Notions of Agonism – Agonistic Pluralism in the works of Chantal Mouffe and John Gray

Abstract

A part of political theory, which considers conflict to be a constitutive feature of politics, is known under the term agonism. The aim of this thesis is to introduce two representatives of agonist theory who nevertheless don't share the same ideological basis – Chantal Mouffe and John Gray. The first part of this thesis is thus devoted to theoreticians who influenced these authors and developed ideas which can help us to easily grasp their notions of agonism. In the case of Chantal Mouffe, we find an influence of Carl Schmitt as well as the need to settle with previous marxist tradition, while liberal agonism of John Gray develops from a critical evaluation of the liberal tradition and from the consequences of value pluralism in the works on Isaiah Berlin. In the next part, this thesis will focus on arguments used by both authors in order to challenge the political theory of John Rawls and on the way in which they distance themselves from his communitarian critics. At the end of this thesis I will confront the positions of both of these authors with the intention to discover to what extent their thought results in two different conceptions of politics.