Social Policy in Belgium and the Netherlands:

Third Way or Not?

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Renaat Hoop
Ph. D. Researcher
Faculty of Law
University of Utrecht

r.hoop@law.uu.nl
I. Introduction

The Third Way seems to have filled the ideological gap left by the collapse of the communist system in Eastern Europe and in recent years has obtained increasing support. Still, defining the exact meaning of the Third Way remains problematic (Alterman 1998). It is often merely referred to as a midway position between socialism and liberalism, or as modernised social democracy (Giddens 2000b). At other times, it is not even attempted to clarify the theoretical underpinning of the Third Way; it is seen as something essentially pragmatic, a policy (Le Grand 1998).

With this paper, I would like to make a contribution towards clarifying the normative tenor and bearing of Third Way thinking. After all, even if the Third Way is indeed only a pragmatic attitude, it will still, like every practice, have been inspired by some kind of theory or philosophy. And in order to be able to properly judge the Third Way on its merits, it seems essential to bring this philosophy out into the open.

I will first analyse the main writings of Anthony Giddens, the chief theorist of the Third Way, and try to uncover the Third Way concept of citizenship. By this, I mean the normative stance that is taken with regard to a dual relationship: the vertical, between the citizen and the state, and the horizontal, between the citizen and his fellow citizens. It is indeed my opinion that each and every philosophy or ideology contains a normative standpoint with respect to the actual design of this dual relationship. I will try to distil the citizenship concept of the Third Way by comparing Third Way thinking with the citizenship concepts present in the major political theories (liberalism, communitarianism, republicanism). In my research I will focus especially on the implications these concepts of citizenship have for the design of a social policy, for this is indeed the area in which the discourse of the Third Way seems to resound the loudest.

In the second part of this paper I will confront the tentative conclusions drawn from part one with the social policies that are presently being carried out in Belgium and the Netherlands, especially in the field of social security. As argued in part one, policies and regulations brought about in the context of the welfare state are highly instrumental in character and from them, the expectations policy-makers harbour – either consciously or unconsciously – towards the behaviour of citizens may be discerned. Given the purpose of this paper, analysing the actual legislation created by policy-makers who may be considered, or who consider themselves, part of the Third Way movement, could prove to be immensely fruitful.

Finally, I will list the different results and formulate some caveats regarding the object and scope of the Third Way as far as the design and the future of the welfare state is concerned.

II. Citizenship

In order to form a picture of the theoretical and philosophical starting points of the Third Way, I use the concept of citizenship. This concept has been enjoying renewed interest for a decade now, both in policy circles and in academia (Kymlicka & Norman 1994). Citizenship is usually defined as a status consisting of rights (and possibly obligations) given to the residents of a certain country. T.H. Marshall’s (1949) theory of citizenship is usually taken as a point of departure in this. In discussions on the reform of the welfare state, the concept of citizenship, however, also often surfaces as a moral category.1 It is precisely this normative aspect connected with the concept of citizenship and the fact that it is often called upon in questions surrounding social policy, that make it ideally suited to an analysis of Third Way thinking, as the Third Way lays claim to being a normative source of inspiration, not in the least in the field of welfare state reform.

1 It is often stated at that point that we are facing a waning or eroding citizenship, in the sense that the citizen behaves like a passive and calculated being which has ceased to assume any responsibility, either for itself or for the community. This is usually followed by a plea for the drastic rearrangement of the rights and duties connected with citizenship status. See, e.g., L. Mead, Beyond Entitlement: the Social Obligations of Citizenship, 1986.
The traditional Marshallian interpretation of the citizenship concept does not, however, offer an adequate instrument for critical reflection on an ideology of the welfare state, involving as it does a social liberal interpretation whereby the welfare state is regarded as the ultimate perfection of citizenship status. In order to be able to make use of citizenship as a criterion for comparison, I will therefore start from a broader and somewhat more abstract interpretation of the concept. Citizenship then refers to the position of the citizen, and this in a dual relationship: the relationship between the citizen and the state (vertical) and that between the citizen and his fellow citizens (horizontal). A citizenship concept will then inform us how that dual relationship should ideally appear and will thus imply expectations concerning the actual behaviour of citizens in society. It is my conviction that every ideology or political philosophy implies such a concept of citizenship. Every political philosophical vision, in other words, contains a normative statement with respect to this dual position of the citizen.2

There are two ways to uncover the citizenship concept of a political philosophy or theory. In doing so, one could start from the explicit normative departure points and theses of the theorists themselves. This is what I will do in the section following hereafter. As said, I will thereby limit myself to the writings on the Third Way of Giddens himself. One could, however, also start from actual legislation as a point of departure for analysis. The legislation created by policy-makers aims to influence, modify and even shape behaviour in society. Especially in the framework of the welfare state, the law is often used as a directional instrument. The aim of this instrumental use of the law is to ensure that certain behaviour is, or is not, engaged in by citizens; i.e., the realisation of a certain citizenship practice. Policy-makers thereby, either consciously or unconsciously, apply a certain vision which could be explained as being a concept of citizenship, as expectations regarding the dual citizenship relations mentioned above. This second method I will also use in this paper. In so doing, I will subject the social policies of Belgium and the Netherlands to close scrutiny and examine to what extent the citizenship concept that may be derived therefrom conforms to the citizenship concept emerging from Giddens’s writings.

Within political philosophy three movements can be distinguished with pronounced concepts of citizenship: liberalism, communitarianism and republicanism (van Gunsteren 1994). Hereinafter I will briefly sketch the core elements of each movement and subsequently indicate the differences between them with respect to the expectations they maintain with regard to the actual behaviour of citizens. Given that it is intended to use this description as a framework with which the Third Way concept of citizenship can be confronted and compared, this overview rather resembles a typology.3 Thereby I am inevitably unable to do full justice to the many variations and nuances which no doubt exist within these movements. I am, however, fully aware of this.

II.1. Main political philosophies

Liberalism

The classical liberalism originating in the 17th century in the ideas of John Locke is built round the following central elements. The first is the ideal and the importance of individual freedom. Liberals in their analyses always take the individual to be their point of departure, not the community. Each individual is considered capable of finding his own way in life based on rational grounds. This ability to freely choose and pursue one’s own philosophy of life constitutes the basis of autonomous living. And to liberals, only a life autonomously led can be a good life.

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2 This, however, does not mean that every political philosophy in fact accepts the necessity or desirability of the existence of that dual relationship. The core of a philosophy or ideology may, for example, consist of the pursuit of a citizenship concept in which only one of these two relationships has a place or is elaborated. In any event, no philosophy will be able to escape taking a stance with regard to this dual relationship.

As a consequence, the freedom and autonomy of the individual need to be protected. The personal domain required in order to be able to realise one’s plans in life will, in the first place, have to be protected against interference from other individuals. Herein lies the raison d’être of the state: it is the state that, according to liberals, must guarantee the necessary safety and security to the individual. It must provide a certain stability by taking care that society does not degenerate into a struggle of all against all. At the same time, this is the only function of the state, liberals being ever fearful of the danger of all-encompassing state power.

This liberal suspicion of state authority has to do with another central value within classical liberalism: the natural equality of individuals. The freedom to shape one’s personal life is due to all individuals in equal measure. Each has the right to develop his own philosophy of life, and in this, each philosophy has equal value. The(158,333),(199,351), therefore, does not have the right to prohibit certain views or to favour others. The liberal state must be tolerant and neutral. The personal domain of the individual must therefore also be protected against the state itself.

Such protection is afforded by the notion of fundamental natural rights: every individual has at his disposal a series of universal and inalienable civil rights and freedoms which the state, too, will have to respect (the rule of law). Central to classical liberals is thus the idea that state power is limited by the rights of the individual. This is in effect the essence of liberal citizenship: it is a formal status consisting of a whole of inalienable civil and political rights and freedoms for the protection of individual autonomy. A rather passive concept of citizenship is what is involved here.

Within current liberalism, however, a further distinction can be made between so-called neo-liberalism and social liberalism. Neo-liberalism could be regarded as the movement which has most rigorously followed and elaborated classical liberalism. Neo-liberals also strongly believe in the spontaneous organisation of society. Such spontaneous organisation is brought about through market forces. According to liberals, people are, in the first place, driven by self-interest: they attempt to realise as many of their own desires and preferences as possible. Because of the laws of supply and demand governing the market, however, they need to attune their preferences to their own possibilities. In this way, market forces mitigate individual preferences and compels their rational balancing. In this sense, market forces exercise a purifying influence. The pursuit of self-interest in a free market would, according to liberals, automatically also lead to increased affluence in society. Society, however, is not further endowed with any intrinsic value. The community, on the other hand, is regarded as an association freely entered into for mutual individual benefit. Active participation in it, be it political or otherwise, is therefore regarded as a lifestyle issue and does not constitute an essential component of citizenship. The best-known proponent of this movement is Robert Nozick.

Social liberalism is a variation on liberalism that has persevered after the Second World War and is currently considered dominant. The welfare state or social constitutional state as we know it in the West is regarded as its concrete application.

The liberal values of individual freedom and equality are central here as well. Social liberals also accept the multitude of lifestyles as given and expect the state to take a tolerant and neutral stance towards these different philosophies of life.

Where classical and neo-liberals avail themselves of a negative concept of freedom (i.e., the absence of coercion, force or repression) social liberals also take a positive notion of freedom into account. Positive freedom here means freedom from want and self-governance (De Beus 1993, 81). It is the degree to which a person is able to make conscious decisions and to lead the life he chooses. Social liberals are thus of the opinion that the formal guarantee of freedom is not sufficient; in order for that freedom to be of any value, the enabling material conditions must also be fulfilled. In order for every citizen to be able to realise his plans in life, government as a consequence must make resources

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4 Neo-liberals or libertarians must, however, be clearly distinguished from neo-conservatives. The latter have also, for example under the policies of Thatcher and Reagan, shown themselves to be fervent proponents of free market politics. As opposed, however, to the libertarians, they do not base these preferences on a notion of personal freedom, but they combine free-market thinking on the economic plane with a strong focus on the reinstitution of traditional values on the moral plane (Kymlicka 1990, 155 note 1).

5 Although social liberalism supposedly already dates back to J.S. Mill and has a respectable tradition boasting writers such as J.A. Hobson, J. Dewey, W.H. Beveridge and J.M. Keynes (De Beus 1993, 81).

6 As to the distinction between positive and negative freedom, see: Berlin 1969.
available. In a social liberal state citizens are therefore not only entitled to civil and political rights, but also to social rights.

All this does mean, however, that the social liberal state will be given a larger number of tasks than is the case in classical and neo-liberalism, individual freedom no longer being a precondition for state intervention, no longer being taken as a given like in neo-liberalism. On the contrary, government is now allocated an active part in the realisation of the individual’s autonomous citizenship. Government is given the function of creating preconditions and opportunities. Market forces will now be corrected to enable a limited redistribution of available means. John Rawls and T.H. Marshall may be mentioned as prominent representatives of social liberalism: the former because he has defended social liberalism the most fundamentally and systematically against his critics; the latter because he has provided an outline of the historical development of the social liberal concept of citizenship from a sociological perspective.

**Communitarianism**

The term “communitarianism” is used to denote a group of writers who, from the beginning of the nineteen eighties, in the United States, expressly reacted against liberalism, which had been given a fresh impulse through Rawls’s *A theory of justice*. Communitarianism is therefore a less consistent and unequivocal school of thought than liberalism: a fundamental criticism of liberalism is the only thing some communitarians have in common. Communitarianism is indeed for the most part a countermovement that may be best visualised by contrasting it with what it opposes, i.e., mainly liberalism (Bovens 1990, 108).

Communitarians in the first place oppose the individualism of neo- and social liberals. According to them it is impossible to view the individual as a rationally operating being which chooses its goals and attempts to realise them completely free from restraint. In so arguing, liberals would lose sight of the constitutive part the community plays in shaping the individual’s identity, as the individual cannot be viewed separately from his social, cultural and historical context. The individual is constantly being determined by and is situated in a community. Communitarians therefore do not take the individual, but the community as their starting point.

The contractualism and instrumentalism of liberals is also departed from. To communitarians, the community is not merely an association freely entered into for the mutual benefit of its members. Here, the community is endowed with intrinsic value, public life being inseparably connected with personal and inner life, and individual well-being depending on general well-being. The community is looked upon as an historically evolved unity in which one participates from and through birth. The ties that spring up in this community are largely involuntary. Maintaining and affirming these ties and relationships is of great importance to communitarians. This explains why they place such emphasis on solidarity and care for fellow citizens. Where liberals mainly pay attention to the rights of the individual, communitarians also emphasise the responsibilities and commitments one has as a member of a group.

Participation in society is therefore not free of obligations, unlike in liberalism. On the contrary, it is an important value to communitarians as it binds the community together. A sense of public responsibility is not only a duty, it is also the only way of becoming a fully-fledged individual. Self-realisation here means discovering one’s own position and role within the community, mastering and identifying with traditional virtues and values. This is only possible through active participation in existing practice, through social participation, therefore. According to communitarianism people can only be truly free when they dedicate themselves to the realisation of traditional communal values. Individualisation is then regarded as a form of isolation, of loss of contact with traditional societal ties.

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7 Social liberalism is indeed being severely attacked from both left and right and is seen as “a crossbreed doctrine, an unsatisfactory mix of, and a vulnerable compromise between, individualism and collectivism, freedom and equality, and spontaneous and formal organisation”. (De Beus 1993, 82).

8 For a proper overview of this debate see Avineri & de-Schalit 1992, and Van Klink, Van Seters and Witteveen 1993.
On political participation, however, communitarians are somewhat brief. Apparently, according to them, public life should rather take place in a strong civil society than through elaborate state organisation. Communitarians for this reason strongly emphasise the importance of intermediary organisations, or the so-called societal centrefield.

Where liberals aim to bring about a stable society by referring the discussion on a fulfilling life to the private sphere and to market forces and by providing everyone with equal rights status in the public sphere and formulating ethically neutral principles on justice, communitarians aim to achieve stability by making members act in accordance with the concept of the proper life that has historically evolved in a community and do so through acquiring and practising virtues, values and habits.

Republicanism

Republicanism or civic humanism, which has its historical roots in figures such as Aristotle and Macchiavelli, could be regarded as a variation on communitarianism with respect to content, allocating the leading part to one particular community: politics (Van Gunsteren 1994, 42). Just like communitarianism, republicanism places strong emphasis on public participation, but where the former looks to social participation, republicans mainly, or even, only, have eyes for political participation. Actively serving the res publica as a free and equal citizen and using one’s political judgement towards the realisation of the common good is perceived as the highest attainable republican virtue. Here, too, communal life is thus thought to be of intrinsic value.

As opposed to communitarianism, however, the republican citizen need not sacrifice his entire life to the community. The equal freedom from liberalism is retained here, although it is construed differently. Freedom here mostly means the ability to govern oneself, i.e., the ability to act independently in the public domain and to live by the laws and decisions which are the result of public deliberation. In this sense, equality is not the equal enjoyment of state guaranteed rights, but equal access to and participation in the process of shaping those rights. It is equality as a public being: the recognition of being capable of political judgement.

This capability, however, is not simply given; it requires the possession of a number of virtues: reason, moderation, tolerance, public awareness, dedication, courage, loyalty. The capability of being able to judge unselfishly, i.e., exclusively in the public interest, also presupposes an ability to withdraw from the sphere of necessity, i.e., the sphere of work and family. That sphere is dominated by biological and personal needs, and these corrupt the political sphere. Republicans therefore adhere to a rigid separation of the political and the private.

II.2. Types of citizenship

The political philosophical movements described offer an overall vision of reality, more in particular of the way in which society and the state should ideally be organised. Insofar as they thereby indicate the exact position of the citizen, we may also distil from each of these political philosophical perspectives a vision of citizenship. As said, this vision of citizenship consists of expectations regarding the actual behaviour of citizens in their relations with government (vertical relationship) and with their fellow citizens (horizontal relationship).

In this section I will attempt to express the essence of the citizenship concepts of the political philosophical movements discussed. In particular, I will pay attention to the position of employment and social security within these concepts of citizenship.

Liberal citizenship

We have already seen that neo- and social liberalism have common roots. Their visions of citizenship are therefore quite similar in that both emphasise the vertical relationship between citizen and state. They view citizenship as a legal status, consisting of the equal enjoyment of state guaranteed rights.
Citizenship is thus given a formal and passive meaning. A citizen expresses his citizenship by claiming these rights, which enable him to realise his own concept of a fulfilling life. In his relations with fellow citizens, no further demands are made of him than that he respects their equal rights.

However, in determining the nature of citizenship rights, there are clear differences between libertarians and social liberals. Libertarians proceed from the notion of a productive society, the membership of which depends on the productive contribution one is capable of making through paid employment. If one is unable to contribute towards an affluent society, one will be excluded from the full claims that come with citizenship. In the 19th century, such exclusion concerned political rights; today, claims to social rights are at stake. If libertarians are at all concerned with social rights, these will depend on strict conditions: only those willing to work may lay claim to social security services (De Haan 1993, 186).

In social liberalism, it is no longer presupposed that individuals derive their autonomy, which is a determining factor for their citizenship, from their economic and social identity, and that they are and should be able to achieve it on their own strength. Here, the societal independence of individuals is being taken into account and it is supposed that individuals are not prima facie independent but may become so, insofar as the state develops the necessary institutions. The relationship between economic status, state intervention and citizenship is thus no longer linear, but circular (Stuurman 1992, 373). According to social liberalism, government must, indeed, carry out a social policy.

The social liberal position clearly appears from the citizenship theory of T.H. Marshall. In his well-known 1949 essay *Citizenship and Social Class* he describes citizenship as a progressive and cumulative development of civil, political, and social rights. This concept of citizenship is all-inclusive; all citizens are equally entitled to it. To Marshall, this was essential: he regarded the equal status of citizens as a counterbalance against the economic inequality brought about by capitalism (Marshall 1976, 70). This, however, in no sense means that social liberals pursue complete equality. On the contrary, both Marshall (1976, 85 and 100) and Rawls (his difference principle) view the existence of a certain degree of social inequality as necessary in any society, because it provides economic incentives and so benefits the entire community of citizens.

**Communitarian citizenship**

The perfect citizen according to communitarianism is one who actively extols the traditional norms and communal practices of the community he is part of. One who helps maintain the community through his social participation: by assuming responsibility towards his fellow citizens, by providing public and private care, by meeting the commitments he has entered into or discovered, by acting in accordance with shared practices, by serving the community interest. Of the citizen it is thus expected that he displays responsibility, moderation and a sense of duty, that he declares his solidarity. In communitarianism, citizenship most clearly emerges as a moral category: citizenship largely equals a sense of public responsibility.

Communitarians fail to show undivided enthusiasm for social security and social rights. Care should not in the first instance be guaranteed by the state, but should be mutually provided by the members of a community. By guaranteeing social rights the state undermines the capability to provide community care and as a result harms the stability of that community.

Communitarian citizenship thus mainly emphasises the horizontal relationship, the relationship between citizens. The existence of a vertical relationship is rather viewed with suspicion and reluctance.

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9 The granting of social rights by definition implying an infringement on civil rights (cf. the right to property), which neo-liberals consider to be much more fundamental.

10 As communitarians believe that quite a number of human relations and ties are of an involuntary, but still obligatory character, it may indeed be better to speak of the discovery rather than the entering into of commitments.
Republican citizenship

In republicanism, one is considered a fully-fledged citizen when simultaneously being the governing and the governed. The ideal here is the self-directed political community of free, equal, autonomous and judicious citizens. The citizenship of individuals is thus realised when they are able to fully participate in all kinds of public decision-making and debate, when, in other words, there is self-governance. Classical republicans situate such self-governance mainly in the political sphere. Citizenship to them means active political participation.

The citizen is expected to act judiciously. This, however, is only possible when he finds himself outside the sphere of necessity. The republican citizen should not be preoccupied with the day-to-day worries of life. That would corrupt his judgement in the political arena. It is therefore considered absolutely necessary that the citizen should not have to worry about his livelihood. A precondition for republican citizenship is thus economic independence. Such independence should preferably be realised through the ownership of land. Where this is not possible, paid employment seems to be a way out. In republican thinking, social participation through employment is thus merely instrumental in function.

Republicans value social rights rather negatively. Welfare recipients are thus given an interest in the state and, at the same time, come to depend on bureaucratic institutions which could then turn into a veritable caste of professional administrators. Furthermore, in this scenario, politics runs the risk of becoming more a question of satisfying private, material preferences. Independent judgement serving the general interest will then become impossible.

II.3. The Third Way Concept of Citizenship

How do the ideas of the Third Way relate to the political philosophical theories discussed above and what concept of citizenship may be deduced from them? A first clue answering these questions may be found in the history of the development of the Third Way itself. Giddens, for example, very clearly states that “Third way politics is above all an endeavour to respond to change” (Giddens 2000a, 27).

Over the past decades profound changes have taken place in the social, economic and technological fields. The influence of intensifying globalisation, the emergence of a post-traditional social order and the expansion of social reflexivity have all accelerated the advance of manufactured uncertainty (Giddens 1994). The established positions and policies of the left are unable to respond conclusively to this new situation, the more so now that social democracy is in a state of crisis with the definitive demise of Marxism and the disappearance of welfare economics. The aim and the reasons for the inception of the Third Way are thus to be found in supplying a doctrinal and policy framework for a renewed social democracy. The departure point of the Third Way clearly lies within social democracy. This is, in any event, an important piece of information for judging the political philosophical intent of Third Way thinking.

Not only with respect to the point of departure, but also regarding the direction he wishes to take with the Third Way, Giddens immediately reveals his true colours. The radical renewal he propagates not only concerns social democracy, but also needs to surpass its major current competitor, neo-liberalism. If the Third Way symbolises a new synthesis, it is important to know that neo-liberalism\(^\text{11}\) is the anti-thesis thereto.

In further analysing the body of thought of the Third Way I would first like to focus on what Giddens has to say about the reform of the welfare state. Not only because the expectations regarding the dual citizenship relations policy-makers hold become most obvious in the actual arrangements of the welfare state, but also because the ideas of the Third Way with regard to the future of the welfare state are the most elaborated. That “the need to reform welfare systems is a key part of third way political philosophy”, as Giddens himself puts it (2000a, 103), should not give cause for surprise. As

\(^{11}\) The term neo-liberalism with Giddens stands for what I have called conservatism, especially the combination of laissez-faire politics on the economic level with far-reaching government interference on the personal and moral level. In order to prevent confusion, I will from now on restrict myself to using the term libertarianism for neo-liberalism as I described it.
stated before, the Third Way in the first place aims to update social democracy, whose main goal Giddens himself describes as “striving to consolidate the welfare state” (Giddens 2000b, 15).

The proposals to reform and modernise the welfare state in the first place relate to the role of the state. Here, a shift in the direction of liberalism is clearly visible. As said, liberals, and especially libertarians, propagate a limited view of state functions and, especially where economics are concerned, would sooner put their faith in the market. This is also the direction the Third Way wishes to take. Giddens argues for a new mixed economy, a co-operative effort of the public and the private sector by making use of market dynamics without losing sight of the public interest (Giddens 2000b, 112). The core message seems to be that the market should no longer be taboo:

The left has to get comfortable with markets, with the role of business in the creation of wealth, and the fact that private capital is essential for social investment (Giddens 2000a, 34).

In the wake of the dissolution of communism, no one any longer argues for the banning of markets from most areas of the economy. It is hard even to remember that this was so widely thought of as a sensible and even necessary aim (Giddens 2000a, 34-35).

The market, in fact, has many positive aspects, some of which are unrivalled by any other system. According to Giddens, it therefore no longer makes sense to continue contrasting market and state, for:

Markets do not always increase inequality, but can sometimes be the means of overcoming it. Moreover, (…), the left has to learn to recognize that the state itself can produce inequality, as well as having other counterproductive effects on individuals’ lives (…) (2000a, 33).

This insight results in new job responsibilities for government, because government indeed still has a job to do in the Third Way: “The essential functions of markets must be complemented and improved by political action, not hampered by it” (Blair and Schröder, cited in Giddens 2000a, 6). Government action must clearly serve the market. The tendency the market has to form monopolies and show cyclical movements must, for example, be countered by state intervention. Further, government is also required to absorb the social costs and externalities stemming from the dynamics of market forces. But most of all, the state must nurture the human capital that markets themselves require (Giddens 2000a, 36).

As a result, the primary goal of government action is no longer the pursuit of an egalitarian distribution of goods. Social justice, which still holds an important place in the Third Way, too, no longer consists of a certain equality of outcome but of an equality of opportunity. Redistribution remains necessary, but should not in the first place be a redistribution of means, but a redistribution of opportunities:

The contemporary left needs to develop a dynamic, life-chances approach to equality, placing the prime stress upon equality of opportunity. Modernizing social democrats also have to find an approach that reconciles equality with pluralism and lifestyle diversity (…) (Giddens 2000a, 86).

Although a redistribution of wealth and income will in the end still be necessary, the policy of the state must first be directed at promoting the creation of affluence. Rather than granting subsidies, the state must create conditions in which employees become more efficient and companies are given an incentive to innovate. The state should no longer direct, but should support. It must not try to control or direct the market, but must ask itself how it can assist the market in meeting the new challenges globalisation offers, and how to develop a beneficial climate for responsible risk-takers.

From the above analysis it will become clear that the Third Way embraces a number of important liberal values in the field of economics, such as the idea that market forces have a purifying effect on citizens’ behaviour.12 Still, this cannot be considered a pure form of libertarianism, because the state retains an important role, albeit in the market’s service. The vision of the Third Way, as far as the relationship between market and state is concerned, is rather practically identical to that of social liberalism.13 The principle of market forces is not fundamentally questioned and the inequality flowing from market forces is countered with the argument that such inequality provides incentives, which

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12 One of the positive aspects of the market is, according to Giddens, that it “favour[s] attitudes of responsibility, since participants need to calculate the likely outcomes of what they do, whether they are producers or consumers” (Giddens 2000a, 35).

13 In fact, Giddens himself admits that the Third Way policy shows clear affinity with the ideas of so-called ethical liberalism extolled by T.H. Green, L. Hobhouse and others, as Alan Ryan suggested (Giddens 2000a, 86-87).
lead to greater affluence, which in the end also benefits the least fortunate. This is the exact meaning of Rawls’s difference principle and also the tenor of Marshall’s work. From this, an active but clearly defined government function follows: government, even though it needs to ensure that every one is able to live a self-chosen fulfilling life, as a result of which it will inevitably have to correct the market and bring about some measure of redistribution, must in the main still focus on maximising the creation of affluence.

Giddens’s Third Way on a social economical level thus represents a position midway between liberalism and socialism. This idea, however, is far from revolutionary. Even Giddens himself establishes that the term “third way” was already in long use precisely to indicate a midway position between American market liberalism and Soviet communism (Giddens 2000a, 1): this third way was actually social democracy. He also admits that for some time already it has not been about finding an alternative to capitalism, but that the discussion now only still revolves around the question to what degree and how capitalism should be controlled and regulated (Giddens 2000b, 53). So, what is so new about his proposals or about the time that they were launched? Is it simply the fact that the Third Way started its advance in countries with a strong neo-liberal past (Giddens 2000a, 1)? Or the thesis that the acceptance of the market’s function alongside that of government should no longer be “a grudging one” (Giddens 2000a, 34)? 14

What sets Giddens’s Third Way apart from traditional social democracy in my view is the fact that this midway position between liberalism and socialism also draws a lot of its inspiration from communitarian circles. This is most readily apparent in the position of the state. Just as with the social liberals, the state in the Third Way is given an active and sizeable task with a view to the realisation of material, not just formal, freedom. In that sense, it is thus mostly the vertical relationship between citizen and state that is accentuated. But the Third Way does not limit itself to that; it also shapes horizontal citizenship relations by stressing that alongside the state and the market, a strong civil society should also be involved, as:

Neither a market economy nor a democratic state can function effectively without the civilizing influence of civic association (Giddens 2000a, 64).

Giddens thus distinguishes three spheres of power – state, market and civil society – which do not exclude one another but are complementary in the sense that they each need to balance the other (2000a, 51). By underlining the importance of a strong civil society the Third Way thus distinguishes itself from liberalism; at the same time, however, a difference remains with communitarianism, as the Third Way does not harbour any suspicions against the state.

Bringing the horizontal citizenship relations into view this emphatically suggests that the Third Way has a clear moral expectation with regard to these relations, just like the communitarians. The Third Way, in fact, launches a moral appeal to counter market excesses:

Excessive dependence on market mechanisms has to be avoided for clear reasons. Markets respond to the desires of consumers, but as they do so can compromise other wants or needs. Markets can breed a commercialism that threatens other life values. Without external controls, markets have no restraining mechanisms – there is nothing in market exchange that limits what might be marketed. In addition, ethical standards, or standards of taste, have to be brought from the outside – from a public ethics, guaranteed in law (Giddens 2000a, 36).

Like the communitarians, it is considered undesirable to let the market undermine social cohesion and solidarity in society. As opposed to the former, this result is however not expected to be reached through the preservation of or emphasis on traditions. This task is reserved here for both families and communities as well as for the state. The task of families and communities is moreover not merely reactive, but also active. Not only are they indispensable in absorbing the social costs and externalities stemming from market dynamics, they also have an important role to play in the creation and preservation of the human capital the market requires (Giddens 2000a, 36).

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14 One could indeed argue that the Third Way mainly distinguishes itself from traditional social democracy because it has made a virtue of necessity (Bieling 1998, 22). The continued adjustment of the own, initially socialist, values and aims to economic necessity are henceforth employed by the Third Way as an offensive strategy. This might at the same time explain why the Third Way has broken through in countries with the longest neo-liberal tradition (the USA and the UK); the pressure to give in to the libertarian way of thinking will have made itself felt most keenly there.
That communitarianism is an important source of inspiration to the Third Way is also made clear by the actual design of the active welfare state the Third Way propagates. First, the criticism of the existing welfare state as formulated by the right is espoused. The welfare state should only be allowed to intervene in case the church, family and friends – the major sources of solidarity in society – fail to entirely meet their obligations (Giddens 2000b, 125). Moreover, Giddens considers the welfare state to be essentially undemocratic and its institutions bureaucratic and inefficient. They actually serve to further the distance to the citizen and leave insufficient personal freedom.

For this reason, the welfare state should not be sized down, as neo-liberals would have it, but is in need of thorough reform. Countering social exclusion should be the central focus in this; another communitarian point of departure. Social exclusion, according to Giddens, is indicative of mechanisms breeding or perpetuating hardship, of mechanisms of social, economic or cultural segregation (Giddens 2000a, 104). This is not about losers, but about people who are not given the opportunity to take part. Some of these mechanisms, like the poverty trap, are a result of the welfare state itself. The active welfare state must therefore aim to promote inclusion. Inclusion in the broadest sense concerns citizenship, civil and political rights to which all members of a society should be entitled, not just formally, but in the reality of their lives. It also concerns their opportunities, and their involvement in public affairs (Giddens 2000b, 115). This is what Giddens terms positive welfare. People are not only protected against risks but are also given the opportunity and means to take risks, to meet challenges. This means that investing in human capital must take priority over providing direct economic support, and that welfare facilities must be integrated into programmes aiming to actively develop civil society (Giddens 2000b, 129). In other words, the state must no longer provide care for its citizens, but guide them in the meeting of challenges and the grasping of opportunities. Important contexts in which such opportunities may be created are employment and education. In practice, this means that the state must launch active labour market programmes (welfare-to-work policy), whereby welfare recipients are stimulated through training programmes and coaching to re-enter the labour market. Investing in human capital thus becomes the main function of the active welfare state. In doing so, it will need to focus on the demands the new information economy poses: as such, training and education have absolute priority. The new social policy is also closely connected with family policy: government needs to promote a family-friendly working environment and create opportunities for online working, care leave and more and better day-care for children (Giddens 2000b, 138-139). Great importance is apparently attached to family values as well. Again, this is not just a state function: “(…) business and third sector groups can play key roles” (Giddens 2000a, 48). Moreover, these programmes need to be “located in the communities with which they are concerned, as well as designed and run by local community agencies” (Giddens 2000a, 48).

Creating opportunities is the state’s job; grasping them is the citizen’s job. Countering mechanisms of exclusion cannot be viewed separately from personal responsibility, because “The social and economic factors that can lead to exclusion are always filtered through the way individuals react to the problems that confront them”(Giddens 2000a, 106). The citizen himself is thus also expected to display a more active attitude. He must be mobilised to take personal responsibility. Citizens will need to learn to take care of themselves and to flexibly and efficiently involve themselves in the global economy. Government may only really be expected to create the necessary preconditions. Rights can no longer be viewed separately from responsibilities. No rights without responsibilities, is the basis of the new social contract the Third Way wishes to conclude. Citizenship is two-way traffic: the citizen and the state have mutual obligations. Welfare recipients are therefore obliged to retrain, to make an effort to obtain new qualifications, to be flexible, and seize opportunities.

The citizenship practices the Third Way wishes thus bear a clearly communitarian stamp. As opposed to liberalism, the Third Way pays attention to the horizontal relationship between citizen and fellow citizens as well, and goes on to express certain expectations about it. Core concepts are solidarity and participation. The concept of citizenship is much less passive. Where the liberal citizen can confine himself in the expression of his citizenship to claiming his state guaranteed rights, the Third Way citizen needs to assume his societal responsibility and take action. Citizenship is given a much clearer obligatory angle.
That Giddens’s renewed social democracy also enters the moral sphere should not really cause surprise. For example, he repeatedly states that classical social democracy was a proponent of economic state regulation and kept aloof from the moral plane, while neo-liberalism combines economic anarchy with far-reaching intervention in the moral sphere (Giddens 2000b, 30). When it is subsequently stated that a credible alternative is really no longer available in the economic sphere besides the current-day tempered market economics and that the polarisation between capitalism and socialism is outdated (Giddens 2000b, 53), social democracy in search of a second life is only left with no other option than to position itself on that other axis of personal freedom and to take up a moral stance. Here, too, the midway position seems to be the most comfortable:

Economic regulation, moral anarchy; economic anarchy, strong moral controls – neither combination makes much sense. Government needs to play a regulative role across the board (Giddens 2000a, 45).

This results in the Third Way’s desire to formulate explicit viewpoints concerning family policy, crime policy and policy with regard to the deterioration of the community, like New Labour and the New Democrats have already done before it:

(... a conscious attempt to relate policies of the left to what are seen as prime concerns of ordinary citizens. We need a third way approach to the family, distinct from those who simply ignore the issue on the one hand and those, on the other, who want to turn the clock back to a time before women went out to work. Changes in the family are related to antisocial behaviour and crime. Responding to anxieties about crime is seen as vital to third way policies (...) (Giddens 2000a, 4).

According to Giddens, the failure to address this type of issues has adversely affected the credibility of the traditional left and lies jointly at the base of the losses it suffered to the benefit of newly erected parties and right-wing extremists (Giddens 2000a, 50).

III. Social policies in Belgium and the Netherlands

So far, I have attempted to uncover the ideological foundations of the Third Way on the basis of an analysis of the writings of its most prominent representative, Anthony Giddens. As, however, I have argued in the first part of this paper, the expectations a political philosophy harbours with respect to the actual behaviour of citizens, may not only be deduced from the philosophical theory itself, but also from policy measures based on that philosophy. After all, legislation that is used instrumentally aims to generate a certain citizenship practice.

Hereinafter, I would therefore like to examine whether the recently conducted policy in Belgium and the Netherlands in the field of the welfare state shows any similarities with the theory of the Third Way described above, as far as expectations with respect to the actual behaviour of citizens are concerned. Both in Belgium and the Netherlands, so-called “purple” governments operate, that is to say, coalitions consisting of liberals on the one hand and of socialists on the other. They are therefore ideally placed to give shape to a policy that constitutes a synthesis between liberalism and socialism, or that could rise above these two movements along a third way. The wish for and the pursuit of a policy of radical renewal, which Giddens (1994) argues in favour of, these purple governments in any case seem to share. The Belgian coalition agreement, for example, in its preamble expresses the ambition “to rise above the classical political concepts and recipes and break new ground”. Much attention is further given to themes Giddens, too, brings to prominence: effective and caring government, civic democracy, safety through fighting crime, and particularly also modern social security and an active welfare state. For Purple in the Netherlands, too, a stimulating labour market policy was and is a core element of the programme.16

15 In Belgium, the first purple government came to power in June 1999; it consists of liberals (VLD/PRL-FDF-MCC), socialists (SP/PS) and green parties (Agalev/Ecolo). In the Netherlands, it is already the second purple government; the coalition here consists of right-wing liberals (VVD), left-wing liberals (D’66) and socialists (PvdA).

Also the way in which it is proposed to tackle these themes displays a remarkable resemblance to Giddens’s plans. The declarations of intent in the Belgian coalition agreement with regard to the reform of social security and the welfare state in general repeatedly speak of investing in people, education and employment, the pursuit of integration and involvement and preventing people from missing the boat as the main goals. It is intended to pursue an active policy in the fields of employment and social security, which also offers opportunities for reconciling employment and family life.

These elements constitute the thread of the concrete policy measures that have been taken both in Belgium and the Netherlands over the past few years. In both countries, raising employment levels is the top priority. Through their participation in paid employment, people not only gain economic independence but also build up social networks, causing them ‘to belong’. Social participation through paid employment thus also strengthens social cohesion in society. A higher level of labour market participation moreover doubtly relieves the burden of the social security system, thereby safeguarding the broad public support it enjoys. This is in summary the flanking rhetoric of the stimulating labour market policy set up in both countries. This policy among other things includes the active use of benefits as a kind of wage subsidy for employers who hire welfare recipients and includes offering training, education or job experience placements in order to heighten the employability of the unemployed and of welfare recipients. Fiscal and welfare policies are also geared towards the aim of increased labour market participation. For example, the new Dutch tax system provides for a reduction to which only the employed are entitled and extends the possibilities for fiscally deducting the costs of child day-care. Both countries also aim to take action towards the creation of more, better quality and affordable day-care centres. It is especially intended to make day-care more easily available and affordable for welfare recipients. In Belgium it is even being suggested that day-care should be free as a basic service. The favourable economic climate in both countries has caused the slogan “Work before income” to gain even more impetus. The labour shortage has caused the pressure on the unemployed and on welfare recipients to mount painfully. At the end of 1999 in the Netherlands, for example, Minister Verstand presented the idea to impose an obligation to apply for halftime jobs (24 hours a week) on single mothers on welfare, caring for one or more children under the age of five. Present legislation actually exempts this category. As a result of pressure from, among others, women’s organisations Parliament declined to side with its Minister on this proposal. The exemption currently in place for older employees (from the age of 57.5 upwards) was: from now on they have to register with the employment agency and may no longer turn down fitting employment offered them, but they still need not actively look for a job themselves. These measures are all within the framework of the so-called “sound approach” the cabinet wishes to conduct with respect to the long-term unemployed and social security recipients. The Minister has also announced that the fight against social security fraud will be monitored and dealt with more sharply. In Flanders, too, increased pressure on the unemployed is reported as far as their willingness to work is concerned; even employers allegedly no longer neglect their duty to report these. The Belgian government has, furthermore, promised to offer every youth a so-called “starter’s job” within 6 months of leaving school or completing their studies.

The stimulating labour market policies as they are carried out in the Netherlands and Belgium could, in my view, certainly count on Giddens’s approval. Both countries have forsworn the passive distribution of social security benefits. Welfare recipients are, by contrast, confronted with their personal responsibility and stimulated to take up employment once again. The state plays a supporting role here; it creates chances and opportunities by offering training and education, by making available affordable child day-care and by realising fiscally advantageous regimes.

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17 In Belgium the labour shortage is most keenly felt in the northern state of Flanders.
18 The situation is illustrated by the fact that the discussion about the proposal of Minister Vermeend still related to the extension of the exemption to include single mothers with children under the age of 12.
19 See Article 107 (2) Algemene Bijstandswet [National Assistance Act].
21 See Press releases nos. 00/168 of 28 September 2000 and 00/170 of 29 September 2000.
Investing in human capital is also a theme in the regulations aiming to effectuate a combination scenario. Notwithstanding the fact that in both countries the pre-eminently family-oriented parties were relegated to the opposition, the facilitation of the combination of work and family is more than ever given priority in social policy. For example, both countries have a system for career interruption, which gives the employee the right to break off his career during a certain period of time. If he does so in order to take care of children or sick relatives or in order to provide palliative care, he will be compensated. Initially, this was an employment measure: the employee interrupting his career had to be replaced by someone unemployed. Both countries are, however, in the process of relaxing the replacement obligation and career interruption is viewed more and more as a combination measure. Paid career interruption is also possible in both countries for taking courses that will improve one’s employability.

New possibilities for reducing working hours also aim to facilitate the combination of work and family. In Belgium, for example, a collective labour agreement implementing the inter-professional social agreement 2001-2002 provides that as of 1 January 2002 employees can reduce their careers by 1/5, throughout a maximum of 5 years. Much more drastic is the Dutch Wet Aanpassing Arbeidsduur [Working Hours Modification Act], which as of 1 July 2000 enables employees in businesses with a minimum of 10 employees to once every two years request of their employers that their working hours be either increased or decreased. The employer may only refuse such a request on grounds of consequent company interests.

Furthermore, both countries have broadened the possibilities for short-term interruptions of work for the benefit of the family. In the Netherlands, 2 days paid leave are from now on granted to new fathers, 10 days care leave a year can be rightfully claimed and days off can be saved up over longer periods of time. In Belgium, among other things, paternal leave was extended from 3 days to 10.

Another Third Way preoccupation that has recently been receiving attention in both countries is the inclusion of the elderly. The Dutch attempts to again make it compulsory for older welfare recipients to actively seek jobs were already mentioned. In Belgium, too, a broadening of the possibility to work for pensioners is being contemplated. It is allegedly also the intention to abolish early retirement schemes or, at least, make less use of them, and there are even those who claim that the principle of age-related retirement should be left behind altogether. Instead, older employees should be allowed more breaks during their career in order to prevent early burn-out. As of 2001, therefore, employees over 50 years of age will be able to interrupt their careers with 1/5 or even 1/2, without restrictions.

All the measures described above can, in my opinion, clearly be viewed not as the concrete elaboration of Third Way thinking with regard to the shaping of the welfare state, but at least as a possible elaboration. For the conclusions which were formulated after the analysis of Giddens’s texts reappear in broad outlines. Recent social policy in both countries may be typified as social liberal with undeniable communitarian features.

Liberal, because market economics are not fundamentally questioned, but, on the contrary, the entire policy rests upon the presupposition that a free market offers the best possible guarantees for maintaining the standard of national affluence.

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24 For Belgium these are the CVP and PSC; in the Netherlands the CDA is the largest family party.
25 In Belgium as of 1 January 2001 still a minimum of 3 months and a maximum of 6 months throughout one’s entire career, to be taken half-time or full-time; in the Netherlands a minimum of 2 months and a maximum of 6 months, to be taken at least part-time.
26 As of 1 January 2001 the Netherlands no longer maintain a minimum period for palliative care and compensation is paid to the amount of the minimum wage (1123 Euro). Also, there is no replacement obligation.
27 In the Netherlands to a maximum of 44 Euro; in Belgium to a maximum of 625 Euro and as of 1 January 2002, 688 Euro.
28 And as of 2003 the maximum working week will be reduced to 38 hours.
29 Wet van 19 februari 2000, houdende regels inzake het recht op aanpassing van de arbeidsduur [Act of 19 February 2000, containing rules for the right to modification of working hours].
Social liberal, because the above presupposition does not result in the idea that the market should be given a free rein. The welfare state is not dismantled and social rights are still considered an essential part of citizenship. Quite a number of benefits and services are actually added to and expanded. At the same time, the focus in the role of the state is shifting from a corrective to a supporting function. The question is no longer how social goals may be realised without upsetting the market too much, it is now how the market can be allowed to function optimally without giving up on too many social goals.

And finally, communitarian, because social participation is also considered an essential part of citizenship. Social policy is therefore entirely dominated by inclusion, social cohesion and solidarity. The state is also unburdened in the sense that, in conformity with communitarianism, the own responsibility and the responsibility of family and community networks are more explicitly brought to the fore.

IV. Conclusions

The social policy that is currently being carried out in Belgium and the Netherlands by the so-called “purple” governments not only shows how the theoretical fundamental principles of the Third Way may be effected in practice, but also supplies additional information about the citizenship concept contained in Third Way thinking.

The measures taken in both countries do, for example, follow the communitarian tendency that is also visible in the Third Way by putting social inclusion as the main goal first and by appealing more to the own responsibility of the citizen, but at the same time also show what this amounts to in practice. The responsibility required of the citizen is mainly directed at the market and the social participation to be promoted is merely the participation in the formal labour market. This clearly appears from the pressure exerted on welfare recipients: they need to re-involve themselves in the labour market or at least co-operate in improving their own employability by taking training courses or classes. Complying therewith is presented as a civic duty, referring to the prevailing labour shortage. Whether the jobs resulting from such re-involvement actually have a strengthening effect on the development of the social networks of those concerned and thus indirectly also contribute to reinforced social cohesion is irrelevant. The fact that a price is paid for that job on the market is apparently sufficient proof of this. In other words, this is a libertarian line of reasoning, rather than a communitarian one: the productive citizen is the focal point, not the socially integrated citizen. The needs of the market are paramount, and what the market needs now are higher educated and productive employees. Everything else comes second, even the value of freedom, as Dahrendorf (1999) rightly puts it. For the way in which the citizen must assume responsibility is dictated by government, which allows itself to be guided by the market’s needs. The communitarian family values do not seem to be that important in the end either. This is illustrated, for example, by the 10-day care leave employees can claim in the Netherlands in order to take care of a sick spouse or live-in child. In this event, employers must continue to pay wages up to 70%; half of this is later refunded by the state by means of a tax reduction for the employer. Care leave is conditional on two counts. First and foremost, the employer can refuse to grant leave if company interests weigh heavier, and more importantly, the employer will have to prove the necessity of the fact that precisely he, and not his spouse, needs to provide this care. If the combination scenario, as it is termed in both countries, is effectively intended to ensure that parents, besides their jobs, take on an equal share in the responsibility of looking after their family, this is really quite a remarkable condition. It implies that it is preferable for the non-working spouse to assume care duties and that the primary responsibility of the working partner is to be found in work duties. What it comes down to, is that assuming responsibility for one’s family is allowed, as long as this does not disrupt the labour market. The same is true with respect to day-care for children: childcare is considered important, which explains the pursuit of better quality day-care and the creation of all kinds of parental and care leave. But productivity is still just that bit more important, as becomes clear from the obligation to work they want to impose on single mothers. That raising and nurturing one’s own children is probably more effective in terms of realising stable family ties than dumping and collecting them in and from day-
care apparently ceases to be a relevant argument. Fostering “(...) conditions in which individuals are able to form stable ties with others, especially when children are involved (...)” (Giddens 2000a, 47) is still a government function worthy of pursuing, but only for those who have already manifested themselves as being productive citizens in the formal labour market. The entire combination scenario seems to be based on this idea. The new facilities which have sprung up in this context therefore do not seem to be inspired so much by the recognition that the activities, which are made possible besides work, possess an intrinsic value both for those involved and for society as a whole. These activities are only considered valuable when they are carried out in combination with paid employment. This is most readily apparent from the rules applying to the unemployed and other welfare recipients. The possibilities offered by regulation and legislation to wholly or partially relieve citizens, who already assume responsibility by fulfilling care functions within or outside the family unit, or by performing other worthy tasks in society, such as certain types of volunteer work, from the duty to apply for jobs, remain insufficiently explicit.  

The combination scenario therefore fits much better within libertarian than within communitarian politics. The aim is apparently the maximisation of the labour supply. By granting employees the opportunity to interrupt their careers under certain conditions, it is hoped that their productivity will remain high and, at the same time, a flexible labour reserve is created. The conditions under which career interruptions are allowed will guarantee that employees are not absent for too long or altogether from the labour market, or that their availability is retained or even improved. As a consequence, however, government policy is foraging ever further into the area of reproduction: education, time off, relaxation, recovery. Government is increasingly interfering in the way in which family relations are organised. It is therefore hardly surprising that the Third Way also pays a lot of attention to the elaboration of a family policy (Giddens 2000b, 99). There is, however, considerable danger that this new social and family policy is being forced on the citizens. As far as the welfare state is concerned, the Third Way seemingly replaces the breadwinner model with a new model, that is imposed in the same authoritarian way and has the same disciplining effect: the one and a half breadwinners model.

The citizenship concept of the Third Way thus leads to a recommodification of the citizen. One may well wonder to what extent the Third Way may be still be called social liberal and to what extent it is rather more libertarian now that Marshall’s thesis that the status of citizenship should precisely aim to create a measure of equality able to counterbalance the inequality of the market is apparently departed from. The only remaining difference between libertarianism and the Third Way seems to be that the Third Way does not consider a free market as a goal in itself, but as a means to realise traditional socialist values such as solidarity, equality and social justice. Question is to what extent the means chosen can be adequate to attain the goal. Because the modern social democrat is so intent on guarding against detracting from the viability of capitalism, he is time and again forced to give in to economic necessity and to deny his own initial intentions. This causes a need for the political and ideological position to be revised over and over again (Bieling 1998, 22). Insofar, however, as it is considered necessary to fall back on communitarian rhetoric, this means a shared illness with the neo-liberalism Giddens so detested, with its combination of market fundamentalism and conservatism. The Third Way makes a similar combination, albeit that on the economic axis the state is no longer regarded as an enemy, but as an ally who can lend a hand in case of serious derailments and for the remainder mostly fulfils a market-supporting function. In the personal and moral sphere, however, the Third Way reveals itself to be no less authoritarian; the views it defends there are merely better adjusted to present-day circumstances than those of neo-liberalism.  

Two questions spring to mind here. First of all, is the traditional family of the neo-liberals outdated and argues in favour of a system of co-parenting. This proposal may have a more modern ring to it and be better equipped to deal with

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30 The Dutch Algemene Bijstandswet [National Assistance Act], besides the exemption already mentioned for parents with one or more children under the age of 5, for example offers some possibility to perform useful tasks in society, while retaining one’s entitlement to social security payments. However, further analysis shows that this so-called “social activation” eventually aims to promote the chances of involvement in the labour market for those concerned, and thus needs to involve activities which are in that respect chance-increasing.

31 Giddens feels, for example, that the traditional family of the neo-liberals is outdated and argues in favour of a system of co-parenting. This proposal may have a more modern ring to it and be better equipped to deal with...
all, are the ideologists of the Third Way aware of their modern combination of economic market-directed thinking and moral authoritarianism? And if so, how do they intend to overcome the contradiction between the two appearing from their analysis of neo-liberalism?

Third Way theorists in my view all too easily believe that choosing a position which, at first sight, appears to be midway between several “pure” positions will automatically lead to an ideal and workable synthesis. The Third Way runs with the hare and hunts with the hounds, and is borrowing left, right and centre from the main political movements. The Third Way has embraced quite a number of republican preoccupations and solutions, for example. It argues in favour of democratising democracy in order to do away with political apathy, and propagates increased accountability for public institutions and the transparent reorganisation of decision-making bodies (Giddens 2000a, 58). Third Way theorists are mistaken though: you do not turn citizens into winners by obliging them to take part in a game that needs losers, too.

existing situations, Giddens still apparently shares the view that the existence of single parents is undesirable (See Giddens 2000b, 99 et seq.).
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