

Centre for Applied Philosophy, Politics and Ethics (CAPPE)
University of Brighton
11th Annual, International, Interdisciplinary Conference

Radical Interventions

Politics, Culture, Society

Wednesday 7th – Friday 9th September 2016
University of Brighton, UK

Conference Abstracts

Avitus Agbor | North West University, South Africa

Re-contextualising and re-conceptualising the notion of radicalism: poisonous pedagogues as intellectual radicals

Contemporary academic literature has succumbed unwittingly and inadvertently to the parochial understanding that radicalism is not only associated or synonymous with extremism, but the very offshoot of intolerant philosophies that share a link with terrorism. The fallacy of this line of thinking is corroborated by the fact that democratic and authoritarian political systems have generated their own specie of radicalism that pitted a majority against a minority. In pre-genocide Rwanda, political literature that was discharged through public podiums and media outlets was characterised by ideological radicalism. Even though its portent quality remained obscure to the ordinary eyes, the mayhem that befell an ethnic minority could only be an indicator of the unimaginable dimensions of radical political literarute. Blended in the social, political and cultural contexts of different Rwandan communities, political radicalism was brewed through poisonous pedagogues who explored public podiums in order to foment and discharge ideologies that whipped up negative and hostile sentiments against specific groups of persons. Akin to the outpourings of Julius Streicher and Hans Fritzsche in Nazi Germany, political radicalism in pre-genocide Rwanda was infused into the social, political and cultural fabric of Rwandan life, usually calling for the degradation, dehumanisation, demonization and annihilation of specific groups of persons (in this case, it was based on ethnicity and political affiliations and opinions). While differences in race, religions, nationalities, and ethnicities have fuelled these kinds of intellectual irresponsibility and extremist ideologies, today, gender and sexual orientations seem to be gathering momentum as contemporary forms of extremism now target them.

This paper contextualises and conceptualises poisonous pedagogues, or instigators, and shows how subtle but portent and potent such kind of radicalism is: subjecting different groups of people to systemic and widespread violations of human rights unprecedented in human history. Using pre-genocide Rwanda and selected instances of Nazi Germany, I develop a blueprint of intellectual radicalism that takes the form of poisonous pedagogy.

Nicola Ashmore | University of Brighton, UK

Guernica Remakings

Since Pablo Picasso's creation of *Guernica* (1937), the painting has been reproduced and recreated in many forms. This screening brings together interviews with participants from four independent remakings of Pablo Picasso's painting *Guernica*. The four remakings of *Guernica* featured in the screening reveal an important and on-going dialogue between art and activism, through community based collaborative practices. A common thread found in all four is the artistic opposition to governments who chose to sacrifice civilian populations to pursue their own agendas. Goshka Macuga's *The Nature of the Beast* (2009) uses the Rockefeller *Guernica* tapestry to contest the 2003 US led Iraq invasion; *The Keiskamma Guernica* (2010) made by villagers from the Eastern Cape of South Africa challenges the government's refusal to comprehensively respond to the HIV and Aids epidemic; Erika Lockert's theatrical production of *Guernica* (2012) witnesses Picasso receiving visitations from the ghosts of the victims of the aerial bombardment of April 1937, and *Remaking Picasso's Guernica* (2013) a protest banner makes connections between historic and current government led aerial attacks on civilian populations through its presence at protests against the bombing of Gaza in the summer of 2014.

Each remaking plays a significant part in documenting and translating local experience into a universal form. Raphael Samuel when describing the formation of history states: "It is, rather, a social form of knowledge; the work, in any given instance, of a thousand different hands [...]. The ensemble of activities and practices in which ideas of history are embedded or a dialectic of past present relations is rehearsed." (Theatres of Memory, 8). The remakings of *Guernica* addressed here are testament to this. Each in its design and formation has involved many hands collectively working together capturing through shapes, symbols and materials knowledge held in that society. Each remaking individually explores tensions between the past and present. Lived experience in the twenty-first century is connected through these remakings with the suffering of the civilian population of *Guernica* in 1937. A mass of people subjected to the actions of governing forces with their own agendas. In the *Keiskamma Guernica* a series of hostile and negligent governing forces in South Africa are raged against; a legacy that has formed a continuum of poverty and insufficient access to health care during the HIV and AIDS epidemic. *The Nature of the Beast* collapses linear time to connect the attack on the people of *Guernica* in 1937, the people of Iraq in 2003 with the people who have been driven to group at a local level in East London who feel disconnected with the powers that operate nationally and internationally. In the theatrical production *Guernica*, our attention is returned to the day the market town of *Guernica* was bombed by the fascist forces of Europe. We are encouraged to reflect upon both the destructive and creative sides of humanity. In the *Remaking of Picasso's Guernica as a Protest Banner* 12 people were drawn together to create the banner, united in their collective disgust with the creeping rise of fascism throughout Europe and the US, UK and Israeli governments continuing to attack civilian populations from the skies.

Pablo Picasso once said, "every act of creation is first an act of destruction" the remakings of *Guernica* attended to here embody this phenomenon and reveal an important and on going dialogue through the numerous remakings of *Guernica* that challenges the atrocities of the present to make way for a better future.

Howard H. Bailey | Independent Scholar

What is it to be 'Radical'?

Three conceptions of Radicalism can be distinguished. A **Reactive** sense is characterized by its form: a reaction breaking with the past, associated with a top-down ideology identifying 'enemies within' sustaining its legitimation. A **Rooted** sense sustains an antagonism by an underdog against those regarded as responsible for a corrupt situation rendering a bottom-up conception. A **Reformist Radicalism** is presupposed by the advocates of Deliberative Democracy where reiterative deliberation is embodied within the idea of representative government. It is radical because it separates a political community's constitution from its form of authority. Here procedures underpin a legitimation of power through a legal framework, a

stance Western democracies may merely assume whereas for emerging Nation-states, this might be quite radical.

This **Reformist Radicalism**, which may mediate between the other two, however, faces a number of difficulties: i) doesn't it lack a sense of maximal activity characterizing a more participatory form of democracy; ii) its universalistic discourse is a specific language-game imposed by the Enlightenment in the development of Western culture; iii) there can never be any kind of rational consensus which it presupposes and if there were politics ceases; iv) it fails to recognize the significance of hegemonic activity.

After delineating briefly the other conceptions and exploring briefly some of the difficulties associated with each, the paper's object is to address these four objections made against the Reformist tradition and whether they can be formulated without presupposing the very categories of thought a Reformist Radicalism has pioneered? And even if the latter may endure the difficulty of ascertaining how its conception can relate to existing depoliticized social conditions, at least it can certainly identify distortions within that existing social state of affairs.

Cathy Bergin | University of Brighton, UK

Radical 'race' politics and the 1916 Easter Rising

This paper focuses on the radical impact of the Irish Revolution on a very particular constituency, black communities in the US. It argues that African American radicals of the period were instrumental in forming a very particular anti-colonial consciousness fired by black nationalism, Marxism *and* enthusiastic support for the Irish Republican struggle. The Easter Rising and the struggles which followed deeply impressed and influenced these radicals. In the context of the almost parodic parochialism that has marked the official centenary events in Ireland this year this paper seeks to register the impact of the rising as an event which was central to a new form of radical anti-racist anti-colonial politics.

Julia Boll | University of Konstanz, Germany

Creating political beauty

The Centre for Political Beauty is a performance art and theatre collective formed in 2008 in Berlin under the general direction of theatre maker Philipp Ruch. Ruch boldly refers to concepts such as 'beauty', 'humanity', and 'moral good' as the guiding principles for the collective, which aims at an art that may generate human rights activists and asks why the reality art proposes should not, in fact, become reality.

Previous actions have included a memorial against the United Nations on behalf of the survivors of the Srebrenica massacre (2010); the offering of a bounty for any information that could lead to legal action against the owners of one of Germany's largest weapon manufacturers (2012); and the attempt to adapt the UK's 1938/39 *Kindertransport* rescue effort by looking for German foster families for 55.000 Syrian children and creating pressure on the German government to adopt this 'ready-to-use federal emergency programme' (2014).

The Centre's most recent, highly publicized, projects were several so-called 'interventions', amongst them "The Dead Are Coming", which involved the burial in Berlin of several refugees who had died during their flight to Europe; "The First Fall of the European Wall", during which activists travelled with bolt cutters to the EU's outer borders to tear them down; and "The Bridge", a (presently insufficiently) crowd-funded major construction project for a bridge connecting North Africa and Europe as a 'decisive instrument in the fight against people smugglers'(all three projects: 2015).

In this paper, I will give a short overview over the Centre's topics, underlying "philosophy", and past actions. I will then explore the following question: Is the Centre for Political Beauty (a) radical in its politics;

(b) too deeply entrenched in post-modern irony to be political, let alone radically so; (c) visionary in a truly utopian sense; or possibly (d) all of the above?

Christos Boukalas | Cardiff University, UK

Radicalisation, British values, liberalism: UK counter-extremism and its paradoxes

This paper examines how the British state conceptualises the 'radical' today. It does so through an inquiry into its counter-extremism strategy (aka Prevent), which represents an unusual case in which the state provides an explicit, official definition. Accordingly, the paper is mainly concerned with the rationale and purposes of counter-extremism, and to a lesser extent with its practice and institutional architecture. It locates counter-extremism within the broader constellation of counterterrorism, and is mainly consumed in assessing its conceptual outlook. This involves three things. First, a chain of conceptual equivalence and opposition (terrorism- extremism- radicalisation vs British values – liberalism), which, with astonishing explicitness, define the radical as anything opposed to political liberalism. Second, the establishment of the 'radical' as harm in itself. And, third, the dual conception of the radical individual as both vulnerable and dangerous, leading to its peculiar treatment through therapy, education, and repression.

Despite (or because) of its polemical character, the paper takes this definition of the radical seriously – after all, whether self- or hetero-defined, the radical is always something in excess of (and opposition with) something else that is already there, established, dominant, canonical, etc.

On this basis, the paper notes three paradoxes of counter-extremism. First, it is a project for the protection/promotion of liberal values; but it violates these values: according to its own criteria, counter-extremism is extremist. Secondly, in counter-extremism, the liberal state has hatched an authoritarian project, with clear 'totalitarian' tendencies. To account for these paradoxes, the paper claims that they pertain to an authoritarian recasting of liberalism. And third, this authoritarian liberalism entails another paradox: it sets the parameters of the 'normal' so narrow, that the conceptual terrain for the 'radical' becomes immense.

Bob Brecher | University of Brighton, UK

Neither revolution nor reform, but - perhaps - Overton windows

This presentation is intended as a provocation to discussion rather than as a fully rounded argument. First, I want to suggest why the old question, "Revolution or Reform" is no longer pertinent (if indeed it ever was). Second, I shall argue, with a few examples taken from the neoliberal "thought bank", that one crucial mechanism of change is the explicit creation of "Overton windows", namely those discursive frameworks that circumscribe the acceptable range of political thought in a particular culture at a given moment (John Lanchester). Finally I shall tentatively propose that the neoliberals have known this for several decades and have carefully acted on that knowledge; and that anti-neoliberals need to do the same.

Sybille de la Rosa | University of Heidelberg, Germany

Rethinking Democratic Theory: On the Exclusion and Inclusion of Refugees

At this historical moment the left has to develop a new programme. I want to argue that two elements in political thinking should lead this programme, namely the deconstruction of recent and contemporary discourses of discourses and of relations and the creation of new democratic practices which are informed by, and strive to overcome, those discourses. Taking refugee activism as an example, I will show how such activism radically calls into question traditional understandings of citizenship and democracy and how it strives towards a new understanding of both. Drawing on James Bohman's deliberations on the refugee question and Laclau and Mouffe's understanding of radical democracy, I shall propose a fundamental change in our understanding of democracy and thus the tasks of political philosophy.

Mark Devenney | University of Brighton, UK

The politics of identification: Freud and post-Marxist politics

Laclau and Mouffe follow Freud in insisting that collective identifications are constitutive of the 'mode of existence of human beings' and play a crucial role in the field of politics. Democratic politics must on their account have some purchase on the desires and fantasies of the subjects of any polity. Politics then is not simply about the rational evaluation of alternatives. An essential dimension of any collective politics concerns the play on these affective ties which the contemporary left has discarded, or regards as supplementary to the rationality which ultimately underpins democratic politics. These arguments have been further developed by other post-Marxist scholars including Stavrakakis, Marchart, Gunnarson, and Glynos.

What precisely is meant by identification however? The concept of identification is most fully developed in Freud's second topography, though it is already anticipated in his earliest psychoanalytic works. It denotes two distinct, though similar processes: the first concerns the processes whereby the identity of the ego is established. Identification in this sense is constitutive of the subject, and identity is built up through identifications with key figures, or parts of these figures in the earlier years of a life. These primal identifications cast a spell over future identifications, and are not simply forgotten or conquered with later identifications. Rather they are likely to structure the form that these identifications may take. Identification refer second to the identification of ourselves with another, or again part of another, or even an ideal, in later life. Psychoanalysis rests on the gamble that the identifications which constitute the subject are organised around an ultimately mobile cathexis, and are as a consequence contingent.

What happens though when this contingency comes to structure a post-Marxist politics? For the subject whose being is constituted on the basis of these primal identifications their exposure in the analytic situation is a wrenching of their being. If we accept the psychoanalytic account the analytical relationship is political in the most extreme sense of that word as it concerns the very being of the analysand who sits in front of the analyst. The translation of this notion of identification into an account of populist politics is, I will argue, deeply problematic. It assumes that passionate identifications with a political cause are necessary, and that the identity of the subject is ultimately so labile that new identifications are both possible, and the very basis of political organisation. However, for Freud these identifications do not make up a coherent relational system, are disorderly and conflictual, and certainly do not admit of the easy resolution that the post-Marxist account seems to think is possible.

Mohammed Elshimi | Independent Scholar

Counter-Radicalisation and De-radicalisation in the Prevent strategy: Rethinking the conventional Wisdom on 'radicalism' in the UK

This paper attempts to rethink what it means to be 'radical'. It uses the UK counter-terrorism Policy, particularly the Prevent strategy (which aims to prevent 'radicalisation') as a springboard to problematise 'radical' in relation to the Radical Other (individual Muslim subjects) and Orientalised Other (embodied singularly as the British Muslim Community). The salient feature of the conceptualisation of 'radicalism' and 'radicalisation' in this policy domain, not least how it is employed in popular discourse, is the way it has been framed as a problem of ideas and of the mind, not to mention its association with violence. An analytical shift occurs in the second section of the paper, where, deploying an interpretive analytic, the paper attempts to outline the regulatory normative ideal, or 'central sphere', within the framework of bio-politics, that guides and shapes the knowledge, conduct, and practices of individuals and populations in our culture. Here I draw on the ideas of varied thinkers like Carl Schmitt, Thomas Kuhn, and Michel Foucault. This move allows the paper to demarcate what constitutes radical ideas and practices in terms of the tensions and tussle between marginal and central practices in our culture. Seen in this way, new possibilities for what can be considered 'radical' are opened. A significant implication, for example, given that the regulatory ideal is coloured and infused by the ideas and practices of neo-liberalism, is that the terrain of the 'radical' is not to be located in, or limited to, what is conventionally seen in terms of left, liberal and post-structural thought

and politics, but paradoxically, in the space of traditional conservative (delineated in the paper) thought and practice.

Kadija George | University of Brighton, UK

'We won't be terrorised out of existence'. Black British Publishers, publishing for social justice

Independent black book publishers, New Beacon Books and Bogle L'Ouverture, were started by John La Rose (1966) and Jessica and Eric Huntley (1967) respectively. As individuals, they arrived from the Caribbean with Marxist leanings, therefore their focus was on building and strengthening black communities to educate and sustain themselves. Social justice was an integral aspect of their work as publishers. Racism experienced by the community led them to set up groups and publish material to support and encourage community groups to be autonomous and to campaign for their rights and against injustice.

The very act of publishing was itself a radical act as by so doing, it not only debunked the myth that black people 'do not read' but they published texts of an anti-colonial and Pan African perspectives that challenged the ethics of empires. Mainstream publishers deemed such material as too risky and unpublishable.

From 1982 – 1995, New Beacon Books, Bogle L'Ouverture and the Race Today Collective organised The International Book Fair of Radical Black and Third World Books inviting key thinkers, writers and activists to address and debate key issues of the times, that affected people of African descent globally.

Joy Harris | Independent Scholar

Reenacting War Crime Trials: Performance Artists and a New Form of International Justice

In 1960 Hannah Arendt wrote "Eichmann in Jerusalem," a radical critique of the processes and efficacy of the trial against the former Nazi officer Adolf Eichmann. Arendt was alarmed by the theatricality of the courtroom and the exaggerated role that witnesses played in the proceedings. She believed its performativity hindered the adjudication of justice. Arendt's analysis became a catalyst for a broad re-evaluation of courtroom proceedings.

The result of Arendt's critique – the need for a dispassionate third person to narrate courtroom activities – has since been identified as problematic itself by performance artists who believe a sterile courtroom environment does not always allow for a complete expression of the results of violence.

These artists make a strong case against Arendt's critique of the Eichmann trial, but, at the same time, they are not looking to revert to the courtroom of 1960. The courtroom of Eichmann was also riddled with problems including access to the proceeding and a conflicted judiciary.

Instead, these artists are questioning the very structure of trials and, in doing so, their very validity and purpose. By using multiple modes of artistic practices – from installation and photography to film and performance – they are re-inventing the courtroom experience.

Using Arendt's critique of performativity in courtrooms, I will evaluate the works of two artists who are using performance methodologies in order to reenact war crime trials. These artists and works are Milo Raul's "The Congo Tribunal" (2015) and Model Court: RESOLUTION 978 HD (2014). These works respond to the genocide in Rwanda.

Their re-staging of war crime trials rejects the pervasive attitude that theatricality undermines the adjudication of justice. In upending this idea through their practices, they hope to recover a narrative that might otherwise be lost in legal proceedings.

Viktoria Huegel | University of Brighton, UK

Taking communitarianism beyond borders

The European crisis demands a different reading of Walzer's political communitarianism. For it is precisely the preservation of the political community which is being set as the top priority, and above all by conservatives. The German CDU, for example is calling for strict limits on the number of refugees who will be admitted into the political community, i.e., the state.

This position imprecisely mirrors that of the communitarian thinker Michael Walzer, who seeks to justify regulation of admission on the grounds of a nation's democratic right of self-determination. Inspired by Derrida, I will critically engage with this position, showing that the phenomenon of the refugee brings to light an aporia in which Walzer and others like him are caught up. It thereby becomes clear that the concept of self-determination can be seen as a weak point in his theory especially as he justifies the political community instrumentally rather than ontologically.

However, I will argue that this aporia should not be understood simply as a philosophical mistake, but rather as an example of how the phenomenon of the refugee makes the paradoxes in such concepts as democratic self-determination visible.

The phenomenon of the refugee thus constitutes "an earthquake moment" for dominant discourses about immigration policy as well as for understandings of democracy in general; and I shall argue that, whereas a conservative reading of Walzer may provide arguments against the admission of refugees, an opening towards the refugee in fact offers an opportunity for a reading of Walzer that provides grounds for braver, freer and more radical political action.

Gemma Jamieson Malik | University of Westminster, UK

To be radical is to be counter-hegemonic

This paper explores the idea that to be radical is to challenge the prevailing common sense. Viewing the prevailing common sense as the dominant hegemony[1], one way to be radical would be to be counter-hegemonic; all true counter-hegemonic practices challenge the dominant hegemony. This raises problems regarding both definition and meaning, as well as problems regarding action. One problem is that the term 'radical' becomes too vague and all-encompassing, since a wide variety of claims and movements could be said to be 'radical'. A variety of political, economic and moral positions, including both progressive and regressive - i.e. old Left, new Left, old Right, new Right, Daesh, neoliberalism - could all potentially qualify as 'radical'. Given this, additional signifiers are needed. For example, 'radically democratic' could suggest a contesting of the dominant hegemony in pursuit of greater equality and liberty. However, if each and every claim and movement becomes individual and specific then their ability to effectively challenge the dominant hegemony will be threatened. This, coupled with the fact that hegemony itself is by its very nature adaptive and capable of variously co-opting, silencing and subverting counter-hegemonic claims, presents formidable challenges for counter-hegemonic movements. To think of being radical as being counter-hegemonic does not provide easy answers. It does, however, provide a rich account of the challenges and obstacles facing radical movements today. An appeal to the work of Laclau and Mouffe and to that of Boltanski and Chiapello, specifically around the formation of chains of equivalence and the recuperation of once counter-hegemonic claims, suggests some ways in which the above obstacles and challenges may at least be tempered.

[1] This paper draws specifically on the notion of hegemony as articulated by Laclau and Mouffe.

Joanna Kellond | University of Brighton, UK

Critiquing Psychoconsumption: Psychoanalysis and Radical Politics

Inspired by a recent documentary, “Psychocompulsion and Workfare: This Time its Personal,” made by activists working with psychoanalysis, the paper reflects on the contribution psychoanalysis might make to thinking resistance and radical politics in the context of “mental health” and beyond. After a brief exegesis of the current ways in which governmentality functions in relation to mental health – and the complex implication of psychoanalysis in such processes – the paper will consider how the work of Jacques Lacan, Judith Butler and Jessica Benjamin has been, and might be, put to work in resisting hegemonic notions of mental health, grounded in positive psychology. However, not only do these thinkers facilitate a critique of the vision of individualised subjectivity so dear to neoliberalism, their ideas also lend themselves to different modes of anti-capitalist intervention. Whilst Lacan’s thinking has been put to work by Bruce Scott in ways that aim at the erosion of the state, Butler and Benjamin lend themselves to reformist tendencies which seek to tame the most destructive elements of neoliberal practice. Overall, the paper will engage critically with both approaches, whilst concurrently foregrounding their importance, with the aim of making a case for the relevance of psychoanalytic thinking to contemporary radical politics.

David Lea | American University of Sharjah, UAE

Georgio Agamben’s ‘Radical’ Non-identitarian Politics

Agamben’s thought is said to be both ‘radically postmodern and radically anarchistic’.¹ The issue of ‘security’ has increasingly come into focus in the post- cold war era, but especially so following the events of 9/11 and finally more strongly with the rise of militant radical Islamic groups. The termination of the cold war brought with it a more hopeful outlook. In the more immediate post-cold war period, the emergence of the Copenhagen school of Security Studies and Critical Security Studies emphasized the complexity of the security issue attempting to move us radically beyond the simplistic view of traditional security studies in which security is synonymous with military preparedness and the readiness to implement exceptional measures and countervailing violent force. However the alleged ‘radical’ behaviour of militant Islam moved the West to implement its own radical response. The events of 9/11 however appeared to put closure to any new understanding of the meaning of security as the perceived threat was again managed through a decidedly violent retributive response or in the words of Carl Schmitt, ‘the implementation of a state of exception’, a ‘radical’ response that moved us away from the norms and protections of liberal democratic politics. But as we seen violence has simply begot more violence and the counter-response. Agamben’s approach to the politics of exclusion and exclusion, which has engendered the cycle of conflict and the degradation of human rights, calls for a future reality of anti-statism, non-identitarian politics.

From the above one notes that the term ‘radical’ is employed in different contexts as found in Agamben’s anti-statism, non-identitarian politics, Critical Security Studies’ rejection of political realism, Islamic militancy, and in the implementation of emergency measures. The paper considers the usage of the term ‘radical’ in these different contexts in order to determine whether Agamben’s anti-statism, non-identitarian politics is indeed radically postmodern and radically anarchistic.

Simon Lea | Camus Society

Political radicalism and the danger of moral narcissism

A high degree of indifference and narcissism is inevitable in any radical political position. However, this is not bad thing in itself since both factors, although limiting, can be virtuous and benign. The accusation of *moral narcissism* when aimed at those who oppose, say, torture as a tool against terrorism or military intervention in border disputes, is an accusation of indifference to perceived political realities in favour of a self-centred bolstering of individual or group esteem. A caveat: accusations can, of course, be disingenuous and unfounded. Here, the criticism is of two related limiting factors: *indifference* and *narcissism*. In basic form: an unwillingness or inability to accept or even acknowledge opposing views brought about by a desire to see

oneself or one's group as morally superior to others with resulting political naivety and potentially disastrous consequences. Like Hegel's 'beautiful souls', moral narcissists reject the world, considering it to be corrupt and corrupting; however unlike beautiful souls they do not withdraw in order to keep their consciences clean but seek instead active engagement with that they consider corrupt albeit with a refusal to engage in debate. Political radicals consider society to be fundamentally corrupt and those who argue for maintaining the status quo as corrupt and corrupting. They are, I shall argue, necessarily indifferent to (many) political arguments offered by non-radicals; in addition radical politics are, I shall argue, necessarily narcissistic. However, indifference can be either a virtue or a vice, depending on its object; narcissism likewise can be either benign or malignant. Neither need necessarily be limiting factors to effective political action and positive social change. I shall argue that while *moral narcissism* is a ever-present danger, it can be avoided and combated by political radicals.

Elizabeth Leopold | University of Hamburg, German

Questioning the sustainability of radicalism in dance

Can dance still be radical? To answer this question we have to analyse radicalism in dance not only in terms of its genealogy and its sociocultural contexts, but also ask questions about the agency of radicalism. Are we talking about an artistic attitude, a critical practice or an aesthetic or political phenomenon with possible social effects?

When thinking about 'the radical' in a dance performance we have to take into account the spatial and temporal interrelations between its intention, practice and interpretation. Dance and performance, therefore, have to be seen as a specific form of art, where the production of an aesthetic or political phenomenon has to be discovered in and through body and movement as well as in and through the semiotic translations and discourses surrounding it.

My focus will be the interpretation of dance performances of a choreographer that have historically been labelled as *radical*, taking Pina Bausch as obvious example of the elevation into the dance canon of 'radical' work. I will investigate just what these 'radical' aspects might be and where they might be located: within the form or within the content? My basic argument is that, throughout history, the label 'radical' has been retroactively reproduced, and in light of that I will analyse which aspects, if any, of this initial 'radicalism' could potentially survive the historical process of canonisation.

Susan Lucas | Team Rector of East Ham, UK & Independent Scholar

Radical Grace: The Theologico-Political Space of Hope

Terry Eagleton has recently argued for a conception of hope that is at once progressive and political, without a commitment to Progress with a capital P; theological, yet with a metaphysical modesty that eschews grandiose ontology, with a properly psychological recognition of the need to attend to desire, both its claims on us and its need for healing, and that is alert to the tragic, in the sense that progress is sometimes won at the cost of suffering.

Might such a conception of hope form the basis of a truly radical politics, one we might name, following a recent lecture of Alain Badiou's, radical grace? Radical grace builds on Badiou's idea of the event as both a radical disjunction from the past and the natural outworking of progressive moments immanent but hidden within it. It is not then a denial of tragic history but a recognition of a different dynamic, not readily discernible but nevertheless present within it.

It is visible in our time in the way in which Syriza has managed, against the odds and with tragic compromise to hold on to power in Greece; with the rise of Podemos in Spain; and, in the UK, in Jeremy Corbyn's insistence on adult conversation in politics.

The possibility of such radical grace gives substance to the hope of progressive politics, hope in the sense of 'trust in things of which we are not certain.' And with that hope and trust, what opens up is a space for and a call to action; sometimes to particular yet symbolically important reform; sometimes even to retreat and regroup. And sometimes, to that turning over of world order that deserves the name of *metanoia*, or revolution.

Mark McGovern | Edge Hill University, UK

The Contradictions of Harm

In March 2015 an official inquiry was established to investigate charges of wrongdoing by undercover police officers - particularly members of the Special Demonstration Squad (SDS) of the London Metropolitan Police - involved in spying upon various political organisations and civil liberties campaign groups (or 'domestic radicals' as they have more latterly become known) over the span of several decades (Pitchford Inquiry 2015). This followed a series of whistleblowing allegations made public by several former such police spies (Lewis and Evans 2013). Among other things, they revealed undercover police had forged long term sexual relationships with women political activists as cover for their activities, used dead children's identities as aliases and kept under covert surveillance groups uninvolved in any violent or even illegal actions (such as the Stephen Lawrence family). The State's inflicting of such 'harms' on supposedly 'radical' citizens is therefore the subject of the Pitchford Inquiry.

The police have since sought to maintain the anonymity of undercover agents, and secrecy concerning their activities, by invoking the rhetoric of 'neither confirm nor deny' (NCND). Arguing the lives and well-being of their officers would be jeopardised if their identities and actions were made known, the state has turned to a defence based on human rights legislation and principles - including Articles two, three and eight of the European Convention on Human Rights (the 'right to life', freedom from 'torture' and, most ironic of all, the 'right to privacy'). The result has been an expansion of a rights-based conception of 'harm', potentially 'inflicted' upon agents of the state, as a means of eschewing public accountability; a pattern already evident elsewhere (for example, in the North of Ireland in relation to the activities of agents and informers within paramilitary organisations). The aim of this paper is to explore some of the issues raised by these contradictions of the concept of harm being deployed as a means to deny accountability for wrongdoing when the police spy on so-called 'radicals'.

Rachel Miles | University of West England, UK

Sharing the Index: Performance

Who speaks? And who does not? And who is it that listens? The answers to these questions matter.

This paper is a performance, a draft of which was given at Knowle West Media Centre in March 2015 (see attached flyer). In **Sharing the Index**, the 100 logos and brand identities of the UK's top 100 FTSE index companies are conveyed through a rapid fire game of word association from which a narrative (of sorts) emerges. What is revealed is the story of how these companies (Vodafone, United Utilities, Dorothy Perkins, Shell etc.) have become entwined within the fabric of everyday life, and what is offered is an interpretation of their impacts on a community.

But this isn't just a story.

Sharing the Index raises questions about the possibilities for radicalism within a neoliberal political landscape. How might a disenfranchised, underpaid and overworked population become motivated towards collective radical action?

Sharing the Index is a deliberately provocative, radical writing and performance work (inspired by artists like Penny Arcade - *Bitch! Dyke! Faghag! Whore!*), which soberly critiques late capitalism and its role in establishing and maintaining the conditions of poverty.

This performance relies upon 'reclamation' and 'reverse discourse' (Foucault, *History of Sexuality: Vol 1*) as a move towards personal and socio-political empowerment. In re-appropriating the logos, brand identities and jingles that the FTSE Top 100 companies use to promote their practices, I develop a user's guide to, and inject some humour into, the most powerful companies in the UK.

Stephen O'Kane | Independent Scholar

Radical as a universal

'Radical' (like 'conservative') appears as a general term, denoting demand for fundamental change – literally at the root – as such, and not necessarily one particular form of government, society, or economy. That is, the conception of radical (and radical change) indicates a universal. However, it may not be an empty signifier in Laclau's terms, relating as it does to change in hegemony rather than any particular hegemon itself. Although Laclau's conception of 'radical democracy' as being about empowering and giving voice to the underdog fits many conceptions of radicalism, the relationship with democracy and minorities can be complex.

These points suggest a connection to the fact that since the nineteenth century it has been unusual for movements or political parties to actually adopt the name 'Radical', for especially in the case of socialist and anarchist groups, but sometimes also nationalists, liberals or even fascists, radicalism being taken as read in what they stood for anyway. There is also a bearing on the complex question of where radicalism has moved since the 1970s, or even before with anti-colonialism. It can be argued that with globalisation radical campaigns have had to become increasingly concerned with the more subtle and complex task of supporting the powerless beyond national boundaries (or minorities rather than the 'masses') without becoming another form of imperialism. In turn, radicalism and radical movements have tended to become more specialised, and perhaps more fragmented, into campaigns ranging from debt relief to apologies for capitalism raising people out of poverty, or from acceptance of diversity in religious communities to global connections through the Internet.

Goran Petrovic | Ghent University, Belgium

The Radical Political Dimension of Contemporary Art

The political theorists, Lars Tønder and Lasse Thomassen, distinguished between the two dominant politico-philosophical ways of conceptualising radical democracy: the ontological imaginary of abundance – which stands for the philosophical tradition of immanence (Spinoza, Deleuze), and the ontological imaginary of lack – which stands for the philosophical tradition of quasi-transcendence (Derrida, Lacan). They grasped the difference between them in the following way: whether the political analysis should start 'from the level of signification or from networks of embodied matter' and whether politics should be constituted as never-receding pluralism or hegemonic constellations? (2014: 2). The different ways of understanding the nature of existence that these two ontologies imply have important consequences for the different ways in which contemporary art theory examines the relation between art and politics in order to understand the radical political dimension of art. Contemporary art theory which proceeds from the philosophical trajectory of immanence supports the discourse on absolute democracy (Negri, Hart, Virno). It argues for a politics of withdrawal from the established institutions and thus risks to challenge dominant representations in art. In contrast, this paper focuses on the philosophical trajectory of quasi-transcendence which supports the discourse on agonistic democracy (Laclau, Mouffe). This discourse, which argues the politics of engagement with existing institutions and social practices, allows art theory to challenge the content of their representations and ethico-political values that are invested in them. Given these points, I will examine: how contemporary art contest dominant politics and representations; how artistic practices may contribute to the overall movements, protests and radical initiatives that stand against carbon-capitalism, economentality and anti-immigratory laws; how art in a network with other social practices mobilises people to engage in a struggle for other ways of living together and, thus, contributes to the invigoration of democracy?

Scott William Raby | Goldsmiths College (University of London), UK

Artists' contracts radical potential

Starting in the late 1960's, artists began using contracts as a radical political tool to address immediate concerns between themselves and art institutions. Artists such as Daniel Buren, Hans Haacke, Adrian Piper, and Maria Eichhorn are some of the notable artists to have used differing forms of contracts to articulate and improve their intentions and positions in relationship to their artwork.

This history has perpetuated a continual return by artists to the contract as a form, gesture, and methodology in art as a means to make demands and shift the power relations. Contracts have worked quite well in allowing artists to ensure where and how their work is displayed, affirm or deny their authorship, and even collect resale royalties. However, contract usage can increase bureaucracy, turn the artists who use them into administrators of their own work, and neoliberalize artistic practice. Furthermore, some artists lost sales insisting on contract use, whereas gallerists Paula Cooper and John Weber successfully used Sigelaub's contract and proved artist-friendly contracts to be a viable model.

Ironically, these "artist-friendly" contracts don't seem to go far enough. These contracts have been quite conservative, have overly respected the collector class, and lacked necessary imagination. As such, even institutions that embrace contracts often use them as empty signifiers, a promotional tactic, or as a business-friendly instrument. Even artist initiated contractual demands such as W.A.G.E. follow suit – they're a good start, but they don't address socio-economic and other inequalities adequately enough. However, contracts still offer a radical promise via the contract clause, which allows for independence, autonomy, and advocacy through the authorship of new terms and conditions.

Hence, I propose a paper to more clearly articulate these issues by further elaborating upon the history, legacy, and radical potential contracts offer in art.

Paul Reynolds | Edge Hill University, UK

Is Violence – Property and Persons – Ever Justifiable in Contemporary Radical Politics?

A feature of contemporary left radicalism, emergent from the 1960's, has been non-violent protest as a dominant paradigm in North American and Western European radicalism. Through the global hegemony of western ideas. Violent protest is often seen as a temporary solution in times of war or social revolution against despotic dictators - an exceptional condition in regimes that are characterised by no democratic or civil forms of decision-making, recall or redress. This precludes, however, a broader question: is violence a legitimate radical left politics? Here, whilst I will also discuss violence in respect to the destruction of property, I will focus on violence against people.

Building on initial arguments from Sorel, Lenin and Negri, but also drawing on deontological and virtue ethical approaches, I will outline and argue grounds for the legitimate use of violence in left politics: the immiseration and dehumanisation of populations; the power of elites/ruling classes and their persistent resistance to responses that would redress dehumanisation and immiseration; violence as a masked form within forms of privation that is done under the veil of non-violent civility; violence as an appropriate response to this state of affairs ethically; and violence as a critical response politically. The caveat to the use of violence is its nature and form, not its presence and absence.

Alejandro Romero Reche | University of Granada, Spain

The professional Practice of Radical Cartooning

Professional cartoonists produce their artwork within the frame of a complex set of limitations, both in terms of form and content. As contributors to magazines and newspapers, they often need to adjust their discourse to each of the publications' editorial line. Since the best opportunities for a steady job as a cartoonist are with

mainstream, high-circulation periodicals, this would suggest a dilemma for artists willing to push a radical outlook: either get professionalized and compromise their political discourse, or preserve its edge at the risk of remaining amateurs (who cannot develop the mastery of their craft that daily professional practice fosters) or precarious employees for life.

This paper examines how such dilemma is negotiated in the practice of radical cartoonists in contemporary Spain, outlining the determinants that structure it: the quantity and quality of outlets for their work, the configuration of their readership, their relations with specific social groups, political parties and social movements, the legal and practical limitations to free speech, and the ideological background. The theoretical approach combines the phenomenological sociology of humour (Berger, Mulkay, Zijderfeld) and Gilles Lipovetsky's theory of the humorous society in order to understand the ambiguous position of cartoonists who intend to commercially produce politically radical humour, and the underlying cultural consensus they have to engage with.

Anne Surma | Murdoch University, Australia

The University: A Hotbed of Radicalism

During the 1960s universities in the west were often identified as critical centres for fomenting revolutionary politics. Staff and students in these institutions took aim at the guardians of states and cultures that protected elitist, authoritarian and imperialist interests, and that reinforced divisions and subordination along class, economic, racial and gender lines. Paradoxically, however, while the changes agitated for by these activists were significant, and while their social and political impacts can still be felt, the ground on which university activism of the 1960s was built has been radically transformed. Thus today the very notion that the tertiary sector might encourage and enable thinking, ideas and activities that do anything *other than* buttress or extend the pervasive neoliberal agenda is widely regarded as shortsighted, illegitimate or simply absurd. How has it come to this? This paper reflects on this transformation and examines, from philosophical and rhetorical (textual) perspectives, some key examples of the ways in which neoliberal approaches and practices have insinuated themselves into the very fabric of the tertiary sector and the university's *raison d'être*. It thus explores how the radical impetus of neoliberalism has become normative in tertiary education.

Eubica Učník | Murdoch University, Australia

Responsibility vs. Responsibilisation: The Neoliberal Space of Human Activity

In this paper, I will discuss the neoliberal construction of the subject as an entrepreneurial self, based on the economic notion of 'human capital'. I will argue that this framing of the self is a fiction that has become accepted as everyday reality: this reduces the political space to that of the marketplace, the state to a corporation, and education to a vocational training ground, producing compliant subjects for a risk-driven present defined by corporate logic. I will revisit Jan Patočka's paper on 'Super-civilisation' to offer a possible understanding of this new configuration of society. Patočka's consideration of the changes to modern society is an extension of his concern with the 'responsibility of the subject.' I will sketch his argument in opposition to the notion of 'responsibilisation' of the neoliberal subject, which is the outcome of the changes I have outlined above. The neoliberal subject is configured on the entrepreneurial model, whereby the social and political become reduced to the personal risk of the 'responsibilised' neoliberal subject.

Bruno de Oliveira | University of Brighton, UK

Dissensus and conscientisation: setting the scene for deeper understanding of Participatory Action Research as a mechanism of disruption

The theories of Freire and Ranciere offer opportunity for mapping the intricate ramification of the interdependence of PAR (Participatory Action Research), Conscientization and Dissensus in the liminal capacity between emancipation and the political order. Dissensus, according to Ranciere, is the disruption of the-existing paradigm political order i.e. imposed social arrangements (Ranciere, 1999). This work critiques Participatory Action Research theoretically criticising its ethical and democratic aesthetics of emancipation. The psychosocial oppressions suffered by those that are made invisible, worthless, and powerless by the more powerful political order who are in a quest for control of their own lives trajectories and, social and economic destinies. The political order is the consensual, and in many cases oppressive, the power to rule given to oligarchs or those with the 'right' to govern even the most minimal aspects of daily life (Ranciere, 2001).

Wojech Ufel | University of Wrocław, Poland

Can a political scientist be radical?

If anyone may be expected to be unbiased, it undoubtedly is a scientist. Therefore, a claim for apolitical political science seems justified. But is it possible?

In the last few decades, developments in political science are taking it further away from any substantial understanding of politics and democracy, turning it into a tool of developing technologies of power. Dominant—liberal—models of democracy have been depoliticised and made shallow by political science's focusing on elections and normative construction of regimes (political systems); techniques for winning (especially in the rapidly growing science of political marketing); "coercive democratization"; and, finally, on liberal (consensual) models of society (political theory). The current paradigm of democracy excludes components that have traditionally been essential to the liberal model, such as extra-electoral representation, the organisation and activities of interest groups, channels of conflict resolution and reproduction, etc. Instead it in fact serves to justify and strengthen what it identifies as pathologies (e.g. the breakdown of political representation).

Thus a "liberal", "apolitical" and "unbiased" political scientist is, in fact, not only deeply influenced by dominant ideology, but is also an active agent in constructing social and political discourse. The mirage of apolitical political science is effectively hiding the actual engagement of political scientists, not only from their students, readers and followers, but also from themselves. This vision of depoliticised science is fundamental for the neoliberal model of society. In my paper I argue not only that a political scientist CAN, but that she SHOULD, be radical, as this is the only way for her to actively and deliberately influence the political and social climate surrounding her research and teaching.

Aspasia Velissariou | National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece

The Greek Double-Bind: The Case of SYRIZA

The Memorandum of Agreement between the social-democrat government, the ECB, the European Commission and the IMF (2010), a shock therapy applied to Greece, was that historical moment that gave impetus to a small party of the radical Left to rise to power. The Memorandum, a complex system of dependency of a former sovereign state on the Troika, establishes a state of exception that calls into question the "naturalness" of the reproduction of the social formation and, by deepening the existing contradictions, fractures the dominant ideology. If radicalism is defined as a system of political values and practices aiming at the subversion of socio-economic structures, then, in this moment of systemic crisis, SYRIZA managed to express the radical demand for Greece to be released from the bonds of severe austerity and for its people to regain their dignity. SYRIZA, having worked consistently at the grass root level in a non-sectarian

participatory manner, functioned as a catalyst that exposed the inability of the groups in power to present themselves as those who embody the common good and to recuperate popular resistance.

However, upon becoming the government, SYRIZA's real contradictions came to the surface. On the one hand, its radical programme was over-determined by the structural antithesis deriving from its call for the abolition of the Memorandum but in the context of the EU, a naïve fantasy that misrecognised the latter as a union of equality and solidarity that would listen to reason, namely, the non-viability of the debt. Significantly, this very same antithesis also permeates the majority of the Greek people. On the other, within the party a division emerged between those who adhered to the radical promise not simply to represent the people but to implicate them in the actual decision-making and the presidential group that promoted a systemic administration as a means of staying in power. To this end the government sought for alliances with groups in power in Greece. The great moral and political triumph of the people's self-determination, signalled by the 62% that voted for No in the Referendum for the Memorandum was cancelled by the introduction of a new one, but by SYRIZA this time. Insofar as the 62% was not a clear mandate for the exit from the EU but it largely inscribed an ambivalence towards it, SYRIZA's re-election and its final surrender to the dogma of TINA marked the utter loss of its radicalism.

Phil Vellender | University of Roehampton, UK

'Till Hope creates from its own wreck the thing it contemplates': lines of dissent in Shelley's radical poetry'

Commenting on Percy Bysshe Shelley's radical poetry, Michael Scrivener (1982: 3) writes:

'The pattern of development typically established for the English romantic poets is the transition from naïve political radicalism to literary romanticism, informed by a faith in imagination and sober conservative scepticism. (...) This is especially misleading in dealing with a poet like Shelley, whose work reflects a growing pessimism even though he never ceased being a political radical. (...) Unless one examines the English radical culture Shelley was part of, that native tradition of radicalism he modified, then it will be impossible to make sense of Shelley's complex development'

With reference to what several critics (Michael O'Neill, William Keach, Paul Foot and Michael Scrivener) have recently termed Shelley's 'interventionist' political prose and poetry, this paper will argue that although Shelley's development has been characterised as evolutionary in terms of his politics and poetics, and he did indeed shed some of his early philosophical preoccupations, withdrawing from direct political engagement and subtly altering the tone of his work to suit his maturing sensibility and vision, Shelley never completely lost touch with his radical political faith nor lost his vibrant optimism, despite the enormous pressure that the combination of his philosophical scepticism and seemingly interminable political setbacks and personal tragedies all put on his meliorist beliefs. How did contemporary radical responses to the anarcho-capitalist reality that was England in the Regency period reveal themselves in Shelley's most radical 'interventionist poetry'? Finally, what insights, if any, does Shelley's 'interventionist radicalism' offer us in 2016?

Martina Vitartali | Independent Scholar

The Dream of Reason Brings Forth Monsters: the 'radical' within Temporary Autonomous Zones within the Free Party phenomenon, and the European Squatting movement

Murray Bookchin, in his 1995 polemical essay: 'Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: an Unbridgeable Chasm' exposed his strident criticism of what he defined as the insular tendency of anarchist movements towards the pursuit of 'lifestyle' over insurrectionary politics. It appears that Bookchin's concerns have yet to be resolved. The current European anti-authoritarian political landscape is underlined by the use of squatting as a political tool, and by the formation of 'temporary autonomous zones' as a form of recreation. The respective strategic efficacy, and political nature of these phenomena bears important analysis. This paper will seek to assess Bookchin's critique whilst simultaneously turning the question raised by him on its

head. The questions therefore become two. One: Can those movements which seek to transform the everyday practices of social relations be defined as 'political' and 'radical'? Two: can a certain lifestyle or form of social organization (which is not explicitly political) itself be 'radical; and hold within itself political potential? Lefebvre's theory of the reproduction of the social relations of production serves as an entry point to this question, in that it allows for an analysis of the role played by everyday social relations in the production of social space as a political tool. To this end, this paper will seek to analyse the role of the 'radical' within the European squatting movement and the formation of 'Temporary Autonomous Zones' within the free party phenomenon. It will assess the affinities between these two phenomena, evaluate their potentialities and limitations, and analyse what their convergence can tell us about the nature of anti-authoritarian politics in the 21st Century. Ultimately the question at stake is whether the politics of everyday life can truly function as a 'radical' political option within a political backdrop of orthodox party politics.

Mario Vrbancic | University of Zagreb, Croatia

St Paul: between the monster and the creature

In this paper we will talk about the radical interventions of St. Paul, the most genuinely radical figure, which Pier Paolo Pasolini faithfully transcribes in the screenplay of his failed 'political-theological film', *St. Paul*. The screenplay alludes to a famous passage from St. Paul's *First Letter to the Corinthians* (15:42–44), in which Paul speaks of the new "flesh" that human beings will acquire at the end of time. This new flesh, one of the central motifs of the screenplay, is envisioned in the phantasmagoric, nightmarish vision: the transformation of a beautiful Arian body devoured by a mysterious sickness into "one of the dreadful living corpses of the concentration camp." Thus this flesh embodies exposure to the peculiar threshold of law and nonlaw, a state of exception, producing an unusual life that Eric Santner calls creaturely life. For Santner, creature is the signifier of an ongoing exposure to biopower, being caught up in the process of becoming, God's creation that borders on the monstrous and unnatural. What becomes apparent from reading Pasolini's *Saint Paul* is that the "flesh" needs to die in order to resurrect, both the flesh in the concentration camp and St. Paul's flesh. This resurrection in the context of the Law, desire and biopolitics brings out some aspects of the most radical left interventions (Badiou, Žižek) in the twenty-first century. But these aspects, taken literally, may evoke fear and trembling: is St. Paul an radical militant or something more, something much beyond? Does he mark the impossibility of genuinely radical left intervention today, or, vaguely signal a new emancipatory politics? Or, this radical left intervention may appear to us as something on the border between the monster and the creature.

Claire Woodford | University of Brighton, UK

Desire and the subject in Freud and Butler

In *Psychic Life of Power* Judith Butler sought to clarify the way that subjects are not merely self-constituting but are constituted by norms themselves and thus operate within a field of power relations that limits their ability to see the constraints of norms and to act to subvert them[1]. She proposes that any investigation into the emergence of the subject needs to appreciate both the social and the psychic workings of power. This does not simply mean that we can supplement Foucault with Freud however. Instead, in order to avoid any residue of an unconscious essence from psychoanalysis she sets about seeking to read theories of power alongside psychoanalysis in order to trace an account of how power forms subjection in 'the turns of psychic life' as well as an account of psychic subjection in terms of the 'regulatory and productive effects of power'. However, this paper will argue that her turn to psychoanalysis is incomplete[2]. She does not explain how exactly we come to break with our social and psychic prohibitions to manipulate performativity and resist or challenge our normative order, nor how we loosen our attachments to all identities in order to avoid these

problematic structures in the first place. In addition, she does not explain why she is willing to accept the assumptions of Freudian psychoanalysis and the priority psychoanalysis gives to sexual attachments, or, translated into her Hegelian terminology, a wider underlying desire for existence, which rather surprisingly, seems to appear in her work as pre-discursive^[3]. Consequently, this paper will ask what happens to subversion in Butler's work and will investigate we salvage her theory of iteration for democratic 'politics' without having to commit to an untenable notion of a volitional subject?

[1]See principally 1993 and 2007a.

[2]Disch, 1999, p.554 citing Butler, 1997, p.18.

[3]Chambers, 2003, p.147. See also Ranciere's critique of Freud 2009e..

Evert van der Zweerde | Radboud University, Netherlands

"Saving the Roots": on Radical Democracy and the Left

There are good reasons to suppose that "leftist" politics must be democratic, and even radically democratic. Similarly, one might argue that radically democratic politics can only be "leftist". Although these arguments run the risk of circularity, they do have, I will suggest, a *prima facie* plausibility.

One of the few advantages of a world largely dominated by right-wing politics is that one can freely speculate about alternatives. Rather than getting lost in sarcasm, cynicism or utopianism, it seems to be high time to rethink the old question about Left and Right in connection to democracy; more specifically, to *radical* democracy.

I shall try to elaborate a few lines of argument, without hope, however, of arriving at a clear-cut conclusion, let alone practical policy proposals. Rather, I aim to contribute to an urgently needed preliminary discussion. In particular, I will try to drive home three points: (1) being "radical" is not a Left privilege: so-called "neo-liberalism" is arguably even more radical in that it goes to the roots of society... and cuts them through; (2). Discussions of radical or direct democracy easily derail into discussions about form and procedure, which, though important, lose sight of the fact that democracy is about decisions with *material* effects; (3) the Left must try to rid itself of its teleological optimism that suggests that, in spite of setbacks and reversals, the world is objectively moving towards freedom, equality, and solidarity – as if, in the end, the world simply must become socialist.