every 'mode' (every person) is limited, and by nature destined to affect others and be affected by them. Furthermore, in his analysis of the Jewish state under Moses, Spinoza attributes great importance to tradition as 'habitus' and to the 'ingenium' of a people in order to understand the continuation and self-maintenance of a society.⁸ Finally, his notion of the subject in the *Ethics* is profoundly reflexive.⁹ Spinoza was a realist rather than a rationalist. Although reason is necessary in order to achieve a kind of personal salvation, Spinoza offers psychological insights into the role of human passions, exhibiting the lack of transparency persons experience with regard to their own desires and motives.¹⁰

According to Winter, the Enlightenment conception of the subject denies the historic contingency of its own concept. Apart from the example of Spinoza, I would argue that the emphasis on education by several Enlightenment authors, for instance in the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, suggests great awareness that values and philosophies are not natural attributes, but can only be the result of a complex process of civilization.

6 René Descartes, *Discours de la Méthode, Les Passions de l'âme, letters*, (Ed. du monde, 1900), p. 120 (article 46).

7 Pierre-François Moreau, *Spinoza. État et Religion* (Paris: ENS éditions, 2005), 11. See also Tinneke Beeckman, *Door Spinoza's lens* (Kalmthout: Pelckmans/Klement, 2012).

8 See Etienne Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*, (London: Verso, 2008), p. 29.

9 Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) p. 136-137. (E, II, prop. 21, scolium).

10 Baruch Spinoza, *Theologico-Political Treatise*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 3 (preface, paragraph 2).

Winter furthermore considers current anti-political reflexes, such as the aversion to taxes. He sees the aversion to taxes as a pathological phenomenon. Winter is, in my opinion, right: it is deplorable that people, showing such anti-political reflexes, fail to see that tax revenues are used to their benefit as well. But is this 'unhealthy' reflex the result of, as Winter argues, the influence of the Enlightenment? Or does it rather show a lack of Enlightenment thought? Are the political attitudes today in line with what the American Founding Fathers, and their Enlightenment inspirations like Thomas Paine, had in mind? Or are we rather witnessing the loss of that original and founding hope? This is a very complex issue, and it seems that some politicians who insist on free market policies as the core of the American project, give an ignorant view at best, or a totally distorted view at worst, of what the American heritage is.

For Winter, freedom is the function of an intersubjective process: a relation characterized by recognition and solidarity. The examples Winter takes from Merleau-Ponty are very interesting: the attitude of the tortured prisoner and the bond between patient and therapist show that a shared commitment and imagined recognition are constitutive for freedom under difficult circumstances. I wonder whether these examples of individuals in extreme situations can be generalized to society as a whole, and if so, what might be inferred from this? The examples strongly imply a sense of belonging, of recognition, of a bond. Simultaneously, though, the examples reveal how the specific bond between recognized allies also touches upon a boundary. There is an immediately given non-association or not-belonging involved too. The tortured prisoner finds strength for not revealing information in the idea of the loyalty and dedication his comrades would expect of him. At the same time, this intensity appears in contrast to the torturers, who hold opposing political views. Precisely because the prisoner cannot identify or align himself with his torturers' views, he realizes what he stands for. The recognition of the comrades occurs simultaneously with the exclusion of a similar recognition from others. The same holds, to some extent, for the example of psychoanalysis (although I would be cautious in trying to transfer such an artificial setting to political life). The new existential relationship between patient and doctor seems to exclude others. This special bond is defined precisely by a kind of intensity that is absent in the patient's relation to others. Put differently: political solidarity and recognition tend to include and exclude by nature. The problem is how to integrate this difference in a democratic way, to allow for difference, without returning to the liberal illusion of individualism (and criteria like majority rule) as a sound basis for democracy. I will return to this inevitable dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in the last part of my comment, when discussing Chantal Mouffe's notion of collective identifications.

3 The Paradox of Collective Action

The Egyptian uprising in January and February 2011 was remarkable because it created a sense of unity and equality (opening in gender relations, when women

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and men are treated like equals) amongst the Egyptian people. However, the feelings of unity and equality were short-lived. Winter follows Gabel's explanation that a social movement yields its own ending. The idea is that the movement, aiming to get beyond previous social relations, finds itself at a loss when confronted with loss. So there is freedom in mutual recognition during the movement, but it is lost quickly afterwards. The recent pro-democratic movements, in Egypt and elsewhere, reveal how difficult it is to install new institutions, such as democratic rule. In my view, an important reason for the success of the Egyptian uprising at the start, and its increasing difficulties afterwards, is the inherent negativity of the project. Most Egyptians were united in their fervour to get rid of Mubarak, the dictator. After decades of fear, they seized the opportunity to strive for political change. But the positive side of change was never made explicit beyond the negative moment of being freed from the current leader. What the new 'Egypt' was to look like, remained unclear. The Egyptian uprising lacked political power, because the main conditions for political organization were absent. Collective action and collective self-constitution require a kind of first person plural perspective in order to have a lasting effect, a 'we' that is more than the sum of individuals saying 'I.' But in order for this 'we' to exist, someone must seize the political initiative and declare what goal or interest joins the protesting multitude on the square into a people. It must be stipulated who belongs to the people, and who does not. Collaborators of the Mubarak regime or clan, for instance, do not. Fortunately for the protestors, the army decided to choose the side of the people early on, preventing unnecessary bloodshed and strife. But the political question is whether a people can be immediately present to itself as a collective subject. The answer is negative. However, this does not solve the paradox of collective selfhood. Another example can clarify what I believe is at stake.¹¹

During the European Social Forum in Florence, in November 2002, Vittorio Agnoletto spoke out as a member of the International Committee of the World Social Forum, as well as on behalf of the Genoa movements. However, the charter of the principles of Porto Alegre indicates that no one is allowed to express positions that claim to be those of all participants. Therefore, no one can make a general claim on behalf of the whole. But if no one can do so, can one properly speak of a political community? The other members do not recognize Agnoletto's claims as their own. The subjects, constituting the 'we' Agnoletto's words presuppose, do not experience his words as theirs. Before it can have political effect, it has to be defined who has a stake, or an interest, in the 'we.' In the case of the Social Forum, the charter seems to prevent precisely this new sense of collectivity. Other contemporary revolts and anti-establishment movements may suffer from a similar shortcoming. Although individual Occupy Wall Street protestors can be very well informed and aware of the objectives they strive for, as long as they do not make their political goals explicitly themselves as a 'we,' the political effect of

11 I borrow the example from Lindahl though attach different consequences to it. See Hans Lindahl, 'Constituent power and reflexive identity: towards an ontology of collective selfhood,' in *The Paradox of Constitutionalism*, ed. Neil Walker & Martin Loughlin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 9-24.

this movement remains limited. Only when the 'we' is somehow defined by the collectivity, revolts transpose into constitutive power. Only then, revolts can really be the beginning of a new political order. Only then, revolts overcome the loss of the previous relations, and form a new bond. Without such redefining of the 'we,' a revolt can only attempt to overthrow the political power of a dictator who is no longer recognized as legitimate. The Egyptian 'we,' then, merely defined who was against the order as it existed. For that 'we,' mutual recognition is not sufficient. The others, those who are not part of that political enterprise, need to be defined too. In a way, this reveals the importance of convincing political leadership. When looking at more successful and lasting overthrows of undemocratic rule, the importance of strong leadership becomes apparent, for instance the influence of both Jawaharlal Nehru and Mohandas Gandhi during the Indian independence in 1948. Years before the change of political power, they established credibility with the Indian people, and, above all, had developed clear ideas of how India was to change. They lead the 'Indian National Congress,' a party founded as early as 1885. They also organized rallies, and were able to mobilize thousands of Indians. Concerning ideas, Nehru wrote many works during his years of imprisonment by the British Raj, for instance *The Discovery of India* (between 1942 and 1946). Years before the negotiations for the independence, they succeeded in legitimately defining the 'we' of their society. The loss of unity follows necessarily from the nature of the freedom as experienced on such occasions. But it also shows another paradox: that the democratically founding 'we' can only come into being, when the 'we' is claimed by a number of individuals first.

The 'we' as collective agent, therefore, is a necessary condition for the execution of the power that constitutes democratic rule. Collective self-rule implies a 'we' that is a unity in action. This is precisely what the last part of Winter's paper puts forward. Here, Winter describes self-governance primarily as collective action, as the possibility to manage one's fate through collective initiative. He nicely introduces the reader to fundamental aspects of the civic tradition that combined a belief in free will with a collective effort to manage 'fortune.' Machiavellian virtue implies capacities to act in order to achieve the common good, although, ultimately, this effort cannot be totally voluntary. To a certain degree, efforts of even the most virtuous political agents are destined to undergo unpredictable influences. The republican tradition does not presuppose a perfectly malleable society. The republican tradition firmly installs the focus on general interest through practices like citizens involvement in the army. The main enemy, Machiavelli explains, is corruption of civic values, which occurs when individuals succeed in putting their own self-interest at the top of the political agenda.¹² Opposed to the ideal of active participation, civic responsibility, and control, stands the reduction of the citizen to a mere voter. The voter chooses passively amongst the options presented. And today, these options hardly reflect real opposing views.

12 Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, (London: Penguin Classics, 1998), p. 193 (Discourses, I, 34).

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Winter's paper thus ends with the Machiavellian tradition. In a final comment, I would like to pick up on this suggestion, involving the contemporary political thinker Chantal Mouffe. Like Machiavelli, she links the political to an ineradicable dimension of conflict and dissent. Furthermore, she emphasizes the necessity of 'collective identifications' in politics: the idea of consensus without exclusion is impossible. But this 'we' of collective action or identification does not imply a 'we' as sameness, to a shared identity as 'sameness.' Collective identifications are temporary and changing. Mouffe refers to Derrida, and his notion of the 'constitutive outside.' Every 'inside' is incommensurable with the 'outside,' while the outside also constitutes the inside. In other words: when defining political relations and affiliations, a citizen also indicates the relations, affiliations or identifications she or he does not adhere to, which precisely defines the nature of these identifications. This process is not at odds with democracy, but a necessary part of it. Ideally, plurality is able to democratically integrate these oppositions. In formulating a view on democratic citizenship, Mouffe uses the term 'commonality,' which institutes a 'we' as a 'demos,' without excluding plurality.¹³

Like Winter, Mouffe refers to Freud and psychoanalytic theory to undermine the liberal view on the rational self.¹⁴ She integrates the lack of rationality in a view on democratic agency. Mouffe, in her own way, also questions the liberal 'autonomy' of the subject. She directs her arrows at liberal theorists like John Rawls. His experiment of the 'veil of ignorance' might look like a beautiful exercise for rational minds to determine the political conditions for government intervention. In reality, however, the willingness to make an abstraction of any identity presupposes a very liberal identity. This is the circular movement of liberal legitimacy: only a truly liberal subject, who is a historically contingently constructed subject, can agree to those experiments that are necessary for transcending a liberal notion of identity. In the failure of the experiment liberal democracy is at risk.

Taking citizens seriously as citizens, and not just as consumers having a right to vote, implies considering their passions, desires, identifications, concerns and combats. As a whole, Winter's paper gives motivating and inspiring indications to this end.

13 Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (London: Verso, 2000), 55.

14 Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (London: Routledge, 2005).