

MULTITUDE

AS A SUBJECT OF DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTIONS SEVERAL CONCLUSIONS FROM THE PSYCHOANALYSIS OF A **COLLECTIVE VOICE**

JAN SOWA

TRANSLATED BY JOACHIM DYMITRI NAWROT

article
abstract

THIS TEXT IS AN ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPT OF MULTITUDE IN THE BACKGROUND OF THE POLITICAL EVENTS THAT HAVE STARTED IN 2011. IT ENCOMPASSES THE RIOTS, PROTESTS AND UPRISING IN THE MAGHREB, THE MIDDLE EAST, EUROPE (MADRID), AND THE UNITED STATES (OCCUPY WALL STREET MOVEMENT). THESE DEVELOPMENTS CHALLENGE THE ACCURACY OF THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC PROCESS. IT ANALYZES THE GROUND FOR THESE PROTESTS WHICH BOIL DOWN TO ONE REQUEST: MORE DEMOCRACY.

keywords

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I would like to devote this work to the political events of 2011. More specifically, to devote it to the unrests, protests and uprisings in the Maghreb in the Middle East, Madrid in Europe, and the USA (the Occupy Wall Street movement). Those events cast shadows over the accuracy of liberal concepts of democratisation processes. There are a number of problems needing to be outlined. First and foremost, those mass movements, unprecedented in their reach since 1968, make more or less the same postulates in Egypt, Libya, Syria, Spain, the United Kingdom and the USA; they all boil down to one demand: more democracy. Everyone, who – just like Francis Fukuyama or Fared Zakaria – still thinks that the theory of modernisation is not yet dead and buried, should really take a closer look at this significant coincidence.

We do not have to do with a transfer or an imitation on the peripheries of something happening in the centre. When citizens of dictatorships struggle for a greater autonomy and emancipation and lesser plutocracy and corruption, citizens of democratic countries - or even citizens of the USA that considers itself an ideal democracy - demand the same. Furthermore, the Protest Movements turn against both the Right (as it is the case in the United Kingdom), the Left (in Spain), and Centre (in the USA). It is, vicariously, an argument in support of the claim that the traditional divisions tend to be vanishing in the contemporary, political reality (or, to put it more aptly, in the post-political reality). Despite what can be heard in the mainstream of dominant liberal discourse, it is not the societies of the centre that inspired the transformations on the peripheries, but its the exact opposite: it is the Tahrir Square in Cairo that can be considered as a synecdoche of the “history’s awakening”- a term used by Alain Badiou to describe the events happening in 2011.¹ Protesters from the Occupy Movement of Plaza del Sol in Madrid, or Liberty Plaza in New York, used to remark frequently of an inspiration, that they considered protest in Egypt and Tunisia to be. For them, these became a source of hope and faith in that a fundamental change of political reality is indeed possible. This situation is a symptom of deep and thorough transformation of global, socio-political dynamics, upon which I shall elaborate further in the conclusion of this work.

Political events of the past year provide very valuable material for an anthropological analysis of democracy. We, however, need to avoid an individualistic perspective that suggests seeking psychological, cultural or ethical characteristic of democratic citizenship. I do not, therefore, plan to consider traits of a “man of democracy” as such, I shall rather concentrate

¹ Badiou 2011.

on the people - males and females alike - who constitute the democracy. The change from singular to plural denotes a deep alteration of both the theoretical and political point of view. Instead of an individualistic-liberal perspective, which has no ability to transcend the perspective of cultural identity, it introduces a collective and communist point of view. I am fully aware of that the notion of “communism” does not carry positive connotations, this being the case in particular when discussing democracy. Let me thus add promptly: I use this term as defined by Hardt and Negri, who refer to “the common” as the essence of communism: “what is common, is for communism what private is for capitalism, and what state-owned is for socialism.”² Just in order to capture what is common, we need to step outside the individualistic perspective. The question about what is common, cannot be correctly posed by a male or a female of democracy, but by both males and females alike, or by the multitude.

Regrettably, multitude as such constitutes a problem. In his book “A Grammar of the Multitude,” Paolo Virno claims the theoretical poverty, which is encompassed by the notion of “multitude” is a direct result of his own failure in the challenge against another notion around which, over the course of years, has become surrounded by a gigantic, political discourse - the figure of “the people.” As a direct result of that failure the contemporary political philosophy turned towards Hobbes and Locke, rather than Spinoza.³ The task that now stands ahead of us includes transcending the political discourse, related to the notion of the people, therefore with the notion of representative democracy or, to be more precise, the parliamentarism. This is, I believe, the most important and ultimate aim strived for by every male and female demanding the democratisation of systems perceived as “democratic.”

According to Virno, the absence of a developed theory of multitude, that would capture the political consequences of its existence and functioning, also opens up tremendous possibilities. We are somehow back in the 17th century, and have to work out a system of notions that will allow us to invent a system different from the parliamentary democracy as much, as the system of parliamentary democracy was different from the monarchy.⁴ What a fabulous task this is! At the same time, however, so much work needs to be done! To reach the goal, we have to employ all tools we have at our disposal, but above all else, the most effective means of intellectual struggle: interception (as defined by Debord), poaching

2 Hardt, Negri 2009.

3 Virno 2004.

4 Virno 2004.

(as defined by de Certeau) and profanation (as defined by Giorgio Agamben). From those I shall draw in the latter parts of the work. First and foremost, however, we need to keep a cautious eye on what is happening in front of our eyes and what is, I believe, a sign and a formative stage of a new order.

The departure point for those short considerations of the multitude as a subject of a democratic revolution is, to me, what I have mentioned not so long ago: the Arab Spring - a pan-Arab uprising that, over the span of a few months, led to a thoroughgoing reconfiguration of a political order of North Africa and the Middle East. I would like to stress immediately that I am no political scientist or, even less, a specialist in the field of the Arab world or Islam. I am not interested, however, in a political analysis of the dynamics between respective groups engaged in these struggles, and sociological enquiries into the causative factors of the conflict. I am but interested in the multitudinous aspect of the Arab Spring, and in allocating this aspect within the wider perspective of global, democratic transformations. I will allow myself here, however, to make a socio-political remark. What has happened - and still happens - in the Middle East, fundamentally contradicts most of sociological, anthropological and political diagnoses of both the situations happening in these very regions, and the cultures of those regions. According to countless observers it is, allegedly, completely incompatible with the democracy and modernity, what is claimed to constitute the main reason for the much-publicised clash of civilisations.⁵ The British anthropologist Ernst Gellner voiced, as one of the very few, a vastly different opinion - and for that very reason, an opinion worthy of being recalled in the current context. In an 1981 issue of the “Muslim World,” he wrote: “according to numerous, straightforward criteria - the universalism, the attachment to the printed word, spiritual egalitarianism, equal contribution of all of followers into the sacred community, rational systematisation of social life - Islam is, amongst the three Western monotheistic religions, the closest to modernity [stressed by J.S.]”⁶ Therefore, democratic rebellions in North Africa and the Middle East might not actually be as unexpected, as they might initially appear to be, based on the CNN footage - or books by Huntington; and both males and females of Islam can become the males and females of democracy. Just as us, just as all males and all females.

Where, however, is the multitude that constitutes the core of our considerations? Right in front of our eyes, even though it might be hard

5 Huntington 2003.

6 Gellner 1981.

to notice. In order for us to notice it, we need, above all else, to change our viewpoint and, rather than seeing a number of national movements, we need to start seeing a Pan-Arab movement - a movement that is currently transforming the whole region. So it is not the people and nations of Egypt, Libya or Syria who have fought – and are still fighting – their rulers, but rather a Pan-Arab multitude seeking autonomy and emancipation. It can be clearly seen if we take look at the influences, mutual inspirations and transfers of practical knowledge, related to e.g. avoiding the police roadblocks, or gearing up against tear gas - between the activist groups of multifarious countries. Undeniably, the rebellions in different countries of North Africa and the Middle East were also conjoined through the mutuality of endeavours and standards of perfection and excellence. There is no need for a wide-range, empirical research done to prove this. Suffice to compare the demands painted down on the protest banners and websites (fighting the corruption, free and fair elections, freeing political prisoners etc.), which are all similar across the countries discussed. The media of ideological communication and discussion were the websites, with social media such as Facebook and Twitter playing a particularly important role. Primarily for this very reason, the events have been even reported as “The Twitter revolution;” this notion is not wholly appropriate, however, as it overestimates the role played by the media - who acted just and only as “the media,” so: as a middleman, an intermediary, rather than an originator or the source of ideas and concepts.



IN ACCORDANCE WITH A LOGICAL PRINCIPLE THAT ONLY ONE COUNTER-ARGUMENT IS NEEDED TO RENDER A GENERAL THEOREM NULL AND VOID, THE EXAMPLES CITED SHOW THAT WE CANNOT CONSIDER THE ARAB SPRING TO BE A “MIDDLE-CLASS REVOLUTION”

Therefore the multitude is not the human beings in the streets of Cairo, Bengazi or Tunis, but rather a whole net of females and males engaged in the process of an autonomic communication and organisation. Unlike the mob, but just like the people, the multitude cannot be observed directly. (Possibly with an exception of the direct multitude, on which I shall elaborate in a while.) The multitude is visible only through the direct consequences of its actions. Its existence and organisation of has always – what needs to be stressed – had an autonomic character; this can be directly observed through an example of the Arab Spring. It is not a result of an initiative taken externally, e.g. by the USA and the CIA supporting

the opposition, or the European Union inciting local dissidents. The best example of that is the general feeling of unexpectedness and consternation that the Arab Spring has brought upon. The reason for such reaction is, amongst others, the fact that no centre of authority has ever done much to provoke the events of the last year. Those events were a result of just and only just the autonomic organisation of the Arabic multitude that mobilised itself, quite importantly, in accordance with the universal values: such as dignity, equality, justice, fight with poverty, etc. – and not particular issues of religious or ethnic nature. This needs to be stressed, due to the role played by faith and ethnicity in the Arab world, as perceived by the Westerners.

Another deeply multitudinous feature of the events of the Arab Spring is their class structure. Undoubtedly, the political engagement of the middle class played a key role in the Arab Spring. We cannot, however, say that it was a “bourgeois revolution.” There is not enough space here to present a meticulous analysis of that matter, but I would like to bring up two facts of high importance. Muhammad Buazizi, who’s *auto-da-fé* caused riots in Tunisia in December 2010, had in no way belonged to the bourgeoisie, and did in no way aspire to become a part of it. He had rather belonged to the cursed people of the land in their most obvious form: he longed for his work to ensure his own survival, and the survival of his family. He self-immolated as he has lost all hope that even so little would be possible. On a wholly different note: in January 2011, it would not have been possible to recapture the Tahrir Square back from the hands of the police and the army, if not for the mass participation of the impoverished from the Imbaba district of Western Cairo. That is where individuals became strongly mobilised against the Mubarak regime, and this is the very reason for the main battle of the Egypt Spring to take place on the Qasr El Nil Bridge - one that connects the western frontiers of the city with the city centre (most of the population of Cairo, including the middle class in particular, lives on the Tahrir Square side of the Nile river, but most of the protesters reached the Square from the western side, approaching it from the impoverished Imbaba district). Those two examples are not enough to thoroughly describe the class structure of Arab uprisings. It is also not my ambition to do this. In accordance with a logical principle that only one counter-argument is needed to render a general theorem null and void, the examples cited show that we cannot consider the Arab Spring to be a “middle-class revolution.” The diversity of groups and individuals engaged does not fit in this simplified notion derived directly from the theory of stratification.

In order to somewhat organise the considerations regarding multitude and the Arab Spring, I would like to attempt a final profanation and use the notions of Alain Badiou to describe the forms of multitude we have had to do with in North Africa and Middle East (it is also an unforgivable profanation at that, but Alan Badiou most certainly will never find out that his own notion has been recontextualised in order to expand upon the notions of his main opponent, Antony Negri). In “Le Reveil de l’histoire,” dedicated to the issue of Arab Spring, Badiou outlines three types of riots: immediate, latent and historical.⁷

The first one is an immediate reaction of an infuriated mob to an affront it has suffered. This was the case, for example, in 2005, on the suburbs of Paris. The latent riots are like a tinderbox that needs just a single spark to cause a gigantic fire, akin to a violent clash between the football fans and police following a particularly important football match. The most important, and most interesting, are the historical riots. They are the consequence of the immediate riots that become an Event (in the sense given to this term by Badiou, a moment of creation a new, previously non-existent opportunity). In order for this to happen, 3 elements are required: intensification (a model of an intense life of a revolutionist devoted to his struggle becomes the main model of subjectivity), concentration (a group of people fighting in the streets expresses the common will), and localisation (a precise place controlled by the movement becomes a space where a new, proposed order takes shape).⁸ It might be, maybe, possible to similarly classify the multitudes striving for radical, socio-political changes, and to speak of “immediate,” “latent” and “historical” multitude. Such categories would have to be, however, applied to cases differing from the ones mentioned by Badiou. The term “hidden multitude” could be applied, for example, to the Internet activists and hacking groups that only come to spotlight in moments they consider to be of the utmost importance (e.g. a revenge for the persecution of WikiLeaks). The process of transferral from the immediate multitude to the historical multitude would also, quite possibly, be different from the one employed in the case of riots. The main role would be played by expanding the class structure, so that it could encompass a variety of social groups. This is what happened in Poland of the 1980.⁹

What followed the events of Arab Spring is no less unexpected than the Arab Spring itself. 2011 might easily be hailed as “the year of multitude.” The main line of the development of riots and protests leads from the Tahrir Square, through Madrid’s Puerta del Sol Square, the streets

7 Badiou 2011.

8 Badiou 2011.

9 Majmurek, Mikurda, Sowa 2011.

of London, up to the financial districts of New York’s Manhattan. The role that has been played by Arab Spring in this whole process is not only noticed by sociologist, political scientists or journalists, but also reaffirmed by activists from various parts of the world. “Tunisia is our university,” say Anna Curcio and Gigi Roggero, Italian philosophers and activists with links to UniNomade and Edu-factory,¹⁰ “Tahrir gave us hope,” say the Occupiers of New York’s Liberty Plaza.¹¹

I shall revert to the declarations stated above in due time. For the moment being, however, I would like to suggest a short, ethnographic journey into the world of the Occupy Wall Street Movement. Of particular interest to me will be not the political matter of the Movement as such, but its organisational form. The Movement was built around an ultra-democratic practice of the people’s assemblies, open meetings offering an opportunity for virtually every male and female to speak up, be listened to, and actively participate in decision-making. It is, to put it concisely, a type of a direct democracy that has been known to the mankind since the Ancient Ages (or even, as suggested by Martin Bernal - the author of “Black Athena,” since times preceding the Ancient Greece).¹² This type of gatherings could be seen as a certain attempt of immediate multitude to manifest itself, and thus it is worth, I believe, to have a closer look at the organisational practice of those gatherings.

Someone who participates in a people’s assembly for the first time, is bound to immediately notice, above anything else, the ongoing communication of the multitude with itself, that takes places in the course of such an assembly. It happens through a range of simple gestures that allow every male and female to express fundamental positions and emotions, such as agreement, disagreement, precariousness, impatience, etc.¹³ This system of gestures is not exclusively employed by the gatherings within the Occupy movement, and is also being used during the meetings of the most diverse types of groups and critical and revolutionary organisations: antiglobalists, anarchists, union activists etc. The system undergoes certain adjustments in each case, but the principal gestures are commonly accepted and widely understood.

There are straightforward and precise rules governing the way that the topics being put up for discussion are selected, but also governing

10 Curcio, Roggero 2011.

11 Occupied Wall Street 2011.

12 Bernal 2006.

13 Brief description and explanation, see: L. Mason, General Assembly Hand Gestures, <http://vimeo.com/30440885>.

who is given an opportunity to speak, or how the minor workgroups are constructed - groups that, following the gathering, continue to work on issues they have been designated with. Further to this, an interesting solution has been found to the problem of gridlocks, that happen when the discussion in a group too large in size becomes too slow and complicated, due to the complexity of the subject discussed - or due to the emotional factor of such a discussion. Should such situation arise, the gatherings are being split into smaller groups, each comprised of a few individuals, who sit besides each other. In those smaller groups the matter is discussed over the time of roughly 10 minutes. Every male and every female can voice his or her respective concerns, shed some light on uncertainties, and confront his or her own views with the views of others. After such time-out, the main gathering is resumed, and the matters previously discussed are voted on. Many commentators, both females and males, voiced their concerns about the deliberative conception of democracy, as proposed by Jürgen Habermas,¹⁴ that the aforementioned practice is very akin to it. Not ruling out on whether those remarks are justified or not - according to my own, personal experience, the practice described is frequently an effective way out of a gridlock.¹⁵

A particularly interesting technique employed during some of the people's assemblies is the so-called "human microphone". Individuals in close proximity to someone who is giving a speech repeat, in a coordinated manner, every word that he or she says, to those who are located further away from the speaking individual.¹⁶ Employment of the "human microphone" is primarily motivated by the prohibition of usage of public address systems during gatherings. This has been practiced as far as the 1999 WTO Conference Protest in Seattle, as well as during the deliberations of people's assemblies in various cities of the USA in 2011 and 2012. Even though the technique might appear to be counter-productive as it prolongs the duration of every speech given, in reality it turns out to be a tool of many benefits. Every participant is fully aware that the "human microphone" is somewhat slow in operation, but that very aspect disciplines the speakers, and gives the others a reason to discipline those who talk too much and for too long.

14 Benhabib, Cornell 1987.

15 As a side note, it can be added that the empirical research conducted on the process of deliberation in parliamentary democracies confirm effectiveness of dialogue and exchanging arguments as a way to change somebody else's point of view, but also to change our own points of view. See: Steiner, Bächtiger, et al. 2004.

16 Illustration of this practice: see Occupy Wall St- Human Microphone, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VoJBZxOh4bY>.

“ THE PEOPLE CONSTITUTE A GROUPING WRITTEN INTO THE LOGIC OF PARLIAMENTARISM, THEREFORE: INTO THE LOGIC OF REPRESENTATION; THE MULTITUDE HOWEVER REMAINS A COLLECTIVE SUBJECT OF DEMOCRACY THAT REJECTS THE IDEA OF REPRESENTATION

I see as very tempting an attempt to outline a psychoanalytic interpretation of the human microphone. The voice is, for psychoanalysis - principally Lacanian psychoanalysis - an object of a particular type: a part-object invoking the phantasmatic fullness of pre-phallic pleasure which has not yet been mediated by the Name-of-the-non-Father.¹⁷ According to the Slovenian psychoanalyst Mladen Dolar, the notion of the voice as a part-object, non-reductive residuum came to be possible largely due to the phonological reduction of the voice as the substance of language, as done by de Saussure.¹⁸ This statement can be easily converted to the language of political analysis. What the Occupy Wall Street Protesters, as well as people protesting in other parts of America and Europe are against, is the reduction of the voice in the political sense - thus an opportunity to have a proportional, but at the same time actual influence on how the contemporary world is being shaped; an opportunity to have a voice in the purely electoral sense. This is the sense of the "real democracy," that Hardt and Negri wrote about in an article published in "Foreign Affairs."¹⁹ The voice of both females and males, repeated by the human microphone, is a voice incarnated in a collective body of multitude; a voice that cannot be reduced to a parliamentary abstraction; a voice that constitutes a non-representative residue. The logic of political representation, that parliamentarism relies on, directly corresponds with the logic of differential structural analysis of the language - as both are founded on the absence and substitution. Voice - in the Lacanian sense, but also in the meaning employed by the "real democracy," is an incarnation of the presence that cannot be substituted, it therefore excludes all forms of representation.

Herein we reach the fundamental difference between the "people" and "multitude" as subjects of two radically different political systems. The people constitute a grouping written into the logic of parliamentarism, therefore: into the logic of representation; the multitude however remains

17 I use a neologism of this kind in order to maintain the two meanings of the Lacanian "Nom du pere" - "Name of the father" and "Prohibition of the Father" (French "non" being a homophone of "nom").

18 Dolar 1996

19 Hardt, Negri 2011.

a collective subject of democracy that rejects the idea of representation. The people are represented, but the multitude “presents itself,” or in other words: “is present.” The Polish language allows for an easier expression of the differences discussed than French or English, as it has separate words for similar, but slightly different verbs: one for the Latin-derived “represent,” and another for “present,”²⁰ which is of Slavic origin. They are not interchangeable, however, and should not be treated as such as it would be an error. “Presentation” does not have the prefix “re”- that indicates reoccurrence, absence and substitution that the “representation” boils down to (only what is absent can be represented, whereas the presence rules out representation). In the political sense the people can only give voice when the multitude speaks. The ambiguity of the term “to give voice” illustrates all the problems related to the parliamentary representation: “giving”- thus “transferring from one party to another and discarding something,” but also “giving voice,” akin to the “speak” command used with regards to a dog, a living being considered to be inferior to humans (whether rightly so, it is an entirely different matter; what is important here, however, is the pejorative connotation of “giving voice”).

The psychoanalytic exploration allows to capture the broader nature of the whole process: it is not difficult to point out that the people are the “figure of castration:” the people are comprised of both males and females who gained access to the political life, by accepting their own impotency and agreeing with that the officially established authorities are the only actual authorities, and with that the people cannot perform government duties as a whole, but only to give permission to be governed by those who present themselves as government candidates. We are immediately reaching, however, a fundamental problem that emerges when we attempt a psychoanalytical approach to multitude, particularly apparent when we operate within the boundaries of conceptual schema, as defined by Lacan, and as used by me - namely: how to devise a subject that locates itself outside castration or even without castration at all? Such things appear to be, immediately, not only impossible, but also internally contradictory: the subject is always the subject of desire and, as such, is the product of the process of castration giving access to the order of desires. There is no subject without castration. It thus appears that in psychoanalytical perspective the multitude, just like any other subject, cannot constitute itself as a subject if it does not agree for a castration. Although in Seminar XI on four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis Lacan speaks on “the subject of the drive” and recalls the “acephalic subject, the subject without

20 Alternatively translated as “to stand for” (Editor’s note-JVdB)

the subject-matter, bone, structure, trace,”²¹ he immediately expands, however, upon that it is a mere metaphor and that there is no subject in the adequate meaning of the word, other than the castrated subject of desire. We stand, therefore, ahead of an obstacle that is hard to overcome. The situation is not hopeless, however - or so I think.

Firstly, we can redefine the unconscious. In the Lacanian system of notions, the requirement of castration stems directly from an alleged nature of the subconsciousness, and, more precisely, from the fact that the subconsciousness is just as structured as the language is. Each and every language constitutes itself through multiple divisions and separations - between the significating and signified, between the sign and its designatum, between the language and the speech. The subject cannot be simply present in such an order. Let us add: just like a regular citizen who, in a parliamentary system, cannot simply perform government duties. In order to become recognised, the subject also has to be broken, divided and crossed-through, according to Lacan. Just like - continuing this inspiring analogy - a female citizen needs to be represented by a female parliamentary representative. The definition of unconscious proposed by Lacan is not the only one possible - and even Lacan himself, in order to create his own, theoretical system, needs to redefine what the “unconscious” used to mean in the times long past. Lacan speaks about it openly in the formative paragraphs of the “XI Seminar,” when comparing his own definition of unconscious with the Freudian unconscious that is “a gap” (*une béance*).²²

We know a similar redefinition that allowed for another discourse to be created - schizoanalysis. It proposes to define the unconscious not in the image of a language, but in the image of a machine.²³ The consequences are fundamental, as the machine, unlike the language, does not have to represent and communicate anything, but - first and foremost - it needs to work, perform a certain, assigned task; perform some kind of manipulation on reality; in the context of schizoanalysis as such, the principle is the modification of fluxes. Other implications are well-known: the schizoanalytical desire is not founded on the absence, but on the production - therefore on the multiplication; there is no castration as the condition of subjectivity, as there is no paternal exception (Oedipus), there is not even one, single Oedipus but thousands of Oedipuses amongst whom the family triangle is just one of the elements misjudged by the

21 Lacan 1973.

22 Lacan 1973.

23 Deleuze, Guattari 1972.

psychoanalytical discourse. This type of ontology of unconscious is more strongly favouring the expression of multitude that can be described as a body-with-no-organs-of-government. Schizoanalysis also allows us to express the relation between multitude-as-such, and immediate multitudes that fight for the control over streets of Egypt, Spain or the United States. The former would be, in Deleuzian terms, a “virtual multitude,” the latter - the “actual multitude.”



THE PEOPLE ARE THE MALE (JUST LIKE THE PARLIAMENT), AND THE MULTITUDE IS THE FEMALE (JUST LIKE AN OCCUPATION)

This particular way of redefinition of the unconscious leads us outside the field of psychoanalytics - or so it may seem. It might also be asserted that schizoanalysis is just a new, different form of psychoanalysis, as it maintains a category fundamental for psychoanalysis: the notion of the unconscious. I find this dilemma to be of little relevance, and, rather than putting it up for consideration, I would rather suggest yet another attempt at a political application of Lacanian psychoanalysis, that would allow us to capture the multitude as a subject remaining outside of castration, while, at the same time, being a subject that can be described using a psychoanalytical language. In order to do this, we need to turn towards Lacan's works from the 1970s, and give particular attention to the “Seminar XX: Encore,” where Lacan introduces a fundamental distinction between the male subject and a female subject. The male, as a subject, is fully constituted through castration and its rule of exception - phallic belief of every male subject in that there is a certain X that has an access to a full pleasure, impossible to be achieved by the aforementioned subject. It translates well into the principles of operation of parliamentary democracy: as male and female citizens we all are excluded from actively performing governmental duties, with the exception of a certain X - our elected representative, who can enjoy the privileges associated with the above-mentioned. Furthermore, according to the logic of castration, we can only become a crossed-through subject of parliamentarism through accepting both the exclusion, and the exception to it. But, as Lacan says, there is the female, too. The female side (*côté*) of subjectivity is different. As a subject, the female also defines herself through the phallic function, but “is not whole (*pas-toute*) within the phallic function.”²⁴ There is one more thing, some kind of a female pleasure that resides outside the phallic function, and is thus not constituted through castration. Consequently, this is the fundamental difference between the

24 Lacan 1975.

gender construction, and this scheme could be employed to describe, using the language of psychoanalytics, the difference between the people and the multitude as different types of subjectivity. The people are the male (just like the parliament), and the multitude is the female (just like an occupation). It is worth noting, in this context, that the arguments against the multitude participating in democracy closely resemble the arguments formerly used against women's suffrage - one can hear that the multitude, just like a woman - is too emotional, not sufficiently rational, too impulsive and too unstable to give her access to an authority of any kind.

Individuals who remember Lacan's twentieth seminar might have noticed a fundamental problem - the female pleasure, while remaining outside the castration, also locates itself outside a discourse of any kind, nothing can be said about that pleasure, and the pleasure itself cannot say anything about itself. It is a fundamental, political problem. But yet, Lacan says, there is a sphere of human experience where the female pleasure is achievable, even if there remains an experience that cannot be communicated - it is the mystic.²⁵ I would like to stress here that I am not a great believer in a post-secular thought, in particular as a citizen of the Third Polish Republic, a country that still has not undergone a complete secularisation, and for that very reason I have an issue with introducing both the religion and the religious language to politics. This notwithstanding, I believe it is worth mentioning what Slavoj Žižek said, while addressing New York's Liberty Plaza Occupy Wall Street Protesters in October 2011. According to him, the Holy Spirit was directly present amongst the Occupy Wall Street Protesters, and this was a presence non-intermediated by the Church. The definition of Holy Spirit suggested by Žižek works really well in the context I am interested in here: “Egalitarian community of believers who are linked by love for each other and who only have their own freedom and responsibility to do.”²⁶ It is, I would say, a very nice definition of multitude. It is hard to understand why Žižek and Badiou argue so heavily with Negri on all those conferences on communism, considering that Hardt's and Negri's “Commonwealth” culminates in something reminiscent of an anthem for love, which is ever so important for both Badiou and Žižek. It could be thought that such an introduction of terms and religious figures to a progressive, political discourse is a paradoxical evidence for the triumph of postmodernism. Personally, I do not think of this as a rightful interpretation. The post-secular thought could be, I think, derived from the Feuerbachian-Durkheimian ascertainment - most certainly materialistic, or even positivistic - that the

25 Lacan 1975.

26 For the full movie of Slavoj Žižek's speech, see: Žižek 10-09-2011.

religion is a false consciousness, through which humanity in an alienated manner worships its own capability to create a community. It would not be difficult to prove, for example, that one of the main theses of Žižek's "Fragile Absolute," i.e. his interpretation of the figure of the Holy Spirit, repeats almost verbatim what Durkheim said almost 100 years ago in "Elementary Forms of Religious Life."

Let us go back to the field of politics and the issue of representation that I consider to be of crucial importance. The necessity for representation and exclusion of the people from governing directly has been formulated *expressis verbis* by the Founding Fathers in the first, modern parliamentary democracy. As Madison said: "The republic is different from democracy because its government is placed in the hands of delegates, and, as a result of this, it can be extended over a larger area. [The republic is characterised by] the total exclusion of the people, in their collective form, from any share in the work of government."²⁷ Using another conceptual system, we could say that the multitude cannot find itself within the parliamentary system, as it is the constituting power that does not want to constitute any constituted authorities, but to merely govern on its own, in a direct and autonomous manner. Consequently, directly at the heart of battles that took place throughout the whole 2011, there is the issue of representation. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri both suggest in "Declaration" that capitalism created four types (or modes) of subjectivity that allow capitalism to maintain its status quo, and to continue accumulation: the indebted, the mediatized, the securitized, and the represented. They also claim that the figure of the represented [subject] gathers together the figures of the indebted, the mediatized and the securitized, presenting the results of their subordination and degradation in a condensed form."²⁸ What we encounter here, then, is both the end and goal of the representation, as we could say by referring to the Derrida's use of the ambiguous French term "fin," derived from the work "Les Fins de l'Homme."²⁹ The mass rebellions against the regimes considered to be democratic reveal their truth, almost universally forgotten and altogether removed from the public debate: the goal of the political representation is not at all to affirm the power of the people, or to create the people's political subjectivity, understood as the possibility of conducting autonomous operations - but rather, as Madison says, "total exclusion of the people, in their collective capacity, from any share in the government."³⁰ This exclusion, it needs to be said clearly, is very

27 Madison 1788.

28 Hardt, Negri 2012.

29 Derrida 1992.

30 Madison 1788.

functional for capital - as it gives the capital an opportunity to influence the political process in a manner inconceivable in the real democracy (through various means: financing political campaigns, controlling the media and using them to create an atmosphere benefitting the actions of the capital, directly corrupting politicians, etc.). In this sense the parliamentarism is a political logic of what the postmodernism is a cultural logic - the late capitalism, according to Jameson.³¹ This association should not come as surprising at all. In the postmodern literature we find a ceaseless affirmation of the omnipresent mediation, representation, simulation, and unlimited semiosis, where signs refer to other signs only and never to [real] things, just like election promises refer to other promises only, and never to the real change. There are also other similarities of high importance: the role of the media in parliamentary mechanisms and postmodern culture, or a very cynical relationship between the power and the meaning.

It is entirely understandable to have fully legitimate doubts and recognise parliamentarism as a modern, rather than a postmodern system. I would like to remark, however, that I am here merely following the definition of postmodernism as suggested by Sloterdijk, Rancière or Giddens - who all stand against strong division into modernism and postmodernism, treating them both as essentially one and the same historical epoch,³² or "episteme" to refer, somewhat metaphorically, to the Foucauldian term. The relationship between the modernity and postmodernity, along with an apparent conflict between those two formations, is ideally captured, in my opinion, by Sloterdijk in his "La Mobilisation Infinite", where he suggests to approach postmodern as an undesirable, but logical, consequence of the modern. This relationship is illustrated by a metaphor of a relationship between the notion of private transportation and traffic congestion. They are evidently interrelated: the traffic congestion is an undesirable, but logical consequence of a widespread access to private transportation, and even if we see the traffic congestion as contradicting the postulates of quick and efficient mobility, that the private transportation is meant to represent, it is not difficult to indicate that both former and the latter are elements of the same set.³³ Such definition of the relationship between modernity and postmodernity allows explaining a theoretical poverty of many postmodern diagnoses. I could never, for example, understand what such authors like Bauman or Baudrillard had to say on capitalism and its social consequences, that has not been already elaborated upon, in a better way, by Marx. Reading the "Communist Manifesto" would

31 Jameson 2012.

32 Sloterdijk 2000; Rancière, 2007; Giddens 2008.

33 Sloterdijk 2000.

be enough to notice certain findings that are commonly accepted as discoveries of the postmodern: “revolutionising the means of production, thus the production relationships, thus the overall social relationships (...) uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, eternal uncertainty and unrest,” to be concise: “all that is solid melts into thin air.”³⁴ Therefore, according to the perspective taken here, parliamentarism is not a form of the people’s sovereignty, but a defence strategy against the possibility of mass emancipation, that is applied, for the most part, to defend what would evidently be the primary casualty of an authentic, public sovereignty, so a private proprietorship of the means of production - a strategy present since the dawn of modernity, which only recently, in what we call postmodernity, fully shows its reactive and anti-democratic appearance.

Mass uprisings, rebellions and occupations that have been reverberating through numerous parts of the world since 2011, turn towards this very postmodern universum of parliamentary democracy that keeps subsisting the trembling power of the capital. They all demand for that rotten system to be brought down, repeating a catchphrase that first gained popularity in Argentina in 2001: “QUE SE VAYAN TODOS!” - “They all must go.” Ben Ali - begone! Zapatero - begone! Cameron - begone! For this reason, amongst others, the Occupy and Protest movements of the present day seems, to some at least, to be lacking goals and postulates. The Movements do not expect the politicians, and those in the government, to do anything other than going away and letting the people make decisions about their own, respective lives, in a democratic way. Their voice, making us all aware that the parliamentarism has reached its end, is the return of the Real excluded from the symbolic order in operation, is an affirmation of direct presence against fraudulent representation of parliament that is being mediated and that has already been mediated. This is the struggle between the democracy and postmodernism. It proves that the political diagnoses, given once by Jean-Francois Lyotard and other postmodernists, become less and less current and relevant. Just as it was the case during Marx’s times, the grand narratives of democracy, emancipation and justice, hold the power to move the masses. Lyotard’s pessimism regarding politics (and what is political) was, in my opinion, directly related to the general pessimism and feeling of exhaustion typical for the West in the ‘70s of the 20th century that came primarily as a result of practical failure of the 1968 Revolution. Even in the Eastern Bloc the moods were different. More or less at the same time, when Lyotard voiced his pessimistic diagnosis in 1979, some grand, political ideas animated massive, social movements in Poland: Solidarity - with a name that recalls a great, universal idea allegedly

34 Marks, Engels 1962.

unfeasible in post-modern times - mobilised 10 million people, effectively more than 1/4th of the whole society. It is true, that the ‘90s of the 20th century seemed to confirm the conclusion of politics (and the political), but the last decade with regularly returning protests of the anti-globalists, mass movements in Latin America, and - finally - the events of the 2011, proves that, despite postmodernist squawking, grand, political ideas are still very much alive, and ready to move the individual and collective imagination.

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HOWEVER, 2011 SERVES AS A PROOF OF
A CHANGE IN SOCIO-POLITICAL DYNAMICS
WITH A POWER AND EXPRESSIVENESS
PREVIOUSLY UNHEARD OF

At this point we could ask whether the events of 2011 are new, and different enough from the movements and social protests we have come to know from the past, to require inventing new notions, and for new means of description to be sought? Is it really a groundbreaking moment? This question cannot be answered with a one-hundred-percent certainty, as the ‘groundbreakingness’ can be indicated *ex post* only, once the course of events reaches its conclusion. I would, however, risk making an argument that the current, global protests introduce new quality, and prove that it is a groundbreaking moment we are witnessing. Two key issues indicate this: the protesters radically reject an opportunity to act within the parliamentary system, which is expressed concisely by the slogan “They all must go” that I previously spoke of. The other key issue is a paradoxical trajectory, in global perspective, of the protests happening in 2011: an impulse to act in favour of a pro-democratic change has been born in the peripheral societies (moreover, in a region usually associated with an intense hostility towards democracy), and their struggles inspired citizens of the nations of the centre (termed as democratic), to go out in the streets and demand an increased democratisation of their political systems. A majority of social and political philosophy has made us used to look for an exact opposite of an influence line. Remarkably, in this respect, Marks and Fukuyama say the exact same thing: developed societies show the future to the developing societies. Obviously, this similarity is not hard to explain considering Hegelian inspirations of both those philosophers, but this similarity is symptomatic of a certain way of thinking that the modernisation theory is concluded by, and a way of thinking that peaked in popularity in the latter half of the 20th century. The events of 2011 show, that we are currently dealing with a situation that is an exact opposite of what is being prognosticated and postulated by the theories of modernisation: today it is not the centre

that shows the future to the peripheries while giving them an inspiration, just the other way round. First indicators of such shift could be sought in the influence of the anti-colonial rebellion on the events in Europe and the USA in the 1960s; however, 2011 serves as a proof of a change in socio-political dynamics with a power and expressiveness previously unheard of.

We could also indicate other symptoms of such change, although not all of them instil optimism. On the fringes of the shift we currently see a heavily-debated, French ban on face covering - one of the key issues for the Islamic women of that country. Discussing that matter in a highly-developed country of a centre, sounds somewhat like an ironic laughter of history, as in such a remote and “underdeveloped” country, as Turkey is sometimes perceived to be, the debate has been known since the times of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk - who decided to radically laicise his own country. There are plenty of tumultuous chapters in the struggle for enforcement of Turkey’s laicisation, including a forceful removal of a female parliamentary representative from a parliamentary building in the ‘90s of the 20th century, for wearing a traditional head-scarf. Who, 30 or 40 years ago, would have thought that France might be witnessing issues, debates and arguments, similar to those that Turkey has faced? It had appeared that an opposite could have taken place that the religion is a “song of the past,” and that laicism is a common and shared future for the mankind. Undoubtedly, Turkey as the “underdeveloped” country, was supposed to reach such future later than France.³⁵ It is not the case, however, and it is France that has found itself in the situation that has been known in Turkey for many years. We can, therefore see that the assumed underdevelopment of Turkey, at least in terms of the religious and customary sphere, would have to be recognised as an avant-garde struggle with problems of the type that the developed societies of the centre will have to face in the future. Opposite to what has been claimed by Marx and other followers of the Hegelian philosophy, it is the “underdeveloped” country that shows the “developed” one where the future does lead to.

Another example is a process that Ulrich Beck names as “Latin Americanisation of labour,” aptly described by an alternative term, “precarisation.” Deterioration of working conditions of dependent labour in developed countries results in approximation of conditions that have been known to the peripheries for years: lack of stability, ongoing uncertainty, dysfunction of the welfare state, professional degradation of the well-educated individuals, etc.³⁶ Despite a modernisation promise, capitalism

35 Lerner 1958.

36 Beck 2002.

is not able to guarantee welfare to the peripheral societies and, furthermore, is damaging the social achievements of the societies of the centre.

In the conclusion, I want to mention yet another process that reveals the paradoxes of de-modernisation, namely: the development of neoliberalism. As a doctrine and practice it is an offspring of politicians and theoreticians from the centre - so-called Washington Consensus - it has been, however, initially introduced at the peripheries: in South America and Eastern Europe, after the fall of Eastern Bloc. Neoliberal reforms of so-called post-communist countries constituted a groundbreaking moment, as they were a reiteration that allowed universalisation. They have, thus, played the same role for neoliberalism, as the Haitian Revolution did to the French Revolution. The case of Greece, currently being damaged by neoliberal reforms, is another groundbreaking moment: for the first time a core country, a membership state of the European Union, NATO and OECD, collapses under the weight of capital. What is interesting, on the purely financial side of things the faith of Greece looks remarkably similar to the fall of the countries of the Eastern Bloc. Greece has been defeated by debt. There is a story going around on how, in 2003, one of the American hospitals has witnessed a male individual waking up from a coma after a period of 12 years. The man could fully comprehend what had happened to him, but there was one thing he refused to take in: that Bush was still a president, and that the Gulf War was still going strong. I share a similar feeling when reading reports on the crisis of sovereign debt in Southern Europe, and when I recall my own childhood from the late ‘80s and early ‘90s of the 20th century: the main topic appears to be a debt that cannot be serviced, then a country goes bankrupt, and neoliberal experts come en masse to the rescue. This is why I am concerned that the neoliberal future of Greece - and if all progresses go as expected then also the future of France, the United Kingdom and the USA - this is well known to me. I have lived it for the past 20 years.

Jan Sowa (PhD) is a sociologist and lecturer at the Institute of Culture at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow. He published several books considering socio-cultural issues. His areas of research are related to media and social change in Western civilisation and European culture references to other cultures (including the issue of colonialism, globalisation, immigration and the collision between the West and the Islamic world). He is publishing in "Lampa," "Krytyka polityczna" and many other periodicals. Moreover he is also the editor of the Radical Line of Corporation Ha!art, and translated many books and articles in the field of political science, philosophy and sociology.

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