INTRODUCTION

> *My interest here is to keep faith safe from knowledge,
> which also means to keep faith alive as faith. For faith is most
> truly faith when it hits that point where it is not supported and
> sustained by knowledge, where we find ourselves pushing ahead
> mainly on faith, driven by the passion of non-knowledge.[1]*

Despite serious attempts to reconstruct liberal political thought to make it suitable to modern times, the theoretical groundwork on which it rests has not been subjected to sufficiently rigorous scrutiny on the conceptual level. Part of the reason for this is, as James L. Richardson points out, that liberalism has never been a unitary philosophy. There has always been tension among the ideals and values which are seen as constituting the liberal tradition.[2] This tension, some critics of liberalism like Charles Taylor argue, stems from the misunderstanding of meanings attached to particular concepts in specific historical times.[3] However, this "conceptual confusion"[4] has not always been examined outside the confines of the liberal political imaginary. This thesis therefore starts from, and elaborates on, the premise that liberal thought continues to be enslaved to its own concepts. In this dissertation I identify three problems with the way liberal political thought deals with conceptual ideas and explore the implications that its limited appreciation of conceptual change has for international relations (IR) theory.

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[1] John Caputo, *More Radical Hermeneutics: On Not Knowing Who We Are* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 10.

[2] James L. Richardson, *Contending Liberalism in World Politics: Ideology and Power* (Boulder: Lynee Rienner, 2001), 20-46.

[3] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 10-19.

[4] This term was coined by Geertz Clifford, "Ideology as a Cultural System," in *Ideology and Discontent*, ed. David E. Apter (New York: The Free Press, 1964). For an in-depth analysis of the liberal concepts of the self and politics see Emma Norman, "The Political Self" (Ph.D. diss., University of Essex, 1999). Published in Spanish as *El yo político: Concepciones contemporáneas del yo. La política y la autonomía* (Mexico, D. F.: Ediciones Coyoacán, 2005).

My hope is to raise awareness among international relations scholars concerning the way we understand the activity of politics, which at the moment I will show is too often unconsciously submerged in a dominant liberal discourse. Here I understand the term 'liberalism' as one of the political traditions which emerged with the project of the Enlightenment, the central tenets of which are freedom and equality.[5] While freedom is at the core of the liberal ideology, there are other principles and values that are of similar importance: freedom, in a liberal context, must always be accompanied by responsibility; otherwise it would degenerate into lawlessness and anarchy. Freedom in the political sense leads to democracy, where liberals uphold the principles of pluralism and checks and balances. My criticism is directed in particular to liberals of past and contemporary tradition like John Stuart Mill, Jeremy Bentham, Ronald Dworkin and John Rawls, who see these principles as the best mechanism to strive for equality in society, as the rule of law prescribes that everyone is equal before the law.[6]

The first problem with liberal political thought is the tendency to conflate complex ideas and concepts. One consequence resulting from blending together at least two notions, for example 'nation-state' or 'state sovereignty,' is that one meaning tends to predominate over, or becomes equivalent to, the other. Consequently the association of two distinct concepts in one single idea produces a discursive political tool that downplays the tension existing between such concepts.[7] As in physics, tension is a force intending to pull an object apart. If the tension is greater than the inward force of the object, then the object will

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[5] Maurice Cranston, "Liberalism," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan & The Free Press, 1967), 458-461.

[6] Ronald Dworkin, "What is Equality?," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 10 (1981): 283-345. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971). Jeremy Bentham, *An introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1973). John Stuart Mill, "Utilitarianism," in *Mill's Ethical Writings*, ed. J. B. Schneewind (New York: Collier Books, 1965).

[7] The most notable example is 'liberal democracy' these ideologies are frequently grafted together, though many critics have noted that the fit between them is not altogether comfortable. See particularly Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* (Chicago & London: Chicago University Press, 1996).

stretch and break off. Similarly with concepts, if more than one are compressed into one object, concepts (or our understanding and use of them) are likely to deform.

The second problem I explore that involves conceptual inaccuracy in liberal thought is the propensity to hegemonize the meaning of one concept for specifically political purposes. This can be seen, in my view and the view of important critics,[8] as a deliberate effort to obscure or exclude the potential inherent in any other possible meanings with which a concept can operate. This is particularly so in the case of 'politics' as concept which has become associated primarily, if not only, with 'government' or 'statecraft' – particularly in international relations theory. This also means that for liberals, concepts are almost always fixed and stable and attempting to adapt them to new historical circumstances threatens the very certainty that liberals attempt to secure.

The third problem I identify stems from the former two. The lack of conceptual clarity leads to difficulties in distinguishing the degree to which a concept has been shaped by liberal thought. This problem arises when attempting to distinguish between liberal-oriented concepts and the strict semantic connotations of ideas, since this would favour one form of hegemony over another. The third problem that results from hegemonic uses of concepts is that new ideas and methodologies build on liberal foundations to analyse political phenomena. Further, because hegemonizing the meaning of a concept means that liberal thought can restrain the room for the contestability of new ideas. This is particularly evident in the ideological offensive launched in the years after the collapse of the Soviet

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[8] Hannah Arendt wrote on the lack of conceptual precision nowadays especially the concept of "politics" and indirectly referred many times to the liberal hegemony of concepts in her *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958). Also see Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). Sandel charges liberalism for operating with a misconceived conception of the individual moral identity which he famously captured in his critique of the 'unencumbered self.' Emma Norman also wrote on the hegemonic use of concepts in liberalism in "The Political Self", iii, Chapter 4, & 232.

Union with an array of victorious claims that elaborated discourses of the 'end of history' and the 'triumph of liberal capitalism.'[9] The apparent annihilation of rival ideologies meant that any type of political contestation would narrow the field of political contestation to debates within liberalism.

Why does liberal political thought have a problem dealing with concepts that fall outside the outreach of its own tradition? Emma Norman has accused liberalism for "unnecessarily confining" current conceptions of politics to liberal conceptions of politics. To a large extent, we are told, this is due to several basic conceptual tensions within liberalism that stem from its hybridized origins. Certain concepts it uses today, such as the 'self', have changed with the times. However, the concept of politics has remained essentially the same as it was in the Enlightenment and has grown incongruent and restrictive in its relation to other concepts – a problem liberals have apparently failed to recognise. While my position differs substantially to that of Norman, this thesis takes this general idea as a point of departure, but pushes it much further, by showing that the "unnecessary confinement" of liberal conceptions is not restricted to merely that of politics and the 'self'.

My focal point explores the tension between conceptual missing links in liberal thought and demonstrates that the failure of liberalism to 'think outside its own restrictive box' similarly means that certain possibilities for resolving some of the problems of liberalism just fail to be seen. I claim that by hegemonizing concepts and reducing the reach of resources to the theoretical insights found within its tradition, liberal thought undermines its putative normative resources that *could* allow it to constantly question and potentially

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[9] One of the main promoters of this idea was Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?," *The National Interest* (Summer 1989): 9-28.

remake itself. Liberal thought operates with a restrictive maxim, which many of its proponents still support, that boasts the liberal tradition as one self-sufficient and autonomous ideology sufficiently rich so as to provide solutions to its own problems.[10] In the light of these developments, I am forced to ask the following question: is it plausible to speak of a genuine liberal critical theory[11] in international relations that seeks to offer alternative solutions to contested issues?

I hope to provide some analytical distinctions that will suggest that the liberal tendency for introspection cannot guarantee the conceptual renewal that liberal thought urgently needs. This difficulty gives rise to a variety of political dilemmas that, in turn, affect the way we theorize world politics To clarify why this is so, my approach attempts to explore the conceptual links between politics and identity beyond the scope of the narrow state-centric account of liberal politics and attempts to examine the influence of liberal thought in international relations theory.

The development of traditional theories of international relations like the so-called 'liberal' and 'realist' approaches remain locked with the conceptual disarray inherited by eighteenth century liberalism. This can be seen frequently in several strands of IR theory. Especially those associated with liberal and neo-liberal ideas which seem to focus the study of world politics on the free flow of the market and the increased institutionalization of the liberal ideals. Liberal political thought in political philosophy is not restricted to Wilsonianism, that is, the school of thought concerned with economic liberalization or

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[10] This important point is also made by Ruth Abbey, "Is Liberalism Now an Essentially Contested Concept?," *New Political Science* 27 (2005): 461-480.

[11] The term critical liberal theory does not present a new theory as such. It is an attempt to rethink the liberal ideals in the light of contemporary developments. See Martha C. Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), argues for 'a form of universalism that is sensitive to difference and pluralism, 8. Also see Nancy Rosenblum, *Another Liberalism, Romanticism and the Reconstruction of Liberal Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987).

laissez-faire.[12] The problem with transposing concepts from political liberalism to economic liberalism (or libertarianism) is that authors like Friedriech von Hayek[13] and Milton Friedman[14] equate the concept of 'freedom' with economic freedom and 'liberty' with economic liberty and limit its meaning to the individual's rights to private property.[15] Similarly, the explosion of late liberal capitalism equates the emergence of a 'new economy' with a 'new politics' which transcends the Left-Right distinction.[16] The unrecognized influence that liberalism has upon so many branches of mainstream international relations theory has resulted in a hegemonic view of world politics. This certainly permits in principle the possibility of articulating different views and opposing interpretations on how political phenomena in the world should be analyzed. However, as I show, in practice much traditional international relations theory operates so fully and exclusively upon on the basis of concepts derived from classical liberalism that it can be argued that traditional international relations theory fails to recognize its own rather restrictive conceptual limits.

In a nutshell, liberal thought employs a concept of freedom that promotes individual liberty to pursue one's own particular conception of the good.[17] The government should limit its functions to safeguard the wellbeing of its citizens as a political community. Since liberal thought enables the citizenry to dissociate from public affairs, it entails a negative

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[12] The distinction of economic liberalism and political liberalism is acknowledged by most IR scholars. However, the tendency in IR continues to transpose and therefore conflate elements from political liberalism to economic liberalism.

[13] Friedriech Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Politics, A New Statement of the New Principles of Justice and Political Economy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976).

[14] Milton and Rose Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2002).

[15] Liberty is a term that gained momentum with the rise of individualism to refer to several types of individual freedom. Thinkers like John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* [1690] (Indianapolis: Hacket, 1980) and Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Discours sur les origins et les fondaments de l'inegalite parmi les homes* [1754] (Paris: CJ-Plamarion, 1971) promoted a conception of the individual with natural rights or liberties that were inherent to human beings.

[16] Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right: The Failure of Radical Politics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991).

[17] See the early work of John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).

view of freedom involving 'freedom from politics' that restricts the scope of public engagement in the political sphere. This is due to liberalism's preoccupation with enhancing individual rights and autonomy against the encroachment of government. While liberal thought makes the government responsible for organizing public life, it simultaneously reduces the meaning of politics exclusively to statecraft and administrative endeavours.[18] By linking the concept of politics to governmental activity and, in turn promoting a freedom from politics, liberal thought works with a rather mistaken impression of what can be considered 'political.'[19] An increasing body of literature that attempts to clarify the concept of the political, not only in political theory, but also other fields of the social sciences have pointed to this theoretical gap and urge us to rethink such an important aspect of humanity.

In the following chapters I hope to contribute to this body of literature in the development of 'post-liberal' discourse by offering an understanding of 'the political' that emerges from the contemporary rethinking of the concept and highlights the value of antagonism in the construction of identities.[20] Several scholars, such as Chantal Mouffe, William Connolly, Judith Butler and Ernesto Laclau, have devoted considerable effort to this particular topic.[21] However, none of these authors tend to focus on the kind of 'conceptual precision' that I try to develop here. For it is not just the difference between

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[18] This point is discussed at length by Emma Norman, "The Political Self," 130-145.

[19] There is common agreement among scholars from different fields on the need to rethink the nature of the political. There are, of course, diverse interpretations of this concept but they all agree on the specificity of the political as the moment of antagonism. See for example the discussion offered by Jenny Edkins, *Poststructuralism and International Relations: Bringing the Political Back in.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), and William Rasch, "Locating the Political: Schmitt, Mouffe and Luhuman and the Possibility of Pluralism," *International Review of Sociology* 7, no. 1 (1997): 103-115.

[20] The interest in this concept seems to increase with people identified with both the left and the right, see Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political* (London: Verso, 1994).

[21] Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, "Discourse in 'Post-Marxism Without Apologies", (1987) 166 New *Left Rev*. 79, (1987): 82-84. William Connolly, *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

'politics' and 'government' that is important in an updated rethinking of 'politics'. Rather, one of the points I intend to clarify is that 'politics' is necessarily involved with the construction of collective identities, and as such, 'politics' and 'identity' require each other. The concept implicated here is identity and this thesis proposes the possibility for an epistemological shift in the way identity is considered in IR and the social sciences, departing from the premise that identity is fundamentally related to politics. One of the points I want to suggest in this dissertation is that the obfuscation of 'politics' and 'the political' by liberal thought poses serious impediments for locating the tension that arises when opposing concepts or points of view come in confrontation. Examples of how liberal thought avoids dealing with opposing concepts can be counted by the numbers. Among the most notorious instances appears the rigid separation of normative concerns versus the empirical aspect of theory, a tension that liberals seem to prefer to maintain at arms-length rather than confront.

This brings us to the point where the conceptualization of identity has to be addressed. To say that identity requires difference is an ontological fact inherent in the logic of identity. However, the tension existing between identity and difference - be it in collectivities or in concepts, requires an understanding of politics that should permit some degree of confrontation. This confrontation, in poststructural thought, symbolises that it is impossible to achieve full identification and simultaneously this confrontation becomes the possibility for identity to flourish.

The central argument I pursue throughout this thesis is the following. Despite the liberal tendency to construct otherness through discourses that establish difference, this practice is not sufficient on its own to address the nature of the conflict between opposing collectivities. This inability to mediate conflict, I contend, stems from liberalism's

misunderstanding of politics and identity. The recent liberal concatenation of the concepts "identity politics" is analyzed for the most part for the serious threat it poses to democratic politics. However, I argue that both concepts 'identity' and 'politics' are fundamentally related in such a crucial way that they have been misunderstood by liberals and therefore by traditional IR theorists, because defending difference is not among the liberal ideals, as it contradicts the ethos of egalitarianism that liberals proudly uphold. My central objective in this dissertation is to emphasize the need for developing alternative forms of political action that, first, contest the various discourses embedded in collective identities and second, show that such contestation can obtain some degree of conceptual precision in such a way that ameliorates concepts in tension. This point is especially pertinent to ask these days in the light of increasing legislation that conflates difference with enmity as a result War on Terror. In consequence I attempt to explicate why liberal thought has not been successful in understanding that genuine politics is, in fact, what mediates this tension. From this point I derive the main hypothesis of this thesis: *there is a correlation between the way liberal thought avoids dealing with concepts foreign to its own tradition and the forms of political action liberal thought employs that restrain the freedom of action necessary to disclose collective identities*. In both instances, liberal thought cannot succeed because politics involves fundamentally the confrontation of conceptual ideas. This confrontation necessarily involves manifestation in the public realm with an engagement in specific forms of political action that allow the participants to address the source of the conflict so as to establish collective identities.

I show that the efforts so far made by a variety of IR scholars and political scientists to understand collective identity construction in theory and in practice continue to work with an understanding of politics that replaces the high stakes of politics for discourses on

the universality of liberal values. Therefore, the conventional liberal view on identity operates with a conception of the subject as an autonomous self that constructs his/her identity exclusively from self-experience and human agency, placing the individual as isolated from the effects of human relations. In consequence, liberals overlook the idea that through relations of otherness collective identity can be created.

From the previous observations I draw the first subhypothesis: *Having a narrow vision of politics to which liberals grant universal validity, liberal thought and international relations theory leave a great deal of political activity underexplored, which excludes or downplays phenomena like collective identity formation.* The rejection by liberal thought of the conceptual autonomy and ontology of otherness for understanding identity can be interpreted as follows: Based on the premise that liberalism insists on restricting the scope of its research to resources found exclusively within its tradition, it can be argued that, as a consequence of these shortsighted tendencies to find new theoretical resources, liberal thought operates with its own conception of universality. The problem with this concept is that it privileges an understanding of universality that hitherto excludes the possibility of considering other meanings and thus is unable to embrace difference. In addition, not only does this trend privilege liberal concepts over possible rival ideologies, it also makes liberalism blinkered to what I call *conceptual otherness*,[22] from which it would benefit substantially in its attempt to 'reconstruct itself'.

This inability to deal with conceptual otherness is also responsible for the specific conflation of politics for ethics that shows how liberals struggle to make the necessary conceptual distinctions. These conceptual dilemmas are not, of course, assumed without

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[22] I introduce the term 'conceptual otherness' to bring attention to the need to discuss and confront political concepts in order to reformulate possible anachronistic meanings and make them suitable to modern times. Facing conceptual otherness is therefore a necessary prerequisite to keep the debate on concepts going.

practical relevance. Certain practices like the development of ethnic citizenship imperil the development of practical solutions to the challenge posed by complex multicultural societies today. Also, this unwillingness to provide conceptual contestation conceals the new forms of struggle resulting from the effects of the fragmentation of the social, economical and political spheres, so acclaimed by the resurgence of the intellectual neo-Marxist left.[23]

My second subhypothesis is particularly crucial to this study and claims that *the work of Carl Schmitt, analysed at the conceptual level, can be used to shed light on the conflicting nature of politics and its inextricable relations with the processes by which identity is attained.* This light is not to be found anywhere within the liberal tradition. My position is founded on an interpretation of Carl Schmitt's work *The Concept of the Political*, which I show throughout this dissertation, offers a very valuable way of thinking about 'the political' in terms of antagonistic relations. Hence this interpretation is necessarily engaged in some degree of exegetical work.

My procedure will be to make a reading of Schmitt's concepts through alternative analytic lenses that now fall under the rubric of 'postmodernist.' While some of Schmitt's concepts in principle seem too radical or imbued with theological elements to many contemporary authors, I show that a sensitive reading of his critique of liberalism (and his alternatives to it) offers a different picture of the German thinker. The centrality of his friend-enemy distinction as the defining moment of the political conceptualizes radical antagonism in a way that, if read as I suggest, discloses an inextricable connection between 'politics' and the binary 'identity/difference' that liberalism fails to identify. This inability

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[23] This trend is enunciated in detailed in the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985).

to trace the connection between politics and identity, I will show, is deeply related to the forms of political action endorsed by liberals like Rawls and Larmore. What I take to be most salient about Schmitt's work is his stinging critique of liberal politics, a critique he made of the Weimar Republic in the 1930s but which continues to apply in contemporary liberal politics. The relevance of Schmitt in contemporary political theory has witnessed unprecedented resurgence in the last few years in the works of authors such as Giorgio Agamben, Chantal Mouffe, Tracy Strong and Gary Ulmen to name but a few. [24] The revival of his scholarship in that discipline has entered a very exciting stage and I argue for the possibility of considering his work as a theoretical perspective that can be defensible on the conceptual level. However, few of authors have discovered the potential inherent in the work of Schmitt for international relations, and if they have, it has been primarily with notions associated with international law. [25] This is unfortunate, for Carl Schmitt's concept of 'the political' is a deep concept which I present as an alternative solution outside liberal thought to provide the conceptual 'missing links' that liberalism negates in dealing with alterity.

The third subhypothesis is: *if a model of political action based on the agonistic pluralist approach discloses collective identity formation by allowing confrontation of incommensurable values and systems of belief, then this model can also show that the confrontation of concepts in agonistic terms is what liberal thought needs to scrutinize the*

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[24] These thinkers have engaged in a re-evaluation of the work of Carl Schmitt for different purposes and have analyzed it with different methodologies. However, they all agree on the usefulness of his work to reconstruct some aspects of contemporary political thought and international relations. See Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998). Tracy Strong, foreword to *The Concept of the Political*, by Carl Schmitt (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996), Gary Ulmen, "Return of the Foe," and George Schwab, "Enemy or Foe: A Conflict of Modern Politics," in *Telos* 72 (Summer 1987): 187-193 and 194-201, respectively.

[25] Anthony McArthy, Carl Schmitt's Critique of Liberal International Legal Order Between 1933 and 1945, 14 (2001): 25-46. George Schwab, *The Challenge of the Exception: an Introduction to the Political Ideas of Carl Schmitt between 1921-1936*, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989).

identity of its own concepts. This model can be integrated in deliberative models of political action with the necessary procedures to address an issue in its full complexity. Schmitt's critique of liberalism is taken here as a point of departure to stress the kind of depoliticizations inherent in liberal thought. I sustain that his views on politics and his criticism of liberalism can withstand substantial criticism and be rescued in a number of ways to contribute to contemporary political thought.

The centrality of his friend-enemy distinction as the defining moment of the political conceptualizes radical antagonism in a way that, if read as I suggest, discloses the inextricable connection between 'politics' and the binary 'identity/difference'. As a concept, 'the political' as understood by Schmitt is useful to elucidate the necessary distinction between difference-as-otherness and difference-as-enmity. This distinction turns out to be very useful to illuminate the conceptual stagnation that overshadows liberal thought. Schmitt portrays this distinction via the friend-enemy antithesis to denote the degree of radical disassociation association as a means to theorize collective identity.

This thesis is divided into four chapters. I examine each hypothesis in one chapter to validate my main hypothesis. In the fourth chapter my concern is to explore the possibilities for applying these theoretical developments in current IR theory. In chapter one, I show that while liberalism has dominated the discourse of world politics and has influenced the discipline of IR, the rise of postmodernist objections to liberal thought has challenged the fundamental assumptions about the fixity and stability that liberals grant to political concepts. Based on the premise that politics is about action and not solely about territory or relations between states, I argue that this restrictive approach has cast a conceptual shadow in the way we understand the construction of identities, which as the political phenomenon *par excellence*, it happens within and beyond the state.

In chapter two, I make a case for showing that the Schmittian concept of the political provides a theoretical approach to antagonism and the political, which reveals that the conceptual stagnation in which liberalism lives is a product of its reluctance to approach academically conceptual otherness. Further, I explain here why I chose Schmitt's thought and not that of other important political thinkers. I conclude this chapter by challenging some of the misinterpretations and misreadings of Schmitt that have occurred in certain recent discussion of his work.

Chapter three is dedicated to analyze two contemporary forms of interpreting political action that purport to establish collective forms of identification. The discussion confronts deliberative democratic forms of political action versus agonistic pluralist accounts of it. Mainly because these are the two camps that mention either Schmitt's ideas themselves or variations on the concept of the political he originally introduced in political science. My contention is that since deliberative democrats follow the same conceptual principles of liberal thought and reject antagonism, they consequently discard 'conceptual otherness' and subsume the contestation of discourses into a universal consensus. By contrast the agonistic pluralist approach allows for contestation of concepts which in turn uncover the relations of power and allow for adjusting to conceptual change, which paves the way for more democratic forms of identification.

The fourth chapter deals with the possibility of applying public sphere theory to international relations theory with the aim of locating the experience of the political *qua* antagonism in world politics. I resort again to Schmitt's concept of the political and argue that this concept can be best interpreted in both theory and practice if applied to public sphere theory. While the liberal version of an international public sphere espoused by Habermas contains important emancipatory possibilities, it operates with a universal and

very liberal conception of human rights that leaves no room for alternative forms of political action. Similarly I draw on Hannah Arendt's notion of 'space of appearance' to show how political antagonisms need to be traced in the public realm. I argue that while Schmitt does not provide a spatial dimension to its political category of the friend-enemy, it is necessary to identify the conditions in which 'the political' manifests itself across state boundaries.

The implications of this reading for democratic politics and for international relations theory are important, for it could bring back to dialogue a variety of conflicting discourses that were thought to be mutually exclusive as a result of the liberal discomfort to deal with conceptual otherness. Before I launch into the arguments defending these hypotheses, it is important to mention the central ideas that will influence my approach and the structure of the arguments to follow. It should be clear by now that this whole thesis is fundamentally concerned with unpacking two central concepts (identity and politics) and their relation to each other. Therefore, to posit a one-line definition of either or both here would be either wildly inappropriate, or defeating the object of the exercise by restricting the meaning of these terms in precisely the way I am accusing liberals of doing. Nevertheless, some point of departure for the following discussion is required.

For postmodern thought, identity is always constructed in relation to difference. In a nutshell, french poststructuralism tends to interpret social relations with reference to linguistic structures and, as many of its proponents claim,[26] meaning is constituted by systems of differences internal to the languages through which humans interpret the world. Meaning is never fully present because it is constituted by the endless possibilities of what

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[26] See the influential works of Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), and Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977).

it is not and is therefore at least always partially deferred.[27] Poststructuralism seeks to expose and undo the paring and hierarchy as they are implicated in various social structures. Under this view, identity comes to be interpreted as one possibility among many resulting from a struggle to attain certainty of what one's group is not.

Dominant writers such as William Connolly and Judith Butler have contributed enormously to enlarge the idea that collective identity should be understood as a non-fixed concept which emerges as a result of the contingency of human relations *qua* politics. Connolly, in his influential *Identity/difference* elaborates that "[t]here is a double relation of interdependence and strife between identity and difference" which makes identity "a slippery, insecure experience."[28] From this perspective, politics comes to be seen as the site in which the contingent act of the construction of identity is dealt with. Contrary to the liberal attempt to make politics safe, the postmodernist approach vindicates the high stakes involved in human interaction. Collective identities are to a large extent constructed through a complex linguistic articulation of discourses. However, I employ poststructuralism only in a methodological sense and draw from a variety of postmodenist approaches to raise some very timely objections to the concept of identity. In brief: language and concepts matter in shaping society and the extent to which identities can develop depends on freedom of human groups to contest and acknowledge opposing views. Echoing the works of Gayatri Spivak,

> [n]o rigorous definition of anything is ultimately possible, so that if one want to, one could go deconstructing the opposition between man or woman [for instance], and finally show that it is a binary opposition that displaces itself. Therefore, "as a deconstructivist", I cannot recommend

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[27] For an in-depth explanation of the origins and maxims of poststructuralism see Alan Shrift, *Nietzsche French Legacy: A Genealogy of Poststructuralism* (New York & London: Rutledge, 1995).
[28] William Connolly, *Identity/Difference. Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), 64-66.

that kind of dichotomy at all, yet, I feel that definitions are necessary in order to keep us going, to allow us to take a stand.[29]

If it is accepted that the liberal conceptual confusion is one of the legacies to the discipline of international relations, it is not surprising that the discipline has paid insufficient attention to the debate already undertaken in other fields concerning the reinvigoration of alternative forms of understanding the nature of the political. Both 'the political' and 'identity' have been a central focus of debate for poststructuralist, psychoanalytic and cultural anthropological criticism. What I consider important in this project is to provide some contribution on the theoretical level that could allow liberal thinkers to be open to interpretations of world politics from perspectives outside the liberal tradition. This thesis also offers an innovative approach to identity that will hopefully provide a small yet important contribution to shift the course of the overall debate. In addition, scholars from a variety of fields within the social sciences can benefit from understanding 'the political' in the way it is presented in this dissertation for complementary analysis of competing discourses. The view developed in this thesis represents only an initial step to fulfil the mission of making the study of politics more interdisciplinary and critical. It is nevertheless, in my opinion, an important one. For no specialist can work their best with inappropriate tools, and concepts are the basic tools with which all academics (indeed, all humans) must work.

The centrality of identity in contemporary political rhetoric justifies the task of conceptualizing collective identity formation on the following grounds: 1) The urgent need to understand politics as action recaptures the important role of identity as a process in constant motion as opposed to fixed and stable. 2) International relations theory especially

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[29] Gayatary Spivak, "Bonding in Difference," in *An Other Tongue, Nation and Ethnicity in the Linguistic Borderland*, ed. Alfred Arteaga (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 520.

benefits from theorising collective identity in this way because it discloses the blurred boundaries between local and international politics, breaking down the dichotomy of inside-outside which many realists and constructivists take as a point of departure.[30] 3) Conflicting and antagonistic relations have an ontological value which provides a pivotal link between identity and difference. Nevertheless, the concept of conflict provides a useful link *only* if it is divested from its ethical correlation with hostility. These are points that emerge alongside the analysis of the existing distinctions between self/other and friend/enemy which are articulated in this work. The upshot is to elucidate the influence of ethics in our understanding of politics when it comes to describing the process of collective identity formation in relation to one 'Other'. As we shall see, this makes Schmitt's work particularly useful for the present study.

Among the various ways there are to embark on a thesis project, I have chosen a particular methodology to corroborate my hypothesis. I am particularly engaged with authors that maintain a postmodernist line of criticism towards dominant narratives. The purpose is to construct a theoretical alternative outside the liberal perspective from which liberals can also benefit. Similarly, I chose to provide a 'postmodernist' reading of Carl Schmitt[31] because his relevance for the present day lies in his insistence in retrieving politics as a truly transcendental aspect of humanity. Overall, this thesis juxtaposes two different sides of the same debate and attempts to bring this exciting discussion into one coherent investigation. My suggestions, of course, should not be taken to represent final or definitive answers to the problems that conceptual confusion inflicts on political action or

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[30] Some proponents of Realism who align with this claim are Robert Keohane, ed., *Neorealism and Its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986). See also Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 5th ed. (New York: Knopf, 1973). On the constructivist side, see Ted Hopf, "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory," *International Security* 23 (1998): 171-200.
[31] See chapter 2 for a detailed explanation of why Carl Schmitt can respond adequately to the problematic presented in this thesis.

identity. Indeed, the views presented here are equally contestable and open to change as is always the case with the temporality and historicity of concepts.

This work is restricted due to the length of the project to a detailed analysis of *The Concept of the Political* and partly to *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*. Although it can be objected that the present study does not show "the full picture" of Schmitt's work, I proceed to clarify that these works appear most relevant for theorising collective identity formation. Much less emphasis is placed on *Political Theology* or his other post-war works which I reluctantly leave underexplored. This thesis, however, leaves a door open to complement further research in the area and push it further, and subject it to critical scrutiny.

This exploration of the concepts of identity and politics is in large part a response to the emergence of numerous claims to collective identity which, under the rubric of 'identity politics,' convey an essentialist understanding of identity construction. Since identity, and particularly collective identity, is such a notoriously difficult and slippery notion to conceptualise, it is also appropriate to lay out here the groundwork on which subsequent arguments will be based. One significant difficulty with essentialist conceptions of identity is the division of collective identity into numerous categories, which in turn, proceed to be examined in isolation. This practice cannot throw accurate insights because collective identities are constituted differently in diverse historical contexts and in different locations. So, for example, a theory of identity that rests its focus of study on cultural ethnicity or religion[32] as pivotal categories for identification might reveal that such categorization in fact, represents different experiences for those groups in which the meanings attached to

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[32] An example of this type of theorizing is found in R. Sooknanan, "The politics of Essentialism: Rethinking 'Black Community'," in *Rude*: *Contemporary Black Canadian Cultural Criticism*, ed. R. Walcott (Toronto: Insomniac Press, 2000), and H. Bhabha, "Introduction: Narrating the Nation," in *Nation and Narration*, ed. H. Bhabha (New York: Routledge, 1990).

these notions are shaped by other categories like morality or language.[33] Hence, the case of a Muslim association in French-speaking Canada may experience their "being Muslim" very differently from a tribe in the Gaza Strip. This example shows that contrary to an essentialist view, "identity categories are neither stable nor internally homogenous" as Paula M. L. Moya suggests.[34] A similar point was famously made in 1971 by Alasdair MacIntyre, who argued that the experience of "pride" in Italy and Britain could not be compared in a politically 'scientific manner.'[35]

Up to this point it is not difficult to agree with Michel Kenny that "identity politics appears to violate the conditions upon which a liberal democracy can successfully encourage a single political identity through citizenship. Liberal thought considers 'identity politics' inherently problematic." The problematic faced by liberal thought is deeply compromised with the tension between liberalism and democracy, and thus intuitively linked with a conception of politics conceptually detached from identity. Yet he reveals how liberals mistakenly tie politics and identity as a phenomenon which "promotes the idea that one's membership of certain groups arises from deeply rooted cultural, biological or social processes that are beyond the volition of their individual members."[36] The kind of association that derives from cultural or other involuntary kinship is seen by liberals as a threat to developing a vibrant civil society because it *reinforces differences*[37] that are latent in social culture and contravene the kind of pluralism that liberals envisage. While the liberal objections to the politics of identity do reveal some of the subversive aspects of some of these groups' sense of identification in that ethnicity, gender or religion may lead

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[33] For a fuller account on essentialist views see Joshua A. Fishman, ed., *Language and Ethnic Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[34] Paula M. L. Moya, *Reclaiming Identity, Realist Theory and the Predicament of Postmodernism,* (Berkeley: The Univesity of California Press, 2000): 12.

[35] See Alasdair MacIntyre, 'Is a Science of Comparative Politics Possible?' in his *Against the Self-Images of the Age: Essays on Ideology and Philosophy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984).

[36] Michael Kenny, *Political Theory and The Politics of Identity* (London: Polity Press, 2004), 34.

[37] Kenny, *Political Theory,* 12.

to fundamentalist perceptions of difference, what I want to highlight is the tension existing between the terms 'identity' and 'politics' which to liberal eyes is reduced to a matter of associational proceduralism.[38]

Because it is of vital importance to maintain the concepts of identity and politics at considerable distance from each other in order to understand how conceptually associated they are, an alternate and more compelling distinction has been envisaged by Maureen Whitebrook, who makes a useful differentiation between "identity politics" and "the politics of identity". In her view, in identity politics, "identity is the ground of the political approach and hence there is an underlying presumption of given characteristics."[39] By contrast, "the politics of identity" explores the formation of identity involving the process of exclusion, "understanding identification as an active process – and hence allows that there is some choice about the characteristics of identity."[40] The views on politics and identity presented in this dissertation are more concerned with the antagonistic tension of concepts that liberals attempt to shun or conflate. This work is less concerned with analyses of cultural identities or the emergence of politics of identity *per se*. Rather, I prefer to refer to the concepts that construct both the collective subjects and the discourses in which identities become embedded as a result of political forms of antagonism.

In the coming chapter, I introduce the traditional view of politics in international relations theory. My intention is to show how influenced these traditional theories, realism and constructivism, have been by liberal thought and to what extent their analysis is compromised by such view. The upshot of this influence in both theory and practice have, I

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[38] Equally, communitarian critic Michael Walzer draws upon the principles of associanalist theory to argue that liberal thought conflates the concepts of voluntary association and civil society. See Michael Walzer, "The Civil Society Argument," in *Theorizing Citizenship*, ed. R. Beiner (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995).

[39] Maureen Whitebrook, *Identity, Politics and Narrative* (London: Routledge, 2001), 159.

[40] Alina Hosu has made this observation. See Alina Hosu, "Identity, Politics and Narrativity" (paper presented at the Second Tampere Conference on Narrative, Ideology and Myth, Finland, June 26-28, 2003), http://www.uta.fi/conference/narrative/papers/hosu.pdf (accessed on January 30th , 2005).

show, important implications for understanding collective identity formation as a political

phenomenon.