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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The crowd in the Occupy movement

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In this article, I recast Elias Canetti's notion of crowds by placing it in the framework provided by Friedrich Nietzsche's Heraclitean dialectic of Apollonian and Dionysian opposites. The argument is introduced that, in European societies, the forms of social existence are mainly Apollonian, whereas crowds are Dionysian. Along this line of reasoning, Dionysian drives, and hence crowds, tend to be marginalized in Europe's Apollonian culture. I argue that, in the liberal democracies of the Cold War era, crowds were marginalized, although they did emerge in the rock 'n' roll mania of the 1960s. West European post-Cold War, I maintain, is characterized by the collapse of liberal democracy and the rise of global capitalism. The recent financial crisis is an event that has disrupted the hegemony of global capitalism. In the context of this disruption, Occupy Wall Street (OWS) emerges as a movement in which post-modern crowds play an important part. OWS is presented as a new social movement that is Apollonian in substance, while its crowds embody and manifest a certain Dionysian vitality.

Keywords: Apollo; crowds; dialectic; Dionysus; global capitalism; liberal democracy; Occupy Wall Street; social alternatives; social movement

Introduction

Crowds have occupied an important place in sociology since the late nineteenth century, particularly when the miserable fate of uprooted factory workers became a pressing social issue in European societies. Industrialization uprooted local peasants and artisans who used to belong to local communities and turned them into industrial workers, thereby upsetting the cultural complex of Christian Europe. The traditional forms of social existence were undermined, but nothing much came to replace them; there was some kind of vacuum or chaos. The notion of the crowd, as developed in French scholarship by men like Hippolyte Taine, Gabriel Tarde, and Gustave Le Bon, tried to convey new forms of social existence, which could no longer be limited to social categories like guilds, peasantry, class, nation, or ethnicity (Stäheli 2011). Le Bon even went so far as to claim that, by the end of the nineteenth century, the modern age had become the Era of Crowds, thereby making irrationality the defining trait of a regressed modern society. There was nothing left other than crowds that were the playthings of demagogical leaders (McClelland 1989, 17–18). Most nineteenth-century scholars perceived crowds negatively, as characterizing and embodying the stupefied mind. Modern crowds were considered

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as irrational and as a permanent threat to European culture or the enlightened nation; they were the signs of a culturally regressive modern society and would eventually facilitate the totalitarian mania, taking violent forms in twentieth-century Europe (Borch 2006). Elias Canetti is the first author who introduces a notion of crowds that is not so negatively charged; on the contrary, crowds, according to Canetti, have the potential of liberating people from suffocating power structures (Borch 2009; 2012; Brighenti 2011; McClelland 1989). For Canetti (1984, 324), the crowd is characterized by a moment of discharge when its members pack together, body to body, and feel equal.

In this article, I draw on Canetti's conception of crowds in order to explore the cultural significance of crowds in European societies. However, I do more or less recast Canetti's conception by placing it in the framework provided by Friedrich Nietzsche's Heraclitean dialectic of Apollonian and Dionysian opposites, as introduced in *The birth of tragedy*. The first part of my argument is that, in European societies, the forms of social existence are mainly Apollonian, that is, fixed, intellectual, reasonable, and moderate. Crowds, on the contrary, as I reinterpret Canetti's notion, are Dionysian, that is, fluid, ecstatic, intoxicating, and lusty. Along this line of reasoning, Dionysian drives, and hence crowds, tend to be marginalized in European societies. This marginalization expresses itself in what I, in the second part of this paper, call the Apollonian reconciliation of capitalism and democracy. Such liberal democracy, which characterizes the initial period of West European post-war existence, is motivated by the Apollonian drive. Despite this reconciliation and predominantly Apollonian context, Dionysian crowds do emerge in the 1960s. Post-Cold War existence is, however, characterized by the collapse of the liberal democratic reconciliation. In this post-modern era, capitalism now assumes global dimensions and suppresses its Apollonian opposite, democracy. Even civil society becomes a capitalist instrument, which prevents the emergence and existence of crowds (in the specific sense used by Canetti). The financial crisis, however, has disrupted the hegemony of capitalism; the suppression of its democratic opposite is contested. Ironically enough, such contestation is facilitated (mediated) by the fruits of global capitalism, namely, new social media like blogging, Facebook, Twitter, smartphones, and digital cameras. That is, the crisis of global capitalism triggers new directions for crowds. The emerging post-modern crowds are crowds that express their resistance to global capitalist powers all around the world and, through the use of new social media, manage to make their presence real for distant spectators (cf. Manoukian 2010; Baker 2011). In the final part, Occupy Wall Street is presented as a new social movement in which post-modern crowds play a vital role.

The idea of crowds as Dionysian frenzies

In *The birth of tragedy*, Nietzsche (2000) introduces a Heraclitean vision of reality, one in which the strife between opposite drives – Apollonian and Dionysian – defines social existence (Ossewaarde 2010). Apollo is the god of Delphi, of light and dream, who excites the eye and gives vision. According to Nietzsche, the painter, the sculptor, and the epic poet are typical manifestations of Apollonian frenzy. Dionysus is the god of wine, fertility, lustiness, vitality, tribal ecstasy, intoxication, and hysteria, who gives discharge and metamorphosis. The musician and the tragic poet are manifestations of Dionysian frenzy; music, for Nietzsche, is an original echo of

pain, being the expression of the inner essence of the Heraclitean flux of being torn to pieces (Nietzsche 2000, 21–2, 58–60). According to Nietzsche, ‘truth’ is a moment when the two opposites are reconciled in a fraternal bond, when Dionysus speaks the language of Apollo and Apollo speaks the language of Dionysus, without the one dominating, repressing, or annihilating the other. The encounter between the Dionysian drive, which goes hand in hand with drunken lustiness, transgression, and fatal misjudgment, and the Apollonian drive to reason, order, just limits, and structure is tragic. The Dionysian characters, such as Oedipus, Zarathustra, or Nietzsche’s ‘good European’, refuse to accept the limits drawn by Apollo, transgress these limits, fight against misfortune, but finally succumb to their cruel fate, and mystically abandon their selves (Nietzsche 2000, 24; Szokolczai 2007). Nietzsche’s chief criticism of Euripides’ poetry is that he, in contrast with Aeschylus and Sophocles, subverts the original significance of the Dionysian essence of tragedy for Apollonian rationality or Socratic irony (Ossewaarde 2010).

European societies, cultural complexes in which reason plays an important role in ordering chaotic realities, can arguably be called Apollonian or anti-Dionysian (Maffesoli 2004, 203; Ossewaarde 2010). The European values – reason, ordered freedom, democracy, rule of law, justice – are Apollonian forms that originate in the post-tribal structures of the city-state. These city-state values are most radically represented by the figure of Socrates, the great Apollonian hero, who, according to Nietzsche, personifies the *decadence* of European culture. Decadence, Nietzsche explains, springs from fighting the vital instincts, that is, from the aversion to the affects, beauty, sensuality, life itself. Inspired by Apollonian frenzy, Socrates denies the body and fights his bodily instincts – instincts that, in Nietzsche’s view, constitute the very essence of life – through an over-development of his intellectual abilities and irony. Nietzsche judges Socrates as the Dionysian artist (like Aeschylus and Sophocles) would do, that is, from the perspective of the one who embraces chaotic life (Nietzsche 2000, 5); and he concludes that the Socratic enterprise, which promotes the examined life to the point that ‘the unexamined life is not worth living’ (as Socrates declared at his trial), is hostile to life. By preferring another life, better life, to the horrific, fearful, and irrational of reality, Socrates refuses the abundance of existence and, hence, flees from the (tragic) truth of human existence. Throughout all historical eras of European cultural development, Dionysian drives have been controlled in disenchanting, rational, or Apollonian forms that are instituted by powers to stop unending Heraclitean fluxes of uncontrolled transformation. Such forms include state, dialogue, church, university, monastery, commune, guild, contract, voluntary association, bureaucracy, publics, projects, technology, market, electoral systems, democracy, civil society, concentration camps, and so forth. For Nietzsche, Apollonian forms are arbitrary fixations of reality that undermine the flourishing of European culture. Apollonian forms, for him, are symptoms of failing strength, of the tiredness of life (Nietzsche 2000, 93).

In his *Attempt at self-criticism*, written 14 years after the first edition of *The birth of tragedy*, Nietzsche (2000, 5, 9) criticizes his own work. In his view, *The birth of tragedy* suffers from two major shortcomings. Firstly, the young Nietzsche was still under the spell of Schopenhauer’s pessimism, mistakenly identifying Schopenhauer as a Dionysian philosopher. In his self-criticism, Nietzsche explains that Schopenhauer’s pessimist claim that life can offer no real satisfaction, and does not merit devotion, points to resignation, which, he emphasizes, is profoundly anti-Dionysian. The Dionysian, Nietzsche insists, is no pessimist but fully embraces life,

saying yes to life, even to being torn to pieces (like Oedipus or any Dionysian tragic hero). The second, and, for Nietzsche, more important point of self-criticism, is that *The birth of tragedy*, which was written during the Franco-Prussian War and the foundation of the German state, expresses a certain hope in the new Germany ‘where there was nothing to hope for’ (Nietzsche 2000, 10). Nietzsche, of course, never placed his hope in Bismarck or the German state, but he placed his hope in the Dionysian artist and the Dionysian festival. That is, he had placed his hope in the music of Richard Wagner and the Bayreuth festival, as a German variant of ancient Athens’ Great Dionysia, while the latter, as Nietzsche later realized, was profoundly anti-Dionysian, being ‘romantic through and through’ (Nietzsche 2000, 11). In later works, Nietzsche would tirelessly criticize German, or Prussian, culture and its key intellectual representatives (Kant, Hegel) as anti-Dionysian. In the *Twilight of the idols*, Nietzsche (1990) re-emphasizes that he is ‘the last disciple of the philosopher Dionysus’ (p. 120), who teaches recurrence and celebrates human existence as the tragic joy of becoming, both in (re)creation and painful destruction.

Whether one should agree with Nietzsche’s devastating critique of Apollonian culture and the Apollonian type of rationality does not matter too much here; there is some degree of clear-sightedness in what he says. What is relevant for my purpose is that crowds are not Apollonian forms, but are, as Michel Maffesoli (1996, 28) insists, very much Dionysian entities. In European societies, as J.S. McClelland (1989) and Clark McPhail (1991) narrate, crowds have typically been delegitimized as irrational, hysterical, barbarian, tribal, mad, hypnotic, lusty, identity-less. For Plato, the great critic of the Dionysian instinct, the crowd is a lawless horde, a superstitious and tyrannical mob that is ruled by popular leaders, sophistries, and flatterers. The crowd is barbaric and potentially savage. For Tacitus, the crowd, in the early Roman Empire, is sated with gladiator shows, circuses, and spectacles. The crowd lives in a fantasy world in which the rational order (that is, the political order of the Roman Republic) is turned upside-down. In Christian Europe, the Church contains the crowd, and aims at keeping the unruliness of both the clergy and lay Christians under strict rational control. For the Enlightenment movement, crowds are unenlightened, ruled by myth and hypnotic demagogues, rather than by reason and science. For Hippolyte Taine, the crowd is a permanent threat to the European values – values that he sees primarily represented in the power structures of the nation-state. Gabriel Tarde points out how the crowd is ruled by fear, is simple-minded and single-minded. Gustave le Bon sees the crowd as stupid and immoral, having no sense of human dignity and no respect of individual persons. Similar negative, fundamentally Apollonian (from classicist, enlightenment, and romanticist traditions), views of the crowd – crowds as the enemies of the European values – have been expressed by José Ortega y Gasset and David Riesman.

Against this background, it is noteworthy that Elias Canetti portrays crowds as a positive force (Brighenti 2011; Borch 2012, 242; McClelland 1989; Mack 1999). Although Canetti does not share Nietzsche’s jargon and does not at all share Nietzsche’s philosophical project or longing for ‘the good European’ (Szakolczai 2007), he does articulate a powerful critique of what may be called ‘Apollonian domination’ – a disenchanting repression of mysterious, mythical, enchanting, incomprehensible, transformative, and uncontrollable frenzies in and through rational forms (particularly, as Christian Borch (2009) notes, the repression of sexuality). Even the Socratic dialogue is, for Canetti (1984, 288), a power structure in which Socrates dominates through his questions. This reminds us of Nietzsche’s

'problem of Socrates'. Canetti considers the Apollonian forms, including the Socratic dialogue, in terms of command. Apollonian forms are instituted by commands. The command, for Canetti (1984, 333), is 'the most dangerous single element in the social life of mankind', because it is deadening. According to Canetti (1984, 281), power eats, seizes, incorporates and kills; commands are like 'death sentences'. In Nietzschean jargon, the command undermines the will to life, it makes people tired of life; it destroys Dionysian vitality. Canetti (1984, 18) points out how, in Apollonian forms, 'burdens of distance' are instituted, in the form of distinct ranks, status distinctions, property, categories, social patterns, conceptual distinctions (such as rationality–irrationality, knowledge–belief, science–myth, ideas–empirical reality, public–private), and so forth. Apollonian forms create distance, and accordingly, undermine vitality; they drain the vitality of human bodies by isolating them from each other.

Crowds, for Canetti, are a refuge from commands and their Apollonian forms. In crowds, individuals lose themselves, get absorbed, and, in this way, are able (temporarily) to escape commands and their forms. The crowd, for Canetti, is the affirmation of, and mediation between, bodies; the indescribable sensation of bodies pressed against each other, melting together, is very much Dionysian (Mack 1999). True vitality, Canetti asserts, can only be found in the crowd when people allow their Dionysian drives to rule, and forget, in all their frenzy and feverish excitement, the distinctions that separate them. They temporarily overcome their fear of being touched (Borch 2009; Brighenti 2010; Canetti 1984, 15). Through their immanent fluidity, crowds escape Apollonian distinctions; yet, they possess a force peculiar to them, one that eludes and negates fixed forms. In their negation of deadening rational forms, Canetti notes, crowds can be violent, driven by a passion to destroy. But crowds not only negate but also transcend: they pave the ways for new alternatives without being able to define these. Such a definition would necessitate forms that they cannot provide. Music and dance, rather than argumentation, are the typical expressions of crowds. This formless nature is the reason why crowds cannot endure. Crowds must be understood as periodic bursts of Dionysian energy or impulse, emerging relatively spontaneously during festivals, revolts, protests, or uprisings (Maffesoli 1996). Crowds, indeed, are temporary. As soon as the tide of the crowd withdraws, individuals go back to their separate worlds. Alienated individuals in the grip of all kinds of domesticating Apollonian forms are what remain after the momentary euphoric discharges (Brighenti 2010).

For Canetti, crowds are the antithesis of commands and Apollonian forms. Crowds are not related to command apparatuses but, on the contrary, are an alternative to power and leadership. Crowds are not mindless or irrational and individuals are not driven mad by crowds (McPhail 1991); yet, the rationality of crowds is not Apollonian and cannot be organized in forms. Crowds have the potential to open up new Dionysian visions of a formless, transformative, and indefinite counter-world, a flux of heated moments and fragments, in which latent social alternatives become manifest (Brighenti 2011; Mack 2005). Poets in particular play a role in crowds. The poets of the crowd inspire radical reimaginings, new ways of addressing the universe, thereby paving the way for a new social order (Borch 2012, 25; Boyer 2012, 49–50). Yet, not every gathering of individuals can be called a crowd. For Canetti (1984, 16, 20), only the 'open crowd' is the real or 'natural' or 'true crowd'. A true crowd is characterized by its spontaneous growth, equality, density, and a sense of direction. A true crowd originates from small

numbers of people and, through coming together, grows relatively spontaneously. At the same time, there is no limit to the growth of crowds; and, given the Dionysian character of crowds, no limit to growth is recognized (Canetti 1984, 16). Canetti contrasts the true crowd with the ‘closed crowd’, which is an organized group designed to prevent or postpone the crowd’s inevitable dissolution. Canetti’s closed crowd resembles José Ortega y Gasset’s ‘masses’, namely, a power mobilized by leaders who are able to generate the belief in the power of large numbers (Stäheli 2011). Open crowds turn into closed crowds as soon as they get a leader and feel powerful; they are then incorporated into alternative power structures.

Liberal democracy as an Apollonian unity of opposites

In order to defeat mass mania and its populist or totalitarian implications that had characterized much of twentieth-century Europe, Apollonian scholars like Hermann Broch and C. Wright Mills advocated ‘total democracy’ and ‘radical democracy’ (Borch 2006; Ossewaarde 2011). In West European societies, however, ‘liberal democracy’ arose after the Second World War as the political form in which the opposites of democracy and capitalism were reconciled in a dialectical unity (Brown 2003). Democracy, to borrow Abraham Lincoln’s definition, refers to the government of the people, by the people, and for the people; hence the construction of a people that is the political actor is the main democratic challenge. Capitalism, despite divergent definitions, can be understood as the urge for accumulating private property and the free exchange of labor, regulated by individual rights rather than community bonds and traditions (McCloskey 2006, 14). Capitalism is an economic system that promotes market forms in which production and prices are determined by competition. An entrepreneurial culture is the main capitalist motivation, which may clash with the demands of democracy. Liberal democracy is a rational form that reconciles democratic life and market existence: it encodes, reflects, and legitimates capitalist relations, while simultaneously resisting, countering, and tempering them (Brown 2003). In liberal democracies, the political and economic challenges are to transform people into citizens and into workers respectively; this also implies checking totalitarian and populist alternative forms, including communism, fascism, and political and religious fanaticism. Totalitarianism, as the term says it, is a political form that is enabled by demagoguery; it relies on certain base desires, in order to establish an all-encompassing system that does not tolerate social alternatives.

In liberal democracies, nationalism and liberalism are the main ideological forms that are meant to transform people into citizens and workers. For a nationalist like Le Bon, the nation represents the highest rational form. Crowds, in his view, are the opposites of nations. According to Le Bon, crowds are a regressive element within the nation. The nation, in particular its elites, represents rationality and progress, whereas the crowd represents mania and regress. Nationalism, Le Bon notes, develops in the Era of Crowds: the challenge of nationalism is to reduce crowds to something manageable, to subject them to strong leadership in order to curb the danger of uncontrollable hordes (Borch 2009; Brighenti 2010; 2011). Instead of Le Bon’s nationalist solution, liberalism seeks to split crowds by promoting individual autonomy and through the distribution of individual rights. For a liberal like David Riesman (Riesman, Glazer, and Denney 1950), crowds and individual autonomy are opposites that cannot be reconciled. In the ‘lonely crowd’, atomized individuals lose their autonomy, their explorative or entrepreneurial spirit, their inner-directedness,

and become empty, anomic, alienated, and nihilistic, to the point that their conduct is governed by extrinsic motivations like flattery and the opinions of others (Riesman, Glazer, and Denney 1950). In sum, crowds pose a problem for liberal democracies. According to liberal thinkers, contested by those who hold positive views of crowds (Canetti 1984; Coleman and Blumer 2011; McPhail 1991; Oliver 1989; Schweingruber and Wohlstein 2005), crowds undermine Apollonian flourishing in the form of nationhood and liberal individualism.

In Europe's liberal democracies, civil society is the rational form through which democracy and capitalism are reconciled. Civil society can be defined as a form of existence located outside the family, state, and the market, where people, emancipated from their communities, realize common interests, ideals, values, or identities in voluntary, contractual, and associational relationships (Ossewaarde 2006). As a democratic institution, civil society is, at least potentially, an extra-parliamentary force of movement activism that can potentially check, through forms of resistance and the exercise of counter-power, the excesses of the power structures of liberal democracy (state, bureaucracy, market, large firm, and so forth) (Beck 1997; Honneth 1995). The American civil rights movement of the 1960s, for instance, presented itself as an extra-parliamentary power in civil society. The American civil rights movement was an Apollonian force embedded in the power structures of civil society. The movement was not a sudden and impulsive outburst but, instead, as Francesca Polletta (2006) writes, it was a planned, well-organized, and well-executed demand for civil rights. Crowds, by contrast, although they can be an element of social movements (social movements typically organize crowd events like demonstrations) upset the Apollonian foundations of civil society. Crowds seek liberation from liberal democratic forms, which is manifested in agitation, formlessness, relief, dismemberment, intensive and bodily existence.

The rock 'n' roll mania of the 1960s can be considered as a crowd phenomenon. Suzanne Smith (2010) asserts that the rock'n' roll mania of the 1960s was a Dionysian spectacle of crowds swinging back and forth their bodies and voicing their protests through their bodies. The rock'n' roll mania broke down hierarchies, inequalities, civil distances, and distinctions established in liberal democracies; and they opened up egalitarian solidarity dreams of alternative worlds of liberation, venturing into the unknown (often therein supported by alcohol and drugs). Such crowds, though they emerge in liberal democracies, counter the ideological substance of the latter. Crowds contest the rationality of the national elites and undermine the very premises of liberalism, unionism, and parliamentarianism. William Roy (2010) suggests that when the civil rights movement turned musical, with activists singing and playing freedom songs in their marches and protests, Apollonian and Dionysian opposites were actually reconciled. In the musical turn of the movement, Apollonian distinctions between performer and audience, content and form, were abandoned. The discharge of the rock 'n' roll mania helped the civil rights movement bridge the most intractable differences (of class and race) and social boundaries of forms.

Civil society has not only a democratic but also a capitalist side. In West European societies, civil society typically assumes the form of socio-economic associations (labor unions, employer associations, labor parties, capitalist parties). These are meant to reconcile the forces of capital and labor, through negotiations, contracts, ombudsman, and so forth. In liberal democracies, labor unions typically have the legal right to start a strike with a view to compelling employers to recognize and negotiate with labor unions to establish new labor agreements or to promote a

vision of structural change in capital–labor relationships. For labor unions, the strike is a rational form, a pressure instrument that may be used in negotiations with employer associations. In crowds, on the other hand, the strike assumes a Dionysian, festival-like, character. In the crowd, the concrete demands in a strike are far less important than the discharge of the moment that the strike offers. The strike comes to be experienced as a release from managerial command structures, a refusal to continue to do what, until then, workers had been commanded (Canetti 1984, 55). Canetti (1984, 56) points out how workers, as a crowd, feel the relief at the very beginning of the strike, when they share, body to body, the moment of common refusal to obey commands. The moment of standstill in production is the crowd’s moment of discharge, typically celebrated in workers’ songs. Such is the significance of the strike for crowds, as contrasted with unions, which are rational forms.

In Europe’s liberal democracies, the welfare state is the Apollonian form that takes care of the work-force. Morris Janowitz (1977, 105–6) notes that ‘the welfare state is an extension of the main lines of liberal democracy that are embodied in the political aspirations of the Western nation-state’. The welfare state, Janowitz explains, is a political strategy designed for achieving the reconciliation of the opposites, democracy and capitalism. Protest and resistance become organized through institutionalized negotiation of wages, income, and welfare claims, so that dissatisfaction and desires for changes are tempered, without the risks of riots and violent mobs (Janowitz 1977, 83). In the welfare state, crowds are less likely to grow or to persist. Labor unions and protest associations come to accept the existing power structures, in return for social policies favorable to liberal democratic development. Those who find more depth in Dionysian frenzies than in Apollonian drives are, of course, critical of liberal democracy. For Nietzsche, liberal democracy is a deadening political form that undermines the instincts and makes people small, cowardly, hedonistic, and domesticated. Canetti (1984, 466) criticizes liberal democracy for being more anxious to protect welfare, consumption, and economic growth than for creating a democratic people or citizenry. Slavoj Žižek (2008) points out that, in liberal democracies, democracy typically means government of, for, and by, the elite, excluding workers and under-productive social forces.

The global capitalist transgression

The moment of ‘1989’, the year in which the Berlin Wall falls, the Soviet Union withdraws its Red Army from Afghanistan, and the World Bank introduces its concept of good governance, is widely considered as one of the victories of liberal democracy over its totalitarian alternatives (Hope 2011; Ossewaarde 2011). Francis Fukuyama (1989) announces ‘the end of history’: liberal democracy has triumphed and its viable alternatives are exhausted. With the collapse of the communist bloc, capitalism is the only social alternative left for organizing societies. As a result, capitalism not only globalizes, that is, accumulation of capital not only comes to be organized across the boundaries of liberal democratic states, but it also increases in force vis-à-vis its democratic counterpart. The liberal democratic form of existence is upset when capitalism comes to dominate democracy (Brown 2003). Jean-Marie Guéhenno (1993) announces, with regret, ‘the end of democracy’ in the global era. As Henry Giroux puts it (2011, 592), the liberal democratic reconciliation breaks down when ‘the realm of democratic politics shrinks and is turned over to market forces’. The power structure of democracy, which relies on ‘the people’, undergoes

deep and irreversible mutations. Rather than government of, for, and by the people, political life becomes economic life, that is, the government of, for, and by the power of capital forces, which now come to operate on a worldwide scale.

In the global era, neo-liberalism is the ideology that is meant to re-engineer the nation-state, so as to equip it with the powers to transform people into consumers and workers (Wacquant 2012). In neo-liberal states, political (or democratic) questions are subordinated to the demands of the world market (Giroux 2011). The world market, rather than the state or democracy, is the ultimate rational form (Crouch 2011). The power structures of the world market, including World Bank, IMF, WTO, credit rating agencies, and so forth, owe their subsistence to their capacity to neutralize, subjugate, or possess 'old' forms like the nation, state, church, national or local bureaucracy, legal rights and legal systems, or any other form that might be an obstacle to the creation of a form of unconstrained global capitalism (Brown 2003; Harvey 2005; Hope 2011). Not only such forms but also the crowd is a plague that cannot be tolerated in the world market. The world market or, more precisely, its political and corporate elites represent economic rationality and technological progress, whereas the crowd phenomenon represents the irrationality of chaos, thugs, obstruction, and destruction.

When capitalism divorces from democracy, civil society is no longer a democratic, extra-parliamentary force that balances executive power through dialogue, protest, and resistance, but is instead enclosed in neo-liberal power structures. In such a context, civil society protest and resistance are too expensive, too inefficient, that is, are an obstacle to the functioning of world markets. In some cases, civil rights come under attack. Global capitalism neither demands nor allows much more than continuous consumption and labor within corporate structures without openings. Such near-absence of extra-parliamentary space and the corresponding impoverishment of democratic discourse make it difficult to imagine social alternatives to global capitalism. As the democratic capacities of people are numbed, populist demagogies tend to spread (cf. Smith 2010). Likewise, the anti-globalization movement, which has developed as grassroots opposition to neo-liberalism, has found limited democratic space for negating and transcending global capitalist forms. Violent forms of protest develop, frontally attacking and destroying the power structures (particularly its symbols, such as the World Trade Centre, World Economic Forum, IMF, World Bank, and WTO and G8 summits) of global capitalist forms.

In global capitalist society, the capital-labor relationship mutates. Unionism is perceived as an unnecessary obstacle to the higher and more rational purposes of the world market form. The adversary unions tend to become converted into an ally, willingly or unwillingly, of capital forces (cf. Crouch 2011, 23); indeed, even labor unions and parties have come to accept global capitalism as the only possibility, even if they strive to humanize certain tendencies. Hence, neo-liberalism is embraced by a broad ideological spectrum, including the left (Brown 2003). In the meanwhile, workers no longer experience that they are being represented by what used to be labor associations. It is hardly surprising that these disillusioned workers have become the perfect preys of populist politicians. Christopher Lasch (1995) warns about the trampling of both citizens and workers by the neo-liberal elites that engineer a bourgeois revolution – divorcing capitalism from democracy – from above: political commitment, democratic challenges, and solidarities with workers are no neo-liberal concerns. The estrangement between neo-liberal elites on the one

hand, and citizens and workers on the other, manifests itself, for instance, in transgressions of salary norms and strict separation between financial considerations and any moral consciousness. In the UK, the High Pay Commission reports that, in 2011, the top pay in a bank like Barclays is 169 times more than the average worker in Britain, whereas in 1980 (under liberal democratic conditions) this was 13 times the average.

In global capitalist societies, the welfare state primarily aims at facilitating the operation of world markets (Ossewaarde 2011). The neo-liberal welfare state exists less for the people, which is perceived to be self-sustaining, and much more to the only legitimate end of worldwide capital accumulation (Giroux 2011). The 'people' is no longer a concrete democratic (political) entity, but is perceived and approached as a collection of economic actors. Under global capitalist conditions, the welfare state has been restyled to contribute to the capitalist goal of global competitiveness, through austerity measures, reduced social rights, self-responsibility for welfare, consumer choice in social services, revisions in the tax code to benefit returns on investments (rather than incomes and wages), sales tax, imposition of user fees, and tax breaks to corporations. The welfare state becomes yet another instrument of global capitalism, and comes to share the political aspirations of global governance agencies, which include inflation control and sound public finances; full employment and workers' protection are implicitly assumed to be spontaneous phenomena (Harvey 2005, 164). In this new social contract, democratic citizens are redefined as service consumers and clients, while welfare agencies (schools, hospitals, employment agencies, and so forth) become service providers. Social services are redesigned to respond to consumer choices (very much influenced by several actors); citizen participation becomes redefined as the participation in the new power structures. Any rupture in this new system, in which everyone and everything has been made an ally, is hard to imagine; till the system collapses.

Occupy Wall Street as a Dionysian frenzy

In 2007, a credit crunch turned into the worst financial crisis since the 1930s and has not yet disappeared in 2012; on the contrary, the crisis has deepened and seems to perpetuate itself in European societies. The crisis can be considered as the painful self-confrontation of global capitalism, but then without the prospect of a viable social alternative. That the pain, the experience of personal degradation, is worse for the ones who have been enclosed in the system than for the ones who have been pulling the strings has now been confirmed several times (Giroux 2011). The crisis, triggered by high-risk investment and speculation (expert gambling), technically complex financial products (like hedge funds), corruption, irresponsible incentive structures, and debt-masking tactics, has shaken global capitalist forms. Financial institutions like Lehman Brothers and Icesave have collapsed, banks have been bailed out by governments; markets have collapsed, real estate bubbles have burst, and unemployment does not seem to be declining (Hope 2011). European economies have plunged into a sovereign debt crisis, whereby several governments that had borrowed excessively (and irresponsibly) find themselves in an impasse, being incapable of repaying their national debts to global investors and to refinance their debts; and, of course, the Euro is dancing on a thin line.

Wayne Hope (2011, 104) observes that 'worsening global-economic conditions triggered the sense that history had changed'. There is a sense that the era of global

capitalism has come, or at least, ought to come, to its end; the supremacy of the neo-liberal ideology is increasingly contested by non-leftists. After the revelation of the scandals of Enron, Worldcom, and Arthur Andersen, the phone-tapping scandal of News of the World, bonus scandals, and after the loss of homes, jobs, pensions, future, and hope, the world market is no longer considered to be a benign form that works best for humanity without democratic forces (cf. Brown 2003). John Clarke (2011, 377) notes that ‘the perceived magic of markets’ is gone in growing disenchantment, mistrust, and disbelief, accompanied by worsened future prospects and increasing income inequalities. Clarke points out how neo-liberal elites are desperately acting to restore the magic by strengthening the rational forms of global capitalism (better regulation, more monitoring, more codes of conduct); yet, as he stresses, neo-liberalism has lost its enchanting power. Neo-liberalism promised inexpensive government, prospects for work and consumption, and good governance, but the financial crisis has shown that these are a bundle of illusions. The actual experience of global capitalist society contradicts the principles of neo-liberalism (cf. Sorel 1976, 131). Workers and consumers experience the abuse of the corporate power of giant firms; the rational forms of global capitalism have lost their semi-sacred aura. The financial world is increasingly perceived as a post-modern royal court, in which the bankers are the autocrats. Madmen, driven by greed, who talk via money, have come to rule the world that has turned irrational, hysterical, carnal, vulgar, brutal, and cruel (Giroux 2011).

In this context of crumbling certainties and hopes, post-modern movements, such as Wikileaks and Anonymous, have developed, to occupy, often virtually and globally, the extra-parliamentary space that has been widely appropriated by global capitalist forms. Occupy Wall Street (OWS) is a movement that tries to recapture lost democratic space, or, at least, it is expressing the decades-long broiling uneasiness about such an absence. Naomi Klein (2012) presents OWS as a social movement that is closely associated with the anti-globalization movement, in the sense that OWS includes many experienced organizers from that (Roberts 2012). As a movement, OWS promotes an Apollonian ideal of democracy which it contrasts with the neo-liberal ideal. OWS explicitly presents itself as democratizers, as having a level of moral culture superior to that of the 1% (the financial barons) who is seen as the main culprits; and such a story seems to have received widespread popular support. By protesting against the non-democratic character of global capitalist forms (especially the large firm), the Occupy movement also expresses its resistance to the neo-liberal reconciliation of capital and labor, which, in its views, has led to the prevailing crises. OWS protests against youth unemployment, the dramatic increase in middle-class and student indebtedness, heightened inequality, diminished supply of social goods, and the rise of plutocracy (Roberts 2012). In many places like Spain, England, Greece, Italy, Iceland, and Ireland, Occupy protesters have emerged from on-going protests against elites who are accused of implementing neo-liberal policies and austerity measures that would satisfy financial markets rather than the people. As a movement, OWS, like the Arab Spring movement, which was a source of inspiration for OWS, makes use of available networks and new technologies, including Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, mobile phones, and SMS texting. Such structures (OWS Structure Working groups (Roberts 2012)) enable it to organize, recruit, petition, debate, express its grievances. OWS has chosen its organizational forms (highly decentralized), which include campaign organization and working groups, it has implemented a schedule of regimentation, and it provides its

demonstrators with standards of conduct and eject rule-breakers, as it is committed to civil and democratic protest. As a movement, OWS has a certain degree of ideological substance and standardized critique of the power structures of the world market. This ideology is typically, but not exclusively, a collection of leftist ideologies, which some global capitalist elites have branded as ‘communist’.

OWS is a social movement. It is planned and well-organized and has a certain resemblance with the new social movements of the 1960s. One of the distinguishing features of OWS, as contrasted with, say, the Anonymous movement of Wikileaks, is its crowds, which define much of the (Dionysian) character of OWS (Sgambati 2012). The very foundation and development of OWS, its rapid growth, as Canetti informs, is typical for crowds. The OWS movement emerged quite spontaneously in Liberty Square New York on 17 September 2011; two weeks later, the movement, facilitated by experienced movement organizers of crowd events (such as mass demonstrations) and new social media, had developed in no less than 900 cities around the world. Urs Stäheli (2011, 76) notes that crowds ‘elude any logic of origin and foundation [...] Crowds obey no law of causality but instead present a spectacle considered miraculous: the creation of a new social entity out of dispersed elements’. This relative spontaneity and spectacular newness also seems to apply to OWS, which, in its early stages, makes it an open crowd. OWS crowds overflowed from some well-guarded spaces (typically the places close to the stock exchanges, such as Exchange Square in Amsterdam, Zuccotti Park in New York, St Paul’s in London, or Stock Exchange Square in Paris) into the squares of cities (Syntagma Square in Athens, the City Hall Square in Copenhagen, Alexander Square in Berlin, or the Gate of the Sun Square in Madrid). In the squares, crowds can move about freely, exposing themselves to everything and attracting everyone in the urge for growth, which, as Canetti (1984, 22) notes, is typical for crowds.

An important crowd feature of OWS is its establishment of tent encampments. In these tents, bodies are pressed to bodies, and the fear of being touched disappears. In tents, the crowd is able to be a crowd: in tents, all who belong to the crowd get rid of their differences and feel equal and free themselves from the burdens of civil distance and hierarchy. Also, encampments, typically placed in the areas of financial centers, signify the mobility of Occupy crowds, as well as their endurance, which is expressed in the rapid growth of tent encampments and their bodily presence and mobility. To express its presence, OWS has adopted the mythological Guy Fawkes mask, which is taken from the revolutionary hero of David Lloyd and Alan Moore’s graphic novel *V for Vendetta* and the subsequent 2006 film directed by James McTeigue (Merrifield 2012, 11). Canetti (1984, 373–7) notes that it is far from uncommon that crowds adopt masks. The Dionysian crowds of ancient Greece, for instance, adopted the satyr mask, typically in dances. Masks, Canetti explains, signal being masked, creating a new figure that enforces a distance between the crowd and the commands it seeks to resist. The Guy Fawkes mask not only expresses but also hides a secrecy and Dionysian mystery, to the point that the mask fascinates and may perhaps even inspire awe, terror, or a sense of danger. The Guy Fawkes mask affirms phantom-faced defiance of big business powers (Merrifield 2012). Power holders, Canetti points out, seek to unmask, to uncover what is mysteriously hidden behind the mask. With tents and masks, Occupy crowds can transgress the limits, the distance, imposed and enforced by the Apollonian forms of global capitalist society.

Canetti (1984, 19) emphasizes that crowds are not civil or democratic entities. Crowds have a Dionysian distaste for forms, including civil and democratic forms,

which deaden its vitality and creativity. Crowds aim at transforming the impersonal objects of a form into life's content, into strong instincts. A crowd's conception of freedom is not liberal, civil, or democratic: it is Dionysian. And indeed, although the OWS as a movement pursues democratic ideals, the OWS crowds that emerged in urban spaces made no rights claims. As crowds, OWS is anti-parliamentarian and anti-unionism, as it has no confidence in political establishments or established forms (cf. Borch 2012, 37), OWS crowds made no claims and did not negotiate: they just affirmed themselves as crowds vis-à-vis the powers of global capitalist forms (Merrifield 2012). Some OWS crowds have affirmed their presence violently, engaging in rioting activities that the OWS movement never intended. In Rome and in Oakland, but also in other cities, OWS crowds on the street manifested themselves as 'war packs' (Canetti 1984, 99), fighting moneyed interests, corrupt capitalists, and politicians through the destruction of the representational forms of global capitalism, including private property. Disrupting traffic, vandalizing cars and businesses, and spreading public disorder constituted OWS crowds' transgression of boundaries, an outburst of accumulated fury (Roberts 2012). The line between a gang of rioters (say, the London riots 2011) and an Occupy crowd manifesting its Dionysian frenzy is at times blurry. However, not only OWS crowds but also the rational forms they have tried to resist have at times turned violent. Police forces have used tear gas, flash-bang grenades, pepper spray, and they have arrested, taken protestors into custody, etc., to break up OWS crowds to re-establish Apollonian forms (the grandeur of the neo-liberal penal state, in Loïc Wacquant's words). On 15 November 2011, police forces, acting on the authority of Mayor Michael Bloomberg, broke up OWS camps in Zuccotti Park, the global center of the OWS movement, using shields, fists, clubs, and tear gas (Boyer 2012). The response of the neo-liberal penal state forms adds to OWS feeling of being persecuted, which makes the crowd resemble 'a besieged city' (Canetti 1984, 23). Canetti (1984, 22) stresses that this collective feeling is a striking trait of the inner life of the crowd, 'a peculiar angry sensitiveness and irritability directed against those it has once and forever nominated as enemies'.

However much new vital energy or hope for a revitalized human existence OWS crowds on the street might inspire, they are unlikely to be the forces that create the conditions for the negation of the financial crisis or for the transcendence of global capitalist forms of existence. OWS crowds can be considered as Dionysian frenzies that contest the neo-liberal ideology and the deadening power structures of large firms. Yet, precisely because crowds utter sounds of alternative, formless, and indefinite counter-worlds, their influences are not lasting. Crowds are essentially against commands that are obstacles to the free release of Dionysian vitality; but such resistance is also temporary, since crowds are also fleeting phenomena of transformative moments. The crowds of the OWS movement are momentary liberations from powers. They are energized by the spirit of the moment: they do not long for the power and the rational forms that they are resisting. OWS crowds on the street are not concerned with seizing power, but seek disengagement from the Apollonian market rationality of global capitalism (Merrifield 2012, 8). The creation and re-creation of social existence involve commands (which OWS crowds cannot deliver), if it is to deserve its name. However much deadening, and often cruel, commands might be – commands leave painful stings in the person who is forced to carry them out (Canetti 1984, 58) – there can be no enduring social life without commands. Alasdair Roberts (2012, 760), therefore, concludes in a somewhat disenchanting manner that 'the Occupy movement briefly flourished'.

Concluding remarks

The fact that crowds have the potential to enchant or re-enchant (Maffesoli 1996, 28) does not yet make them the source for the transformation of social constellations, which involves not only Dionysian but also commands and hence rational forms. Fluid (Dionysian) reality has to be formed if people are to be enabled to live human lives; the democratic (Apollonian) challenge is to determine a form that does not reify social existence in rational forms and that does not issue commands that are all too deadening (which is the key problem of neo-liberalism). Only in crowds, that is, in open crowds, Canetti (1984, 324) explains, ‘no-one has a right to give commands to anyone else’, which is, for him, the meaning of all feeling equal – a key feature of crowds. Crowds do not want to take control of rational forms like democracy, rights, or representation: the will of crowds is growth, vitality, density, equality, physical discharge, standing together, body to body, tongues getting together, chanting, clapping, dancing, reciting poems (Manoukian 2010). This makes a crowd analytically distinct from a social movement. OWS, as it has manifested itself in the first months of its existence, is a movement with a strong crowd element, with the movement organizing a worldwide variety of crowd events. The OWS movement has manifested a certain reconciliation of Apollonian and Dionysian frenzies. Vitality, the feeling of being persecuted, the Guy Fawkes mask, tent encampments, and music have been used, by campaigners, within organized protests itself, especially in marches and in the use of social media. Activists thereby managed to abandon conventional distinctions between performer and audience, content and form – the Dionysian frenzy helped bridge distinctions and boundaries, the alienating burdens of distance (cf. Roy 2010).

The ideas and ideals of OWS are the ideas and ideals of a social movement. In OWS crowds, such ideas and ideals lose their meaning: it is the discharge from strings that matters in crowds. Occupy crowds use or create mythologies, poems, music, theatre and dance, in which vital energy is at work to reawaken fantasies, liberate the imagination, and, occasionally, trigger an orgy of violence. This is not to say that crowds are mindless or less important than Apollonian forms. Clark McPhail (1991), who is sympathetic to crowds, points out that thinkers that have all too strongly identified themselves with Apollonian forms have wrongly typified crowds as irrational, hysterical, and destructive (McPhail 1991; Schweingruber and Wohlstein 2005). Such views fail to appreciate the Dionysian drive, Dionysian freedom. Yet, embracing crowds as a positive force is not to attribute Apollonian features to crowds, but it is to appreciate, with Nietzsche and Canetti, the Dionysian dimension of human existence. It is to appreciate that crowds have no Apollonian frenzies, for such frenzies would deaden the vitality of crowds. As Maffesoli emphasizes, crowds establish a Dionysian rationality that is different from Socratic rationality or the rationality that the Enlightenment movement promotes (Borch 2012, 287). It is, at least analytically speaking, incorrect to expect an Apollonian discourse or Socratic dialogues or an ideological alternative from crowds. As an early member of an Occupy crowd in San Francisco put it, during the early stages of the crowd’s feverish growth (on 16 October 2011): ‘They are asking us what is our program. We have no program. We are here to have a good time’ (quoted in Žižek 2012). As crowds, OWS celebrates life, vitality, growth, physical discharge.

Crowd scholars have often overlooked the Dionysian frenzies of the crowd. For instance, Robert Michels identified parties and unions as organized crowds, while Sigmund Freud saw churches and armies as crowds (Borch 2012, 94, 106). Parties,

unions, churches, and armies, however, are Apollonian forms belonging to a particular order, rather than Dionysian entities. Crowds pose a threat to such forms, in the sense that they seek release from them. Also, the concept 'wisdom of the crowd', originally introduced by Francis Galton, and recently used in a variety of writings (cf. Coleman and Blumer 2011), misunderstands the Dionysian frenzy of crowds and underestimates or overlooks the anti-Apollonian character of the crowd. Galton implies that crowds are more likely to arrive at rational conclusions than individual experts. But crowds, as Canetti theorizes them, do not generate Apollonian forms (like Socratic dialogues) but instead criticize and negate such forms. A crowd communicates its condition, its vitality, to the world, typically in a Dionysian, creative manner. The rationality of crowds is of a different, more vital, more poetic and musical, kind; a sharp contrast with the deadening rationality of Apollonian forms. When, on 15 November 2011, OWS crowds were confronted with policy brutalities in Zuccotti Park, they did neither reply mindlessly nor did they seek to argue. Instead, they replied poetically: the poets of the OWS crowds read poems from the OWS Poetry Anthology aloud directly into the faces of riot police (Boyer 2012). In sum, Galton is right to identify crowds as a positive force, but he is wrong to identify crowds as Apollonian entities. Similarly, Stephanie Alice Baker's observation that 'reflexivity is a vital component of the mediated crowd' (Baker 2011, 2.10), a post-modern crowd that manages to make its presence real for distant spectators through the extensive use of new social media, expresses conceptual confusion. Reflexivity is an Apollonian trait; it could be a trait of social movements as such, but not of its crowds. As a movement, OWS may be reflexive, but when its crowds express their presence in streets and squares they have the Dionysian, chanting and intimate (body-to-body), features that Canetti appreciates so much as the core of sociality. That is, the crowd in the Occupy movement is characterized not by reflexivity, the transmission of thought, or other Apollonian traits, but by what an OWS poet typifies as 'vibratory magnetic cosmic pull' and 'a continually ecstatic outburst of psychedelic transformation' (Boyer 2012, 46).

Canetti (1984, 81) emphasizes that crowds are fluid: they lack the constancy of rational forms. It can therefore be expected that the Occupy crowds will tragically dissolve, and that people will move back into the Apollonian forms of global capitalism that seize, incorporate, and domesticate the crowds (Roberts 2012). Žižek (2012) has observed (and, in his case, has feared) this working of power. A global capitalist elite representative like Bill Clinton, for instance, Žižek explains, welcomes OWS but is worried about the nebulosity of its cause, encouraging the protesters to support President Obama's jobs plan. The point of the OWS crowds is resistance to the forms of global capitalism and its power structures, including the type of elites (including Bill Clinton) and the sort of labor market that is being produced under conditions of global capitalism. 'What one should resist at this stage is precisely such a quick translation of the energy of the protest into a set of "concrete" pragmatic demands', Žižek maintains, if OWS is to persist as a movement. John Clarke (2011) expects the continuation of neo-liberal welfare states, the reinvention or even the renewal of neo-liberalism under another name. Similarly, Colin Crouch (2011) predicts 'the strange non-death of neoliberalism'. Although neo-liberalism has lost its credentials and legitimacy, it seems to be emerging from the financial crisis more powerful than ever; the curtailing of the welfare state has become priority. A crisis is often a very painful time of transition, but in the present case, it seems to be the promise of an even more debilitated will, mind and heart; unless the voices of the

crowds, against all odds, do shake something of the Apollonian impassibility that characterizes neo-liberal states dictated by world markets and large firms; and penetrate its consciousness. The future will tell.

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