

Jan Smoleński

Central European University, Budapest

***Chantal Mouffe vs. Carl Schmitt: The Political, Democracy, and the Question of
Sovereignty. Abstract***

In this paper I compare political theories of Carl Schmitt and Chantal Mouffe in three important aspects - the conceptualization of the political, their attitude towards liberal democracy and the conception of political process - and point to significant discrepancies. Schmitt's concept of the political is deeply existential and essentially involves real possibility of death, whereas Mouffe's is more domesticated, centered around the struggle, not physical elimination. Schmitt sees liberal democracy as inherently contradictory, because it is grounded on contradictory principles: democratic equality and particularism, and liberal freedom and universalism. Mouffe perceives this contradiction as a locus of tension with emancipatory potential. I trace these differences to their different perception of history. Schmitt's vision of history is marked with ruptures created by the political emergencies, which correlates with his eventual, decisionistic conception of politics. Mouffe's processual conception of politics corresponds rather with the conception of the end of history.

***Chantal Mouffe vs. Carl Schmitt:
The Political, Democracy, and the Question of Sovereignty****

Political thought of Carl Schmitt is an important point of reference in today's political theory. His fascist past made him an object of deserved criticism: some critics

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were interpreting his writings from Weimar period through the lens of his political choices;¹ other sought for his self-excuse for involvement in NSDAP in his post-World-War-II works². Despite that fact, however, Schmitt's thought has been keenly adapted by some of the left-wing opponents of post-political hegemony of neoliberalism. One of the left-wing thinkers inspired by the thought of Schmitt is Chantal Mouffe. She employs his deep conviction about the inevitability of conflict in political life and on this basis she refutes claims of the demise of the division into right and left³. Schmitt's claim, that "whoever invokes humanity wants to cheat"⁴ is understood as the exposure of the particular interests disguised as universal values. In Mouffe's interpretation, the emergence of right-wing populism is the effect of the repression of genuine political conflict and invoking universal concepts to justify the measures taken to pursue particular goals. She also tries to show the inevitability and desirability of political conflict within a nation state.

In an epoch of effective repression of political conflict under the pressure of the principle of economic effectiveness⁵ this attempt of rediscovery of politics and refutation of "the end of history" claims deserve attention and serious examination. Although Mouffe openly admits that she reconceptualizes Schmitt's notions (in some cases against Schmitt's intentions), close comparison of Mouffe and Schmitt points to the possible shortcomings of Mouffe's attempt to accommodate political conflict within liberal-democratic framework of politics. The aim of this essay is to show that

1 For example: Ulrich Preuss, "Political Order and Democracy: Carl Schmitt and His Influence," in: Chantal Mouffe (ed.) *The Challenge of Carl Schmitt*, Verso: London, 1999, 155-179.

2 For example: Victoria Kahn, "Hamlet or Hecuba: Carl Schmitt's Decision," in: *Representations* 83, no. 1, 2003, 67-96.

3 See: Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right: The future of Radical Politics*, Polity Press: Malden, MA, Cambridge, 1994.

4 Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of The Political*, trans. George Schwab, University of Chicago Press: Chicago 2007, p. 54.

5 See: Colin Crouch, *Post-Democracy*, Polity Press: Malden, MA, Cambridge 2004, as well as Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics. Lectures at the College de France 1978-1979*, ed. Arnold I. Davidson, trans. Graham Burchell, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Chantal Mouffe's reconceptualization of Carl Schmitt's main categories of the political and friend-enemy distinction is rooted in quite different ideas of the ontology of historical time. This has profound consequences for political practice Mouffe advocates. For the sake of simplicity (not because of the bias in favor of one author) I will compare Mouffe's theory to Schmitt's; this approach has only one explanation: it is Mouffe that reconceptualizes Schmitt, not *vice versa*. To argue for my thesis, I start with the central concept in her political theory, which is political conflict, and show the basic differences between her understanding of the political and that of Schmitt. This leads me to the issue of the nature of modern democracy, especially the tension between democracy and liberalism, which I will explore in the second step. This part points to yet another important difference between Mouffe and Schmitt – the nature of politics. I argue that in the case of Schmitt, politics has eventual/revolutionary nature, whereas in the case of Mouffe it is processual. I trace this discrepancy to the lack of the theory of sovereignty in the latter case and describe it in the third step. In the fourth part I explain the discrepancies between Mouffe and Schmitt with their different understandings of history (stated explicitly by Schmitt and implicit in the case of Mouffe)⁶. Lastly I conclude.

Difference between Schmitt's and Mouffe's idea of conflict

In his famous book *The Concept of the Political* Schmitt argues that the distinctive feature of politics is the conflict along the line that separates friends from enemies. "The political," friend-enemy relationship constitutes the heart of politics⁷. This distinction is analogous to distinctions in other realms (like good and evil in ethics

6 One may object reconstructing Mouffe's theory of history from the writings that do not concern history. The aim of this paper, however, is to draw ultimate consequences from Mouffe's reformulations of Schmitt's concepts. Since, as I argue in this paper, Schmitt's political theory rests on peculiar understanding of history, I find it legitimate to reconstruct a theory of history that corresponds to Mouffe's theory.

7 Schmitt. *The Concept*, op. cit., p. 26.

or ugly and beautiful in esthetics), but it cannot be reduced to those⁸. In other words, the political is autonomous not in the sense that there exists some independent realm of the political; rather, the autonomy of the political is grounded in the fact that the political relationship, the friend-enemy distinction, describes the intensity of association and dissociation of men, and is irreducible to any other distinction. “Thereby the inherently objective nature and autonomy of the political becomes evident by virtue of its being able to treat, distinguish, and comprehend the friend-enemy antithesis independently of other antitheses”⁹. Politics, therefore, is never about struggle in the name of ethical or any other principles; these principles, however, can be employed in order to sharpen the friend-enemy distinction. The ultimate consequence of the friend-enemy relationship is the possibility of dying. It is not to say that war is just a continuation of politics by other means, as Clausewitz argued. Rather, for Schmitt, war is always a present possibility of politics, its ultimate consequence and in this sense its truth¹⁰. Therefore the distinction has profound existential character: the existence of the one side of the relation is a threat to the existence of the other. Hence the definition of the enemy as a collectivity of people that (at least potentially) confronts similar collectivity. It means that the enemy is always the public one, because it refers to the grouping of people¹¹. At the same time, the existence of the enemy is the condition of possibility for the unity of friends. In other words it is the existence of public enemy that enables the creation of the political unity of friends and give them substantial collective identity. Moreover, the potential conflict between friends and enemies cannot be mediated or resolved by a disinterested third party¹². Political actions in the strong sense of the word are those that have the possibility of fight for life and death as their horizon. The friend-enemy distinction is also existential in another sense: it overrides all other divisions inside the political unity of the nation.

8 Ibid., p. 27.

9 Ibid., p. 27.

10 Ibid., p. 34.

11 Ibid., p. 28

12 Ibid., p. 27

Radical existential separation in politics is ultimate and unavoidable. One is either a friend or an enemy – there is no middle ground; the temporal apparent lack of intensity of political conflict does not change the fact that the relation between friends and enemies rests on the mutual threat to physical existence. Mouffe accepts Schmitt's premise that conflict constitutes the core of politics, but she rejects his radical separation of friends and enemies. The friend-enemy distinction is for her one of the many possible forms of the “us” and “them” relation¹³. The acceptable form of conflict is not an antagonism but an agonism, “a we/they relation where the conflicting parties, although acknowledging that there is no rational solution to their conflict, nevertheless recognize the legitimacy of their opponents. They are 'adversaries' not enemies.”¹⁴ Mouffe accepts the irreducible dimension of conflict in the political, however, it is restrained in order to fit liberal-democratic form of the polity. Through the change of the conflictual relation from enemies to adversaries, Mouffe claims, the formal construction of the political is preserved, yet the final horizon of the Schmittian understanding of the political, the possibility of dying and killing, real fight for life and death, is averted. Mouffe is convinced that by these transformations of the Schmittian notion of the political she has better understood and preserved the political: Schmitt, by not accepting the pluralism of the modern democratic societies, annihilates the political because the potential for dividing into friends and enemies will be finally exhausted, when the mere possibility of the fight for life and death turns into reality. In her reformulation, however, existential aspect of the political is lost: although the elements of the relation still reciprocally define their identities, they are not the threat for their very existence. Political conflict turns into parliamentary debate, where the procedure of voting replaces the final resolution of the conflict¹⁵.

13 Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political*, Routledge: London, New York 2005, p. 16. Unfortunately she does not specify other possible forms.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 20.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 22.

Democracy vs. liberalism or democracy *and* liberalism?

Mouffe's reformulation of Schmitt's basic political relation results with different understanding of political conflict. For Schmitt it is ultimately a physical confrontation between two hostile groupings which perceive each other as a threat for their existence. For Mouffe, on the other hand, political conflict is the relation in which the two parties can differentiate from each other, not necessarily becoming an existential threat for one another. The discrepancy between Mouffe and Schmitt in this respect – its magnitude and its ground – is understandable much better in the context of their different attitudes towards liberal democracy.

In his book *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy* Schmitt writes: “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”¹⁶. He equates equality with homogeneity, because he understands the former not formally, as expressed in legal provisions, but substantially as “found in certain physical [sic!] and moral qualities, for example, in civic virtue, in *arete*”¹⁷. This radical democratic idea of equality rests on the substantial identity of the governing, the sovereign, and the governed, the subjects¹⁸. In other words, the ruler is not distinguished *from* the people, but *by* the people¹⁹. The dark underside of Schmitt's conception of democracy (especially bothering in the context of Schmitt's political choices) is its tendency for internal repression of everything that differs from the established pattern of substantial commonality because it is this commonality that defines the ultimate democratic sovereign – the people. In democracy it is the will of the people that sanctions any

16 Carl Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, trans. Ellen Kennedy, The MIT Press: Cambridge, Mass., London, 1985, p. 8.

17 Ibid, p. 9.

18 Ibid. p. 26.

19 Carl Schmitt, *Constitutional Theory*, trans. Jeffrey Seitzer, Duke University Press: Durham, London 2008, p. 264.

decision that is made; this will is not a simple aggregation of individual votes but is expressed as the will of the collective. This claim is paradoxically consistent with another Schmitt's claim that "democratic dictatorship" can exist. Democracy can be dictatorial if the sovereign embodies the existential, pre-legal unity of the people.

This understanding of democracy is incompatible with liberalism. Liberal form of government – parliamentarism – rests on the principles of openness and discussion which by definition requires not homogeneity but rather pluralism of opinions. The clash of opinions is supposed to produce the truth and justice²⁰, not the unanimous decision of a collective subject. The institution of parliament presupposes that the reason is scattered unevenly among the participants of the discussion and it reveals itself through the deliberation. Thus discussion is not just negotiation but a (constant and in this sense never-ending) process of achieving the truth and justice. Public deliberation produces political harmony analogously as market competition produces harmonious distribution of goods; in this sense, liberalism is profoundly rationalistic. With its insistence on individualism and universalism, and with its rationalistic core, liberalism is incapable of creating genuine political, that is collective identity – it perceives conflict either in moral terms, that is confrontation between good and evil, or in economic terms, where there are not enemies, but only negotiable interests²¹. Democracy, on the contrary, is a political form *par excellence* because, according to Schmitt, it rests on substantive collective identity of the group, that is created in the opposition to other groups. The democratic illusion of parliamentarism as a liberal form of government stems from the historically contingent struggle of liberals and democrats against absolutist monarchies. However, the plurality of opinions contradicts democratic homogeneity. "The essence of the parliament is therefore public deliberation of argument and counterargument, public debate and public discussion, parley, and all this without taking democracy into account"²². It is so, because

20 Schmitt, *The Crisis*, op. cit., p. 49.

21 Schmitt, *The Concept*, op. cit., p. 37.

22 Schmitt, *The Crisis*, op. cit., p. 34-35.

liberalism and democracy rest on different, mutually exclusive principles. Thus, according to Schmitt, liberal democracy is an oxymoron, an internally contradictory notion for liberalism rests on individualism, pluralism and universalism and democracy rests on the principle of homogeneity and in fact particularism.

Accepting Schmitt's premises about the contradiction between liberalism and democracy, Mouffe rejects his conclusions²³. Using his categories, she tries to defend pluralism of the liberal democracy against Schmitt's fierce criticism. She acknowledges that there is a contradiction between liberal and democratic concepts of equality, however, it does not have to lead to destruction of the regime but it rather can be a *locus of tension*

that installs a very important dynamic, which is constitutive of the specificity of liberal democracy as a new political form of society. The democratic logic of constituting the people, and inscribing rights and equality into practices, is necessary to subvert the tendency towards abstract universalism inherent in liberal discourse. But the articulation with the liberal logic allows us constantly to challenge - through reference to 'humanity' and the polemical use of 'human rights' - the forms of exclusion that are necessarily inscribed in the political practice of installing those rights and defining 'the people' which is going to rule²⁴.

Methodological individualism of the liberals results in acceptance for multiplicity of individual ends, desires, opinions, etc., while universalistic reference to humanity or reason are in fact the attempts to create the all-inclusive universal equality. In the case of democracy, however, some sort of homogeneity is necessary in order to distinguish the equality of citizens from inequality between citizens of different states. In order to create *demos* one needs those who are excluded from *demos* as a constitutive outside. Hence this tension creates the potential for emancipation. Liberal democratic slogans of liberty and equality can not only be tested against oppressive practices in politics,

23 Chantal Mouffe, "Carl Schmitt and the Paradox of Liberal Democracy," in: *The Democratic Paradox*, Verso: London, New York, 2000, p. 44.

24 Ibid.

but claimed in the spheres that were not considered political before: “the process of democratization has to extend from the sphere of political relations to encompass all social relations – gender, family, workplace, neighbourhood, school, and so on”²⁵.

Mouffe believes also that Schmitt's insight in the nature of the political and the shortcomings of the liberal-rationalistic, consensus-oriented idea of politics can preserve liberal democracy from illiberal attacks of right-wing populism. In her diagnosis, right-wing populism emerged in response to elimination of effective political divisions by technical language of economic efficiency (accepted by the “third way” social democracy) on the one hand and moralization of the conflict on the other. Lack of genuine political difference that would give a vent to dissatisfaction and social cleavages combined with delegitimizing *cordon sanitaire* against 'irrational populists' gave fuel to a very dangerous mixture. As a result the right-wing populist parties, that combined anti-elitist and anti-systemic claims with xenophobia and ethnic and national particularism, appeared as the only real alternative for 'those corrupt in power.'²⁶ Paradoxically, in order to sustain the relative stability of the liberal democratic polity one needs to accept conflictual character of politics and install it into the core of liberal democracy. According to Mouffe, in this way the emancipatory dynamics of liberal democratic system can be preserved, containing the conflict within the limits of continuous agonism, and not in unrestrained antagonism.

Politics – processual or eventual? On the concept of sovereignty

The two discussed differences between Mouffe and Schmitt – the discrepancy in the understanding of the political and attitude towards liberal democracy – stem from a more fundamental difference concerning the character of politics. Although they both accept conflictual core of politics, they ascribe to it different roles. In the

25 Chantal Mouffe, “On the Articulation between Liberalism and Democracy,” in: *The Return of The Political*, Verso: London, New York, 1993, p. 103.

26 Mouffe, *On the Political*, op. cit., Chapter 4, especially pages 64-76.

case of Schmitt it is the ever present possibility of annihilation, ultimate resolution of the tension between friends and enemies by the destruction of one of the sides. In the case of Mouffe, it is rather the engine of the continuous process of struggle. In other words, for Schmitt, politics has eventual character, whereas for Mouffe it is processual.

In order to better grasp the theoretical foundation of this discrepancy between Schmitt and Mouffe, what should be examined is the question of sovereignty. Traditionally, since Jean Bodin, sovereignty is defined as the unrestrained by law, highest authority. In this conception the sovereign is the figure that holds ultimate political power and is defined by the capacity to impose decisions onto its subjects. At the moment of crisis, the sovereign decides to suspend or even breach the law in order to keep the integrity of existing political unity. The mature form of this understanding of sovereignty can be found in political philosophy of Thomas Hobbes. The reason people keep allegiance to the sovereign is the fact it protects them from the unbearable fear of the state of nature. If the sovereign cannot provide protection, this obligation will simply be taken by another sovereign, which, according to the rule *protego ergo obligo*, would have the right to demand allegiance²⁷.

However, it is not the most important feature of the Schmitt's sovereign. In his analysis of Schmitt's notion of sovereignty, Andreas Kalyvas points out that the sovereign is mainly the constituent power, the capacity to create and find new political order. The state of exception is the moment when the situation of the *creatio ex nihilo* can be repeated²⁸. The first sentence of Schmitt's *Political Theology* – “Sovereign is he who decides on the exception”²⁹ – should not be understood as simply the suspension of existing legal order. This distinction is better visible in Schmitt's writing on

27 Andreas Kalyvas, “Popular Sovereignty, Democracy and the Constituent Power,” in: *Constellations* vol. 12 no. 2 2005, p. 224.

28 Ibid, see also: Andreas Kalyvas, “Hegemonic sovereignty: Carl Schmitt, Antonio Gramsci and the constituent prince,” in: *Journal of Political Ideologies* (2000), 5 (3), 343–376.

29 Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapter on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab, The MIT Press: Cambridge, Mass., London 1985, p. 5.

dictatorship. He distinguishes there two types of dictatorial rule. Commisarial dictatorship – an exceptional power granted to the particular body in order to restore the order. Sovereign dictatorship, on the other hand, refers to the provisional body that is granted by the people the constituent power³⁰. It should be stressed that although *Ausnamenzustand* plays structurally the same role in political theory as the notion of the miracle in theology,³¹ the decision over the state of exception is never made with disregard to historico-political context. Schmitt's interpretation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* shows, that every political decision is taken in particular historico-political conditions³². It is pre-normative, but it is always already made in the situation of concrete disorder. There is no external measure that could provide any prediction about its outcome. A decision in this sense is an embracement of the contingency constituent for the political, however, as Giacomo Marramao rightly points out “[t]he decision is not a coup de theatre - a mere arbitrary <<gesture>> for its own ends, art pour l'art - but the cut, the innovative schism, which is the origin of every concrete, actually existing legal system”³³. The concreteness of historico-political circumstances limits the arbitrariness of the sovereign creator. The sovereign decision is sovereign not because it is discretionary or groundless. The decision is sovereign because it is an ultimate act of establishing the new order, an act which cannot be judged by any existing norm, because it creates those norms. In the epoch after the French Revolution, the only legitimate sovereign is the people, but not understood as the collection of individuals, but rather the self-conscious collective will³⁴. The people by its will make the comprehensive constitutive decision about its collective existence; any constitution, any legal and political order is grounded in this existential decision. The

30 Gopal Balakrishnan, *The Enemy. An Intellectual Portrait of Carl Schmitt*, Verso: London, New York 2000, chapter 2., especially p. 32.

31 Schmitt, *Political Theology*, op. cit., p. 36.

32 Carl Schmitt, *Hamlet or Hecuba: The Irruption of Time into Play*, trans. Simona Draghici, Corvallis, OR: Plutarch Press, 2006.

33 Giacomo Marramao, *The Exile of the Nomos: For a critical Profile of Carl Schmitt*, in: *Cardozo Law Review*, vol. 21:1567, p. 1576.

34 Schmitt, *Constitutional Theory*, op. cit, p. 125-127.

ultimate consequence of this claim is that the political is constitutive for the social³⁵.

A preliminary theory of constituent power can be found, however, in Mouffe's earlier work co-authored with Ernesto Laclau. As described in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, hegemony is independent from any other social realm, totally contingent and constituent for the society understood as the polity³⁶. Politics is about fixing the meaning of different social identities and establishing the main line of social antagonism. Although it is deprived of decisionistic character of Schmittian sovereign (in this sense it is not the exception that constitutes the rule), the Mouffeian-Laclauian conception of hegemony retains other important features of sovereignty – autonomy from other realms (and related capacity to politicize them in antagonistic relation), and the capacity to constitute the identity of the friends against the enemies. As it is a struggle for power, politics is ultimately a process of the constitution of society. Hegemony transcends the state and thus plays the same structural role as the notion of the Schmittian sovereign as the constituent power. Sovereignty is defined as the power to overcome legal order and even create it, similarly hegemony is a relation of power creating a discursive net that is constitutive for the political and social order³⁷. In her democratic theory, however, Mouffe does not theorize the sovereignty, neither in the sense of *plenitudo potestis* or the constituent power. What she is interested in is democratic politics that would not be limited to proceduralism and retain the pluralist and conflictual – active aspect within the framework of liberal democracy. In this sense her understanding of democracy is that of a “non-hegemonic struggle”³⁸. Mouffe

35 Kalyvas, “Hegemonic sovereignty,” op. cit.

36 Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, Second Edition, Verso: London, New York, 2002.

37 See: Kalyvas, “Hegemonic sovereignty,” op. cit. Author does not refer to Laclau and Mouffe's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, however his interpretation of the notion of hegemony and especially the critique of Gramsci's “crude social determinism” according to which political domination had its sources in the domination in the realm of the economic, is very consistent with their post-Marxist standing.

38 See: Stefan Rummens, “Democracy as a Non-Hegemonic Struggle? Disambiguating Chantal Mouffe's

theorizes only the struggle within an already established institutional framework; the question of sovereignty is absent from her democratic theory, and as I want to argue, not by chance.

The political and the vision of history: *to katechon vs. the end of history*

I believe the key to understanding Schmitt's vision of the political is his conception of history described in "Three Possibilities for Christian Conception of History," a short, dense, and unfortunately not well known text. In this article, debating theses of Karl Löwith's *Meaning in History*, Schmitt describes his political eschatology which consists of three figures: the great parallel, *Katechon*, and Christian Epimethius. The great historical parallel is the basis of the historical self-consciousness of modernity: it relates present times to *the* great event in the past, it signifies the actual presence of *the* historical event as the beginning of the history; it does not mean simple identity of historical moments, but it is designed to create difference and thus enables historical thinking. The past is perceived from the point of view of the present, but it is the past event that serves as the criterion for the judgment of the present. This is how the history gains its "dark meaning"³⁹. This apparent paradox results in the radical contraction of time by bringing together the present and the past. At the same time, this radical contraction of time gives the sense of approaching *eschaton*, the sense of the end of times and the related ultimate confrontation of the good with the evil. In this deeply existential understanding of time, time flow is reversed. It does not flow from the past to the future, but the other way around. However, this eschatological perspective, in which great parallel posits us, does not guarantee truly historical consciousness because the eschatological anticipation – ontological privilege is given to the future as the criterion of interpretation for the present – results in passive awaiting of the end of times. The figure that can prevent this 'eschatological

Agonistic Model of Politics," *Constellations* Volume 16, Number 3, 2009, pp. 377-391.

39 Carl Schmitt, "Three Possibilities for a Christian Conception of History," in: *Telos* 147 Summer 2009, p. 170.

paralysis' is *Katechon*, the restrainer, which Schmitt derives from Saint Paul's second letter to Thessalonians. *Katechontical* forces are not simply reactionary forces; they rather prevent the victory of the Antichrist on Earth. It is active awaiting of the believers, which includes the necessity of taking decisions, including (or especially) political decisions. The third element, Christian Epimethius, refers to infinite particularity of the historical event. Christian Epimethius looks back on past historical events and from them draws the meaning for the present. This Marian history, as Schmitt calls it, is the messianism of the restraint⁴⁰. “[K]atechontical view of history focuses on the occasional and unpredictable *emergence* of world powers that prevent the much feared world unity”⁴¹ that according to Schmitt's interpretation of the words of Saint Paul will be a false paradise, a kingdom of the Antichrist. *Katechon* prevents the end of history not only by sustaining the plurality of states but in more abstract terms by guaranteeing the discontinuity of time. History is as long as time itself is not homogeneous and contains sudden ruptures. In other words, history is constituted by sudden breaks, extraordinary political events of the (re)creation of political unities by sovereign decisions. In this sense, Schmitt's conception of time has similar structure to that of the political: it is the exception that is fundamental and constituent basis for the regular and normal. Extra-legal and pre-legal constitutive power of the sovereign is primary to the constituted legal order. The existence of history as such depends on the ruptures of time marked by the emergence of *katechon*.

At first glance, Mouffe's conception of the political is compatible with Schmittian conception of history. Closer examination, however, proves otherwise. Although she does not explicitly formulate the theory of history, her conception of the political seems to be grounded in the end of history, rather than in attempts to preserve it. The best known modern version of 'the end of history' theorem was presented by Francis Fukuyama. In his essay *The End of History?* and later in *The End of*

40 See: Janusz Ostrowski, “Anioł Przeszłości – nota tłumacza”, [in:] *Kronos* 2/2010, 167-170.

41 Wiliam Hooker, *Carl Schmitt's International Thought. Order and Orientation*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, London 2009, p. 51.

History and the Last Man, based on the Kojèveian interpretation of Hegel's philosophy of history, he argues that the end of the Cold War proved to be the end of history in the sense that the ideological development of mankind achieved its *telos* in liberal democratic regime as an embodiment of the principles of freedom and equality. In other words, democratization of the world is the question of time, not *whether*, but *when* undemocratic societies (i.e. still historical societies) will adopt liberal democracy. “[A]t the end of history it is not necessary that all societies become successful liberal societies, merely that they end their ideological pretensions of representing different and higher forms of human society”⁴². According to Fukuyama, the end of history means the state in which no substantial, qualitative change is possible nor desirable. What has brought history to an end was the end of political evolution, and liberal democracy represents its final stage⁴³. In other words, it is not about the true end of times and ideological struggle – they may appear between historical and post-historical societies. The end of history is a utopianism in which humanity has found the final formula of political organization *and* politics as action. Is not it the case with Mouffe's understanding of democratic politics? In her view, liberal democracy is *the* regime that by its internal dynamics provides mechanism for progressive democratization. Although it is possible that subsequent spheres of life are democratized, the liberal democratic framework and institutions stay intact. Although she rejects the idea of the end of history in many of her writings, it seems that within her theory there is no room for emergence of a genuinely new political form. Her main point of attack is not the end of history, but rather the post-politics. Of course Mouffe does not endorse Fukuyama's deep conviction that it is only a matter of time before liberal democratic principles be adopted worldwide, both in internal affairs and as an international order. In this case she is much more pessimistic. However, the structure is very similar: a processual character of politics (with no sudden ruptures and moments of discontinuity) and the belief in the final formula of the politics.

42 Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?,” in: *The National Interest*, Summer 1989, <http://www.wesjones.com/eoh.htm>, last accessed at December 31 2011.

43 Susan Marks, “The end of history,” in: *European Journal of International Law* 3/1997, p. 452.

This conception of history is at odds with Schmitt's conception of discontinuous time and history. Schmitt's conception of politics is eventual: politics for him is not a process (as it is for Mouffe) but an event. Mouffe's vision of time resembles a pagan cyclical self-reproduction/reconstruction of the political community through repeating elections and continuous political *agon* within certain limits of liberal democratic debate. The improvements within liberal democracy itself are possible, but they are possible thanks to the internal liberal democratic principles of liberty and equality. Still, the conception of the end of history is deeply conservative because it assumes that a political regime superior to or more advanced than liberal democracy is simply impossible. Such a conclusion can be drawn from Mouffe's reformulation of political conflict and abandonment of the issue of constituent power. Constituent power as a new beginning corresponds to, and in fact creates the rupture in the flow of time. In Mouffe, the lack of this aspect of the political results in an unexpected similarity to Fukuyama's conception. Schmitt would most probably call it a-historical thinking.

Conclusions

This paper attempts to show the basic differences between political theory of Carl Schmitt and Chantal Mouffe's reformulation thereof. Because of the scope and complexity of Schmitt's thought I limited myself to three central points: the difference in the ideas of political conflict, different understanding of the relationship between liberalism and democracy, and the notion of sovereignty. I argued that Mouffe's more domesticated idea of conflict results from the value-based commitment to liberal democracy. While accepting his remarks as valuable source for reinvention of the emancipatory potential of liberal-democratic project, Mouffe rejects Schmitt's ferocious critique of liberalism on the grounds of her devotion to individual freedom. This, in turn, rests on the conception of politics that is processual, not decisionistic/revolutionary.

In the final section I propose a more general interpretative framework which takes the (implicit or explicit) conception of history that is considered a logical ground for further political theory as the (logical) point of departure. From this point of view Mouffe's reconceptualization of Schmitt results from her different commitments concerning historicity of history. This, I believe, points to a more general issue of connections between politics, sovereignty and the historicity of history. The understanding of politics is intimately linked with, and in fact presupposes, an ontological commitment in the understanding of history. In other words, political ontology can be fully understood within the framework of the ontology of historical time. Schmitt's enterprise can be interpreted as an attempt of repoliticizing the politics – by internal repression of visible differences as – in the times when decisions concerning collective existence are made not with the reference to the political, but to technical knowledge or the strength of the pressure groups⁴⁴. The ways of such repoliticization are unacceptable within democratic polities. A similar goal is set by Chantall Mouffe. To give Mouffe full credit, her attempt to “think with Schmitt, against Schmitt”⁴⁵ should be read as a heroic effort of breaking out from the alleged lack of political alternatives to neoliberal state-craft within an already established – and widely accepted, at least in democratic countries – liberal democratic framework. It seems, however, that in order to think the alternative, we need to be able to think the break with liberal democratic regime in general. And this thought requires the reinvention of history.

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