

International Perspectives on Social Policy,
Administration, and Practice

Vicente Berdayes
John W. Murphy *Editors*

Neoliberalism, Economic Radicalism, and the Normalization of Violence

 Springer

International Perspectives on Social Policy, Administration, and Practice

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The Springer series International Perspectives on Social Policy, Administration and Practice puts the spotlight on international and comparative studies of social policy, administration, and practice with an up-to-date assessment of their character and development. In particular, the series seeks to examine the underlying assumptions of the practice of helping professions, nonprofit organization and management, and public policy and how processes of both nation-state and globalization are affecting them. The series also includes specific country case studies, with valuable comparative analysis across Asian, African, Latin American, and Western welfare states. The series International Perspectives on Social Policy, Administration and Practice commissions approximately six books per year, focusing on international perspectives on social policy, administration, and practice, especially an East-West connection. It assembles an impressive set of researchers from diverse countries illuminating a rich, deep, and broad understanding of the implications of comparative accounts on international social policy, administration, and practice.

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Neoliberalism, Economic Radicalism, and the Normalization of Violence

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Series Editors Introduction

This edited volume by Berdayes and Murphy offers a rich tapestry of critical theorizing about the relationship of forms of physical and symbolic violence in a global world. It provides an important volume of the Springer International Perspectives on Social Policy, Administration, and Practice book series. The authors raise critical questions about social inaction and action and the problems of ideologies which provide mystification processes that deny positive social identity.

Of course, the spectre of problems of economic violence against subjugated groups in neoliberal globalization has endured a lasting legacy. Huge numbers of people struggle with poverty and significant pockets of poverty portend more than lack of income. Those living on the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder labor under the burden of avoidable lifestyle diseases, hunger, and related maladies, not to mention myriad social risks (Powell and Chen 2013). More than 2.5 billion of the planet's population live on less than US\$2 a day and nearly a billion still have less than US\$1 daily (Chen and Ravallion 2007). As might be apparent, in this day and age poverty creates conditions in which rationality is redefined, nation-states struggle to control circumstances, not to mention criminality, low birth weights are ubiquitous, ill-health a fact of life, illiteracy rampant, malnutrition commonplace, environmental degradation seen as the cost of doing business, and notions of social justice are brought face-to-face with priorities said to have greater standing (Beck 1999).

Focusing on the extent of the disparities for just a moment: not only is there asymmetry but real immiseration as well—only about 5% of the world's income is earned by the poorest 40% of its people (Estes et al. 2003). Even with the stalling of mature economies, the gulf between the most advantaged and the most disadvantaged in developed countries is no less dramatic; factor in the impact of gender, ethnicity, or other social impediments and the complexity intensifies as formidable inequalities shape well-being (Powell and Chen 2013). The disparities extend well beyond vital income differentials to quality of life issues, education, structured dependencies, or social exclusions resulting from policy decisions (Townsend 2007). Navarro (2007) posits that escalating differentials can be attributed in no small part to interventionist strategies adopted and endorsed by national governments (Powell and Chen 2013).

Not surprisingly, as a consequence of the richest segments of the population having far greater assets and control over their lives, they feel they have more in common with their counterparts in other regions than they do with their less affluent opposite number in their own regions (Hoogvelt 1997). Cross-cultural comparisons are extraordinarily valuable in helping lay out causal connections and for double-checking inferences. For example, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has a reliable cross-national comparative database of indicators of social policy expenditures in 30 member nations and their state-sponsored social welfare provisions entitled “Social Expenditures in the Period 1980–2003”. It covers public expenditures for typical forms of welfare including old age, survivors, incapacity-related benefits, health, family, active labor market programs, unemployment, housing, and other social policy areas (education excepted). Shalev (2007) points out that if health and pension benefits are combined as a share of GDP, countries like Sweden rank at the top by devoting some 14% of its GDP to health and pension protections. Data for the period 1980–2001, the latest available on the OECD Web site, suggests that Germany expends about 8% and the USA and Japan about 4%. In terms of both economics and domestic social policies, the impact of international economic relations has recontoured the landscape, so to speak, all the way to the regionalization and appropriation of economic relations. What were once bold lines of demarcation are now dotted lines more suggestive of administrative spheres than jingoistic borders. In the global century, deregulated markets are tightly integrated with political and social transformations, affecting local circumstances and communality (Geertz 1973). All in all, the globalizing influences of the early twenty-first century are producing a distinctive era in social history linked to the emergence of transnational actors as well as economics and technologies that are helping fuel the shifts. Global economic change portends more than alterations in per capita income, the nature of financial products and currency markets, or the rapid circulation of goods, communication, or technologies. It is a precursor to broad cultural and political shifts that challenge pre-contact arrangements, notions of social justice and solidarity as well as local interaction patterns. In a post-modern world, globalization is creating interlocking dependencies linked to the ways in which priorities are ordained by transnational interests (Powell and Chen 2013).

As Chen and Turner (2006) point out in a discussion focused on the welfare of the elderly but equally applicable to all social welfare, the accrual of public benefits reflects the invisible hand of market forces, the invisible handshake of tradition, and the invisible foot of political decisions. Despite avowals about the secularity of modern life, economic thinking, what might be termed spreadsheet logic, is accorded near theological status, with its canons seen as universally applicable and providing appropriate precept for adjudicating what is considered fair and just (Powell and Chen 2013). These tendencies are abetted by what is sometimes called the cyber infrastructure, or more simply, informatics, reinforcing these shifts and creating a digital divide separating those on either edge of the diffusion of innovations. Of course, there is more to this technological transformation than the appearance of new ways to communicate; it has also paved the way to a post-fordist formulation that Castells (2000) labels network capitalism.

The consequences of globalization are fraught with new risks and ambiguities in daily experience and in the way matters of worth are defined; along with the many positive aspects that are undeniably part of the process associated with privatization. Navarro (2007) points to the privatization of services, public assets, and other public provisions in asymmetrical fashion, deregulation of labor and currency markets as well as other forms of commerce, free trade, escalation of an accompanying anti-interventionist rhetoric, and encouragement of individualism and consumerism. A number of commentators have noted that a corollary of globalization results in an unprecedented pattern of social risk. As Townsend (2007) so elegantly points out, the globalization of the marketplace is changing the face of dependency. It is as though the configuration of risks has shifted from settling on just those poor down-and-outers living along society's margins to those derailed by restructuring of labor markets, the dramatic spread of employment in service sector jobs, shifts in the types of career patterns that so characterized the twentieth century, and the role of informatics affecting employability of middle-class workers (Powell and Chen 2013).

These risks are not grounded merely in the absence of resources but in an absence of personal autonomy and by people's position relative to others. Add to these factors the fact that as they wrestle with the issues, national and local governments are assailed from multiple fronts: pressed by transnational interests to provide open trade liberalization for private enterprise and pressed by the growing need for social protections and labor policies to sustain the working populace and those whose lives have fallen through the proverbial social safety net. Ever more inclusive protections call for targeted expenditures at exactly the time when expenditures are hemmed in by capacity to levy taxes of any type but especially progressive taxes and by powerful interested constituencies. The neoliberal globalizing drive has disenfranchised workers and their representatives in ways that have eroded their ability to bargain for benefits. Many commentators have noted that governments have generally adopted a *laissez faire* stance when for one reason or another they have chosen not to intervene in the disempowerment of the citizenry (Navarro 2007).

It is up to the challenge of scholars to be both critical and do something with the critical questions they raise about the chilling implications of economic and social inequities in the world. Berdayes and Murphy's edited volume rises to this challenge with an impressive depth and breadth attached to their volume. They target inequality grounded with an outstanding range of theorists whose ideas provide important lessons for how we go beyond critique and point to radical action without ever failing to see the threats that impinge on meaningful and existential social agency.

About the book series

International Perspectives on Social Policy, Administration, and Practice is one of the first to attempt to bring together a truly international dimension of studying social policy, administration, and practice grounded in understanding the socioeconomic and cultural conditions from diverse countries. It puts the spotlight on com-

parative research of social policy, administration, and practice with an up-to-date assessment of their character and development. In particular, the series seeks to examine the underlying assumptions of the practice of helping professions, non-profit organization and management, and public policy and how processes of both nation-state and globalization are affecting them as well as specific country case studies, with valuable comparative analysis across Asian, African, Latin American, and Western welfare states.

It has become evident that major social forces of an international nature, including population changes, social-political trends, and the globalization of economies are reshaping social policies, administrations, and practices around the globe. Among the many ramifications of these changes is that globalizing influences impede the power of nation-states to establish individualized national policies based on local priorities. Multinational corporations, NGOs, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund have appeared on the scene and are factors in determining welfare policies. Depending on where a nation-state may have been on an industrializing trajectory, the influence of globalization will play out differently but inevitably in light of global influences. The emerging societies/nation-states in the global world are shaped by inward forces of health and social welfare policies as well as international forces of globalization, each conspiring to provide social protection for people uncertain in modern times. The book series will examine the driving forces of political, cultural, and economic transformations in comparative and historical perspectives. Macroscopic global trends will be highlighted as undoubtedly powerful in shaping social policy, administration, and practice experiences, yet their influence will be traced and rivalled by domestic institutional traditions in nation-states.

The series publishes books that attempt to understand social policy, administration, and practice in the continents of the Americas, Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia. Given the international scope of the book series, it will be very relevant to policy-makers and practitioners interested in a comparative understanding. There is much to be learned from a critical and comparative analysis of experiences of various countries that are both struggling and adapting to the emerging challenges to social policy, administration, and practice in the emerging global century. There is any number of competing priorities facing countries around the world and the ways in which they adjudicate among the various petitioners reflecting their relative position and aspirational status in the global economy. This book series meets the challenge head-on with a rich variety of topics and case studies and teasing out the implications for comparative social welfare drawn from debates framed within a critical understanding of international social policy, administration, and practice. It assembles an impressive set of researchers from diverse countries illuminating a rich, deep, and broad understanding of the implications of comparative accounts on social policy, administration, and practice with a focus on international perspectives, especially an East-West connection.

The book series will promote examination of important issues from a diverse array of researchers from around the world. It seeks to integrate analyses of policy and practice in particular countries struggling to provide social welfare support for all the populations. The series aims at the highest professional and academic

level, with a highly international audience. There is a chronic lack of good resource materials that attempt to understand comparative welfare in its relationship to examining the problems and possibilities of social policy, administration, and practice grounded in an analysis of features of international facets of health and social welfare in nation-states spanning the six continents. The series offers academics, researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers the opportunity to propose diverse viewpoints that illuminate the problems and possibilities of social, political, economic, and demographic trends and the relative impact these have on the policy process in comparative contexts: national, international, and global arenas. It provides the necessary historical and contemporary perspectives on the development of social policy as well as present articles providing state-of-the-art developments in research methodology, theory, and practice in comparative understanding of various social issues.

A book series striving to develop the scholarship of comparative social policy, administrative studies, and professional practice will help to meet the needs of students in numerous courses offered around the world with relevant titles. Important fields include social policy and planning, social work, public administration, political science, legal studies, economics, sociology, social theory, social geography, cultural anthropology, history, education, psychology, health studies, disability studies, nursing, social gerontology, children and family studies, women and gender studies, ethnic and cultural studies, population and migration studies, urban and community studies, developmental studies, and area and international studies. The volumes in the series will also appeal to students interested in interdisciplinary courses; to professionals in health and social care and public services, as well as academics. This book series is timely given the recent proliferation of degrees looking specifically at social policy in the USA and UK being two such examples, but more generally in light of the current high profile of comparative studies of social welfare. Major English-speaking markets also include Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Hong Kong, and India in addition to other markets such as Europe, Japan, China, Taiwan, Korea, Latin America, and Africa. In social work, public administration, and sociology, programs for undergraduates include related courses, typically on policy studies, administrative studies, and professional practice. These are core courses for all degree students but are also a popular option for students registered for degrees in other social and human science subjects. Particularly interested will be libraries in the USA and UK, plus mainland Europe and developed and fast developing Asia, including China and India, and also in Latin America and the Middle East. Social security agencies all around the world and scholarly organizations with large membership may also make up the specific audience for the book series, including social policy associations, sociology departments, public policy departments, social work departments, etc. as key customers of social policy books.

The book series' cross-disciplinary appeal is one of its major strengths: The variety of case study of nation-states in the international arena and examples used to illustrate those debates will allow debates around the impact of health, welfare, and other types of social provisions on contemporary social life into new realms:

realms that students and practitioners can utilize to reflect upon their own experiences in challenging assumptions about international social policy, administration, and practice and relationship to health, welfare, and other types of social provisions; learning from experiences of other cultures. The series seeks to encourage debate about the implications of the most pressing health and social welfare issues for people of all ages, ethnicities, and classes in nation-states. Substantive areas include social development, social welfare, social security, social assistance, employment policy, education policy, cultural policy, health care policy, social rehabilitation, housing policy, child welfare, gender policy, family policy, population policy, minority issues, migration policy, equity and diversity, NGOs, social enterprises and social capital, social support networks, international social work practice, community organization, administrative studies, and other major social development issues that impact and are interwoven with social policy practice, research, and theory development.

This book series promotes discussion of comparative policy and practice issues, encourages submissions of interdisciplinary work from Asia, the Americas, Europe, and other parts of the world and thus expands cross-cultural opportunities for exciting and cutting-edge research. The series particularly welcomes:

- Research studies on the influence of national and global issues in social policy practice and development;
- Theoretical works that explain the origin, development, and evolution of the multidisciplinary fields of comparative social policy, administration, and practice as well as their research methodology;
- Reviews and meta-analysis of research scholarship written on the topic of social policy, administration, and practice for systematization into textbooks and other educational tools.

Sheying Chen and Jason L. Powell

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Language, Social Order, and Neoliberal Violence

Vicente Berdayes and John W. Murphy

This book examines neoliberal economics as a form of violent radicalism. The orienting framework is a focus on neoliberalism as a discourse whose assumptions and influence on contemporary institutions normalize violence. In the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks, the term “radicalism” has become a signifier of global terrorism. For a variety of commentators, terrorism can only be understood in reference to violent acts that remain unthinkable to normal human beings. Yet, the violence associated with overtly political or religious extremism is only a small component of contemporary violence. In their everyday lives, people are subjected to routine, widespread, and equally radical violence associated with the economic theses of neoliberalism. Understood as the complete reorganization of social existence in pursuit of narrow economic interests, neoliberalism normalizes ideas and behavior that would appear obscene outside of an economistic frame of reference. The antisocial imagery propagated by this market-based extremism, for example, vindicates the existence of profound social inequalities that consign billions of people to supposedly deserved squalor. Yet, such ideas often pass as unquestioned verities among elite decision-makers, theorists, and commentators and indeed can be brought up for discussion as if their catastrophic impact on the world’s peoples were only abstract policy issues. Even more striking, some of those most hurt by neoliberal policies, for instance, working-class people whose unionized jobs once guaranteed them stable, middle-class lifestyles, are sometimes the most vociferous champions of economic extremism, interpreting such policies as expressions of “freedom” and “liberty.”

However, social conditions have unraveled to the point where violence in life makes itself apparent in spectacular ways and generates public calls for a response.

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There is no doubt that the character of contemporary life conveys a dire message to many people in American society. Contrary to the positive ideology of growth and increasing prosperity publically touted by elites, the value of life diminishes every day. Noteworthy examples of this phenomenon are mass killings, the list of which grows at a monthly rate in the USA. Many persons in the USA desire to live more secure and tranquil lives and are fed up with these spectacular acts of violence. Mass shootings like the ones in a Colorado movie theatre, Sandy Hook Elementary School, the naval facility in Washington, DC, and the shooting in a church in Charleston, SC, have caught the public's attention and rallied calls for social change. Yet here, too, public discourse and deliberation on this issue remains narrowed to superficial kinds of interventions such as restricting the availability of military weapons and large capacity clips of ammunition. That such killings may be approached as symptoms of radical economic changes occurring at a global scale rarely enters mainstream forums of public deliberation or, even more rarely, the chambers of government. That even superficial efforts to legislate gun control are now practically guaranteed to fail in spite of widespread support illustrates the distortion and voiding of political deliberation that has attended the rise of neoliberalism.

The theme that life has little worth is especially problematic for young persons, who lack experience and the maturity to reflect critically on the violent images and ideas that inundate society. Blood and gore on television, video games, and in movies are examples of the pervasive violence directed to young people as part of highly profitable business models. So, too, is the state of perpetual war, which media and the military glamorize as the real-world complement to the fantasies presented in televised programming and games. Maudlin affirmations of military personnel at public events as well as the military's own blood-and-thunder advertising campaigns suggest that military service is a uniquely impeccable way to live one's life. Nowhere, for instance, do people begin a seventh inning stretch by "stopping for a moment to recognize our heroes in the Peace Corps," even though men and women regularly lose their lives in voluntary service to that organization, and its values of peace and intercultural understanding seem at least as compelling as those of the military. What these features of everyday life imply and what many people, especially the most vulnerable, begin to experience is an environment where persons are regularly degraded. The moral argument against killing, accordingly, begins to appear disingenuous and loses potency. Violence and death become taken-for-granted features of social existence, while efforts to speak out for alternatives seem increasingly utopian and are thus shut out from public deliberation in the name of realism.

Yet, some critics exhibit the courage to talk seriously about this cheapening of life in American society (Casparius 2013, p. A8). After all, those who pursue this angle risk censure and being labeled un-American or subversives. The problem, however, is that these writers do not go far enough in their analyses. Often, they restrict their focus to discussions of obscene films or violent video games, whereas the economy, an allegedly neutral and central institution, is typically not addressed as instrumental in creating a context for violence. In spite of efforts to clothe it in scientific neutrality, neoliberal economics is a radical expression of elite interests.

The current neoliberal outlook advances a social imagery and claims that diminish the communal nature of social existence and which erode compassion and trust. The result is what Erich Fromm (1955) once called a “sick society.” In a sick society, people yearn for security but try to achieve stability in ways that cheapen life: Diversity and difference are demonized, and people lash out at anything that seems not normal and which threatens their world. Not surprisingly, such responses only further the ongoing process of social degradation.

Modes of Degradation

While media and most persons concentrate on the increasing number of horrendous acts performed with outrageous weapons, the more general and fundamental fact that life is diminished daily receives scant attention, even though these messages originate from mainstream institutions rather than the margins of social life. This reluctance to undertake more extensive forms of social analysis is understandable for many reasons. For one, institutions such as the economy, education, government, and science are pillars of society. They form the institutional matrix through which society reproduces itself, so in a real sense criticism of such institutions requires questioning one’s entire mode of life. Another well-known phrase of Fromm’s refers to the way in which people faced with such exigencies recoil and seek to “escape from freedom,” meaning that it takes courage to face the contingency of existence and that it is often easier to shirk this responsibility in favor of a reactionary stance toward change (Fromm 1941). Moreover, because of their status, specific organizations and by extension the people that control them are often placed beyond suspicion of wrongdoing. Thus, specific scientists may be thought biased, but it takes more persistent analysis to argue that the framework of what is called normal science contains inherent biases. Similarly, it is easy to admit that one or an even group of well-placed bankers conspired to steal vast fortunes, but it takes more fortitude to question whether the expropriation of wealth is built into the basic operation of capitalism. Because these organizations are so central to society and are intertwined with its most basic values, the damage they inflict in the normal course of their operation is often overlooked. These foundations, in other words, are the basis for order and morality and thus are not usually identified as contributing to the onset of social problems such as violence.

The capitalist economy, especially in its current neoliberal incarnation, is very violent. Companies abandon their communities and persons lose their jobs, even as profits increase. The image conveyed is that workers and their families are nothing but cost points on a spreadsheet and that sacrificing lives in the pursuit of profit is a rational choice both for individual investors and for the ultimate benefit of all. After all, why should ineffective people unable to compete in the marketplace due to personal decisions be protected? Even those most hurt by market forces are its supposed beneficiaries, as the economy’s immutable laws teach people the value of self-discipline. “Compete or die,” easily stands as the motto of the day: the value of human beings pales in comparison to the demands of economic rationality.

The social imagery coveted by mainstream economists is telling. The social world, simply put, is equated with the market. For this reason, Hinkelammert (1991) and Serrano (1995) refer to the modern world as a “Total Market.” In this volume, the chapters by Esposito as well as Franz and Murphy discuss the impact of this imagery. The general idea is that those who are successful at the marketplace are adversaries, and any deviation from this outlook undermines economic success. Rational persons pursue their own interests, look out primarily for themselves or their families, and cast derision on those who are unsuccessful. As a result, to borrow from Karl Marx, persons begin to lose a sense of their “species-being,” that is, their fundamental connection to others and, thus, their humanity.

This unseemly doctrine appears in other ways and in diverse areas of life. Quite some time ago, Randall Collins (1974) illustrated the violent nature of bureaucracies, yet this lesson was not learned, and bureaucratization proceeds unabated. Practically every day, persons are sacrificed to abstract rules and regulations within inflexible organizations. Decisions about employment and health care, for example, which are incredibly harmful to organizational stakeholders, are made in a dispassionate manner under the cover of bureaucratic rationality. Often persons are denied care simply because of technicalities or in deference to predetermined profit margins. Yet, no one is at fault, because administrators and their underlings understand their actions as simply following rules.

Persons are incidental to bureaucracies (Perrow 1972). The Congress of the USA clearly illustrates this point when senators and congressmen debate economic relief and health care as if real people were not suffering in their midst. Concrete individuals are sacrificed to an abstraction such as the national debt, while it magically becomes irrelevant when debating military expenditures. A viewer of these debates would easily get the impression that human beings are an afterthought, dispensable, or at least a nuisance that has to be grudgingly managed.

Steve Arxer, in this book, argues that a new outlook has emerged that reinforces this standard bureaucratic rationality and which is also consistent with the ideology of the market. Due to the dominance of computers and new communication technology, network imagery now complements the economic precepts of market rationality. In a manner consistent with Castells, the network society has arrived. Arxer argues that although network imagery seems to offer an alternate form of social organization that is somewhat unobtrusive, even inviting, nonetheless this type of society still overwhelms people and subverts their autonomy. People remain incidental to the requirements of the network. His analysis suggests that the identification of social life with networks or webs should inspire suspicion rather than excitement.

These examples illustrate the way every day persons are treated as impediments to the efficient operation of institutions. Education provides yet another example as teachers are now routinely berated by politicians for not meeting senseless performance standards while students are subjected to dehumanizing forms of schooling more apropos to totalitarian regimes than democratic societies (Kozol 2005). As Jung Choi says, in his chapter, schools have become entrapped in the market and education is little more than a quality assurance program for employers. Students

are treated as commodities who must acquire credentials certifying them competent to enter the marketplace for labor. As a result of this orientation, the focus has shifted to passing competency tests instead of training young people to address the big ideas and ethical issues that face a citizenry. The human side of education is thus diminished by treating students as objects to be marketed and by the desire to acquire only the outward signs of an education.

In a sense, the social world has become a corporation, and everyone is subservient to this master. What persons or communities desire is irrelevant if these aims conflict with the corporatist master plan. Practically every day, persons and communities come into conflict with the corporate “bottom line,” and lose. If profits cannot be made in a particular community, entire ways of life are forcefully discarded. Under current conditions in the USA, workers and corporations no longer negotiate wage and benefit packages. Workers are continually on notice that a move to Mexico or another far-flung locale is imminent if concessions offered by employees and local government are insufficient to increase profits. These empty exercises in labor relations have much more to do with degrading workers and breaking their collective agency than with increasing profits. Accordingly, when living standards have degenerated to the level of third-world countries, corporate overseers celebrate the return of now low-paying jobs as a vindication of market forces.

Existence Within the Machine

In many ways, social life grinds on like a machine. Most persons are on a wheel, and they cannot get off. Their jobs are in jeopardy, and pay is inadequate. Prices continue to rise, and personal debt increases. And daily life becomes harsher as this process proceeds. As Mickunas and Pilotta discuss in their contributions to this book, the entire world has been subject to the whims of economic planners. These plans involve manipulating human beings in one way or another, all the time promising an increase in the quality of life. Yet, the necessities of life become more costly, and the future looks increasingly uncertain. The problem is that planners and entrepreneurs, while trying at times to act in a heroic manner, create plans that regularly overlook the real needs of communities and do little more than enhance, and often disguise destructive policies. A type of reverse adaptation has thus initiated, whereby persons and communities are expected to adapt to economic practices and developmental schemes that make matters worse.

As a result, persons who once viewed themselves as solid citizens begin to drift to the periphery of society (Newman 1993). What used to be called the middle class—a bastion of stability and virtue—is no longer secure. Schooling and training, for example, become more expensive and difficult to obtain, and those who once attended 4-year universities find themselves in community colleges or online classrooms. The path to success, accordingly, becomes longer, less direct, and burdensome. Trying to become a member of the middle class is now an arduous and almost impossible trek for many people. In spite of the impact of planning and

the application of theory to social life, people have, in effect, lost control of their lives. Of course, effort still matters, but the end product is more elusive. With success becoming more difficult to envision and just beyond grasp, work becomes less fulfilling and unrelated to the achievement of personal or community goals. In the end, few seem to care passionately about anything as more and more people simply try to survive. In social science, the term often used to describe this situation is alienation, a truly degrading condition (Marx 1973). Alienated people feel a sense of powerlessness and meaninglessness because institutions and other key aspects of social existence seem unresponsive to human desires. Human beings' creations, in other words, become their adversaries.

Although the experience of alienation is widespread, Jean Baudrillard (2009) declares that current social conditions should not be described as alienating. In fact, he contends that the situation is much worse! People are enveloped by a system they cannot control, and they see no way out of their predicament. One reason is that the machine supplants the everyday world with a system of programmed images. As Berdayes and Berdayes detail in their chapter, the contents of commercial media are designed to reinforce people's sense of helplessness. In an echo of neoliberal sloganeering, the imagery presented by commercial media reinforces the idea that there is no alternative to the current order. Warfare and privation are presented as de facto features of the world, and the only options are to arm oneself against one's neighbor and squirrel oneself away in the placebo world of electronic games. The imagery disseminated by media conglomerates teaches that maltreatment and brutality are unavoidable. In the background of this image factory, moreover, lies a technological system that collects information on everyone, at once "targeting" consumers with ads designed to further impoverish them and generating a catalog of online behavior readymade for any government eager to corral subversives.

Thus, although people may internally rage against their situation, it also seems like only a matter of time until they succumb to the machine. Everyone seems to be awaiting their fate as the economic wheel turns. When will the next recession/depression come? Well, over a decade ago, Pierre Bourdieu (1989, n.p.) could ably describe the character of life in the present neoliberal period: "In the way, a Darwinian world emerges—it is the struggle of all against all at all levels of the hierarchy, which finds support through everyone clinging to their job and organization under conditions of insecurity, suffering, and stress." Thus, despite politicians and religious leaders' claims about the worth of human life, the opposite appears to be the case. The economic system takes precedence over human existence and defines life in its own terms. When the economy demands sacrifice, humans must relent. As in service to the idol Moloch, so ably portrayed in *Metropolis*, workers give back salary gains and accept temporary layoffs, all the while hoping that the economy has been appeased and conditions will magically turn around. Talk about the value of human life is little more than rhetoric in view of this reality. The truth is that people are routinely thrown into the street and have their lives totally disrupted, often after years of hard work and loyalty to their employers. The callousness of the entire scene is difficult to bare.

Not surprisingly, religion has become a source of comfort and inspiration to many of those discarded by the economic system. Nonetheless, when these persons leave their places of worship, their religious fervor is confronted by the dominant and stubborn message that the world is an uncaring place dominated by institutions that apparently no one controls. In the so-called real world, as Louis Althusser (1969) once remarked, in the final instance the economy is dominant. Of course, Althusser is referring to the world envisioned by capitalists and supported by economic imperatives masquerading as laws. Besides the conflicted role of religion in a neoliberal setting, other remarkable cultural contradictions arise in this context (Bell 1976). On the one hand, because individuals are theoretically the focus of attention in a system based on free choice, people expect recognition and to be treated with dignity. Yet, human desires are often presumed to be irrational and an impediment to the smooth operation of social institutions, including the market. For example, universal health care—a very popular idea—is sidetracked because such a policy allegedly threatens the well-being of the economy. Likewise, universal employment, it is argued, would destabilize the cost of labor. As personal sacrifice to the economy and other institutions comes to be expected as the only rational option, the care of persons accordingly takes a backseat to abstract economic dogma.

No Exit

The title of this section is borrowed from Sartre's (1959) play in which three deceased characters face eternity locked together in a room. Many persons likely recognize the limitations of the institutions that shape their lives, and even note their violent nature, but it is likely that few believe there is an exit from this situation. Though protestors chant that another world is possible, even necessary, this invitation is often dismissed as an illusion or the product of youthful idealism. In the press, for example, the Occupy movement is portrayed as a bunch of capricious kids, likely hoodlums, who lack a coherent philosophy or plan of action. Similar to protesters in the 1960s, they are characterized as lacking gravity and incapable of formulating a viable alternative to the current situation.

Herbert Marcuse wrote in 1964 that most persons have become trapped within a "one-dimensional" world. In this sense, a very narrow slice of reality is envisioned to be the only viable alternative. Through various means, including schools and the media, people are bombarded with claims that no other economic system is better or more humane. The result of this misperception is that the so-called real or current social arrangements go unchallenged as alternative proposals are dismissed as fantasy. Prevailing institutions may be troublesome, but any possible replacements are untested and likely worse. Anyone who hopes to be taken seriously is forced to be a realist and adapt or merely hope for a better world (preferably in the next life). While the actual world may be ridden with problems, persons become convinced that other options are utopian fantasies. Why would reasonable people, who have worked hard throughout their lives and persevered in the face of continual hardship, risk everything pursuing impracticable social possibilities?

But why should persons relent so easily? One successful strategy of social control has been the introduction of ideas such as human nature to convince people that progress is unlikely because the basic and unsavory constitution of humanity cannot be overcome. This type of biologicistic thinking appears in many contexts in contemporary society including justifications of market-based society. The market, for example, is thought to provide the perfect ordering mechanism if people are assumed to be basically greedy. As if through the guidance of an “invisible hand,” the market channels universal human avarice in socially constructive ways. This type of thinking obviously interacts with religious conceptions of sin and corruption, and, not accidentally, God and the market are often linked in conservative public discourse. But biologism is a particularly useful ideology because it grounds and justifies the market in an apparently scientific understanding of human nature. The message offered by this discourse is that persons lack integrity, and must, like wild beasts, be corralled by powerful institutions to prevent disorder and despair (Wrong 1961). If avarice is presumed to be an immutable feature of human nature, how can a more just society even be possible? Those who pursue social alternatives are told that disaster is the only possible outcome of irresponsibly ignoring human nature. Oriented by this discourse, people have difficulty imagining a world that is not based on greed and corruption and where guns are always required to ward off violence.

An additional benefit of this biologicistic discourse is that it provides a readymade justification of the inequalities that pervade market-based society. Rather than have to recognize the socially catastrophic impact of slavery, Jim Crow, and the ways in which existing institutions perpetuate inequality, biologism refers to nebulous concepts like IQ to explain social disparities. Inequalities of wealth and access to resources arise naturally, in this view, due to biologically grounded differences among racial and ethnic groups. Current society is thus blameless because inequality is simply a natural outcome of intellectual advantages that select groups on average have over others. Some people are simply more biologically fit to compete in a market system. In this Panglossian view of the world, the market continuously selects for meritocratic excellence and insures that the deserving rise to the top over time. Thus, if one is really interested in social justice, what could be more unjust than hindering the operation of the free market and penalizing the most deserving through one form or other of collectivism? Although activists may periodically propose alternatives and appear set to bring about significant change, such efforts are doomed to collapse as an implacable process of social degradation sets in, leaving people with no option but to curse the human condition.

These attempts to immunize institutions against change spawns a culture of suspicion in which people search for opportunities to take advantage of one another and are wary of anything novel. One lives life on the run, so to speak, desperately hoping that one's luck does not run out (Fromm 1955). Because hostility and violence are thought to be ingrained by nature, only heroes or saints are able to overcome these traits. While such exceptional persons can entertain ideals and strive for moral rectitude, the masses of human beings are condemned to suffer and merely hope for a better world. At best, persons strive to find a stable niche where they can retain their humanity in the chaotic world fashioned by the Total Market. In

the end, however, pragmatic actions do little to propitiate the Moloch of the market. Whether people have work or any kind of livable future becomes increasingly questionable as distant elites gain more and more control of the economic machine.

New Inspiration

As persons express rage and sorrow with little impact, there seems to be no way out of this machine. The cycle of violence and regret continues, punctuated with cries for change, yet nothing improves. Persons are trapped within a system of their own devising, with no escape in sight. Baudrillard (1980, p. 68) refers to this alienation as the result of “misrecognition.” His point is that persons are complicit in their own suffering; in other words, they have fallen prey to their own ideology. As a result of various claims about human nature and the basic perils of social life, a better world is simply thought to be a dream. Although persons created both present social conditions and the rationale used to legitimize this situation, any significant change is perceived to be beyond their ability to realize. Similar to Plato’s “Big Lie” or stories about the Bunny Rabbit, tales about the present social order attain bigger than life status and become difficult to challenge. So, what is to be done? Perhaps a new view of the human condition might be helpful?

What is interesting about Baudrillard’s analysis is that alienation is connected to human initiative. As a result, the tale of woe can be rethought. Instead of attributing current affairs to mythologies about the desperate human condition, a grounded narrative that would clearly be more enlightening may be developed. This new story, for example, might illustrate that everyday acts of degradation, both large and small, have a social or cultural rationale. Beliefs about greed or egoism that ground the current social order can be reframed as mechanisms justifying present economic arrangements. Instead of seen as basic to the human condition—what Frederick Herzberg (1973) calls the myth of the Fallen Man—these claims can be reinterpreted as political narratives designed to restrict ambitions for change.

This reframing of human nature can draw on equally powerful sources for legitimacy to counter the dominant narrative. Modern anthropology, for example, no longer cleaves to the belief in an essential human character. Like other facets of the social world, identities are invented and creatively propped up by theories and situated forms of data. It is difficult to see why certain images of the human being should be granted primacy rather than others because no one has discovered an indisputable human nature to ground institutions. If there is anything natural about humans, it seems to be that they are open, flexible, and capable of developing in any number of directions (Gehlen 1988). In the end, there is no reason why an alternative vision of human existence has to be treated as inherently utopian, other than a lack of imagination and courage. As Sartre notes, human beings are condemned to be free and, consequently, carry the weight of the whole world on their shoulders (Sartre 1994).

Although often unnoticed, social life is inundated and mediated by a plethora of narratives. As writers such as Roland Barthes (1988) declare, there is nothing outside of language. Other writers, linked to philosophies such as phenomenology, hermeneutics, existentialism, and postmodernism, share this perspective (Murphy 2012). The implication of this epistemological position is that the current economic reality constitutes a dominant storyline. Although linguistic in origin and not necessarily spawned by an objective reference, a narrative is able to support an entire economic system and associated image of humanity. The result is that no one ever confronts a brute reality. Instead, our encounters are with a particular linguistic rendition of society. Every reality, therefore, is a story that can be reworked and reissued. The biography of a society can thus be given a new plot and ending, even in the case of a story that is touted as aligned with human nature.

Additionally, recognizing the linguistic foundations of social order provides theorists with powerful tools of social analysis. Basic features of the contemporary world, which at first seem immutable, can be subjected to a critical archeology that brings to light how they have been constructed over time, how they cohere with other narratives, and how their current configurations might be dislodged. In the context of understanding neoliberalism, this approach to social analysis brings to light how economic extremism becomes normalized to the point that inhumane policies and practices become accepted as an expected feature of the world. Examining the mechanisms of economic radicalization is a step toward articulating alternatives to the current and dominant economic worldview, while recognizing that the social world is linguistically constituted opens the possibility that qualitative social change is not only possible but also attainable and practicable.

Because all social arrangements represent stories—fables about origin, purpose, and success—constructing a new and compelling storyline is not automatically off-limits. While a new narrative may be utopian in comparison with the past, such a proposal is not necessarily inherently unworkable and doomed to fail. In fact, those in power know this to be the case and consequently always move quickly to restrict forms of expression and to substitute manufactured pabulum for public access to the means of expression. Although changing the world involves a confrontation with the powerful, the continuous and increasingly complex efforts that elites must pursue to maintain their version of reality—from new forms of censorship to increasing expenditures on the fables of advertising—shows that their world is already unraveling as people withdraw their belief in a premanufactured world. This does not mean that the transition to a new world will be easy or guaranteed. As Hannah Arendt (1970) argued, the opposite of power is violence. As their power over others disintegrates, who knows what steps those in control of the current global order will take to maintain control? Clearly, their narrative provides them readymade ways to justify future atrocities in the name of saving human beings from themselves. Yet, all over the world, people are giving voice and practical expression to new ways of living. As the current order implodes in part out of the social and ecological dynamics its narrative has set in play, many of these emerging narratives will seem increasingly compelling as people search for new ways to give meaning to their lives. Closing this book, Richard Cohen's chapter describes this new sensibility

coming to fruition among young people and its relationship to the great refusal—to an unwillingness to adopt prescribed norms even for what constitutes rebellion. To paraphrase Nietzsche, nothing is foreign to human imagination, except perspectives that persons choose to reject. A more commodious social existence, one that is less violent and corrupt, is possible.

Conclusion

The perspective outlined so far suggests that a basic problem in overcoming neoliberalism is that the public has been chided into becoming too realistic. The idea that persons can treat one another in less degrading ways is presumed to be fantasy. But what would a new story entail? Perhaps the mythology attached to the present economic system can be rewritten or opposed by alternatives, so that persons do not think of themselves as fundamentally greedy adversaries. Maybe there are ways to rethink forms of exchange so that market relations and the forms of sacrifice they require are not so appealing. Social life can also be portrayed in ways that sustain a more communal sensibility, so that alternative ways of living would not be dismissed automatically as unrealistic.

The point is that in order to reduce the violence associated with the existing economic order, new narratives are necessary. These renditions of social life will reorient the ground of human institutions. By subjecting taken-for-granted associations and expectations to serious reflection, the justifications for human degradation can be uprooted. The time has come to think anew about the character of social relationships, so that support and care are not viewed as rare and unexpected features of social life. As Foucault (1983, p. xii) noted in his Preface to Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*, the fascism found in everyday life, the coveting of advancement and personal gain that degrades persons, must be challenged. In this regard, a new image of social existence must be proposed, one that does not seek to compete with a putative fundamental reality but is instead oriented toward replacing the current outmoded and death-oriented narrative without fear of courting irrationality. While a confrontation with reality is futile, the reworking of a dominant narrative is an altogether practical possibility.

For this reason, Walter Benjamin (1969) lamented the demise of storytellers. Nowadays these persons are viewed as unproductive eccentrics, as tangential places in the economy. At the most, they are a source of new “sign values” that can be commodified and incorporated into the machinery of entertainment. This is the way the dominant economic system appropriates their real and dangerous power, which lies in the ability to propose new narratives and announce a call to action. The storyteller shifts the ground of reality. In the biblical sense, they are prophets—they herald a break with the past and the opening of a new reality. But as fellow humans, rather than heroes, they demonstrate how all persons can change both themselves and the future. In effect, their approachability and frivolousness is anathema to the narrative of abstract control and efficiency.

Thus, the choice is no longer between reality and fantasy. People are capable of rewriting themselves and their relationships—a much less daunting task than confronting reality. Yet, has the dominant rendition of reality destroyed any prospect of this change? Has imagination been so discredited that a new story about economic life cannot be formulated? The current centrality of the entertainment industries in the global order shows that this is not so. Human creativity continues to abound, only the conditions for its expression have shifted. Moreover, as Bingham and Kramer detail in their chapter, even under conditions of hyper-commercialism and monopoly control of media, human beings literally take a resistant stance on such content; by virtue of being embodied, human beings have the ability to reinterpret their prefabricated world. Thus, the appropriation of the future by entertainment is never complete, and many voices from the margins continue to propose alternatives to what exists. A simple choice always faces human beings: The failure to voice new narratives is a choice to support current conditions. After all, as Sartre (1994) noted, inaction is action—inaction allows the current narrative to endure. Hence, inaction and action are both existentially weighty. The difference is that without new, affirmative narratives, the degradation of human life that is central to the neo-liberal order will continue to be seen as justified and necessary. The only way out and toward a livable future is by means of new narratives.

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Chapter 2

The Language of Current Economics: Social Theory, the Market, and the Disappearance of Relationships

Berkeley A. Franz and John W. Murphy

Social theory begins with the odd proposition that persons are basically separate and somehow must be united. As a result of this inauspicious beginning, the collapse of society and the need for order have been a key preoccupation of many social critics. Dennis Wrong (1961) contends, accordingly, that this fear of disorder has resulted in these writers advancing an “over-socialized” conception of human existence. Specifically, unless persons are dominated by powerful institutions, the assumption is that society will likely erupt into chaos.

The central problem is that persons cannot be trusted to regulate themselves. Unable to recognize any justification or means to generate solidarity, they must rely on institutional controls to instill order. Social imagery is advanced regularly; accordingly, that portrays society to be autonomous, intimidating, and able to join together disparate individuals.

The history of modern social thought has been monopolized by two, very different social ontologies (Stark 1963). The first is referred to as nominalism. Nominalists argue that only individuals are real and that the social realm is simply a myth. Although at first this perspective appears to elevate persons in importance, they are subordinated eventually to powerful control mechanisms. Any ability that these individuals might have to exhibit social action, and form equitable relationships, is thus compromised. The second of these renditions of social life is realism. Realists believe that only the social domain is important, and, in the end, individuals are incidental. With persons undermined in this way, the preservation of society becomes a dominant theme. But this aim requires the immediate sacrifice of human dignity and any sense of fellow feeling.

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Both of these trends are witnessed in neoliberal economic philosophy (Hinkelammert 1991). Clearly, the individual is the centerpiece of this outlook. Creativity and personal freedom, for example, are predominant themes. But eventually this pursuit of individual goals must be tempered, or these fundamentals will be lost. At this juncture, the market enters the picture. Through the efforts of this device, the behavior of individuals is coordinated, thereby producing economic wealth and social harmony. Persons are joined but without their knowledge or consent.

If social theory would have begun with a different premise, establishing order might not be so difficult. For example, searching for social solidarity, and the accompanying sense of community, might not seem so idealistic. Alternatives to perennial cultural rivalries and class conflicts, often attributed to human nature, might not be viewed as unworkable and abandoned with little serious discussion or effort. But with realism and nominalism firmly in place, the development of authentic relationships is unlikely since order is unrelated to human interaction.

Nonetheless, many persons long nowadays for a sense of community (Bellah et al. 1985). They are tired of the isolation and lack of camaraderie and support. The freedom to compete at the marketplace and elsewhere, for example, has strained relationships and created a very hostile world. But the usual alternatives are not very appealing—more market control or collective management. Either way, meaningful relationships are not going to be resurrected.

Something new is needed that is overlooked by both nominalists and realists. Martin Buber (1978, p. 184) referred to this possibility as the “in-between,” which constitutes a “narrow ridge” between absolutes. His point is that maybe persons are not fundamentally estranged from one another! If critics had begun from a different theoretical standpoint, and adopted different social imagery, perhaps a more commodious version of order could be established. A type of order may be possible whereby persons can engage one another and institutions established that reflect this commitment. The idea that persons can live a communal and more humane existence would no longer be a dream.

Nominalists and Fragmentation

In the history of social thought, nominalists come in many forms. Thomas Hobbes, Adam Smith, and Herbert Spencer all belong to this school of philosophy (Stark 1963). Although they are often evaluated differently, they share a common theme. In short, they give primacy to the individual and treat society as something very abstract. In the case of Smith and Spencer, society is almost an afterthought.

Not as extreme as the neoliberals, the version of the individual advanced by these writers is still not socially oriented. Sometimes labeled as egotistical or self-consumed, the persons featured in these theories exhibit little social responsibility. They are presumed to be motivated primarily by personal gain and are suspicious of the intentions of others. Self-protection and advancement are their most obvious concerns.

Yet, clearly this outlook is not the atomism of neoliberals (Harvey 2005). Persons are not completely disinterested in others but must learn to cope with their presence. Nonetheless, rivalries and conflicts are expected. Persons must become adept at navigating a situation where everyone is ultimately free and unimpeded by ethical concerns. In fact, any talk of collective interests is met usually with fierce criticism or outright resistance. After all, others are viewed as competitors and impediments to achieving as much as possible.

This orientation is basic to classical economics and is epitomized in the position taken, at least in his early work, by Herbert Spencer. During this time, he championed a strict laissez-faire philosophy. As a social Darwinist, he believed that as a result of competition the social world is generally improved (Dickens 2000). The best persons or ideas rise, while the losers fall by the way side. Nothing should stifle this process, or persons who are not worthy may advance and corrupt key social institutions.

Social existence, accordingly, is guided by what he calls a “tooth and claw” morality (Mingardi 2011). In a public space, free from manipulation, persons reveal their skills and ideas. Those who are better simply persevere and succeed, while the rest become irrelevant. The society as a whole benefits from this activity since those who succeed at the marketplace, and have proven abilities, move to the head of important institutions.

Despite this enthusiasm for competition and the glorification of individual initiative, society on average is supposed to gain from any developments that derive from the competitive struggle. In this sense, nominalists argue that society is not completely fragmented. Persons are connected in some way, or the collective improvements associated with competition would not be possible. But how are persons joined together according to this philosophy?

Most important is that persons are not responsible for this outcome: They do not somehow reconcile their differences and begin to cooperate. This turn of events would not make sense given the dismal character of persons. Individuals, after all, are voracious and interested mostly in the satisfaction of personal desires. This sort of identity is hardly conducive to neighborly relations and concern for the common weal.

Therefore, most nominalists, but certainly Hobbes, Smith, and Spencer, make a non-sequitur. That is, they begin to refocus their theories away from the individual. Persons may still pursue fundamentally their own interests, but the outcome of this activity is guided by a different and superior principle. Smith (2001, p. 593), for example, introduced the “invisible hand,” while Hobbes and Spencer assumed that nature would resolve any conflicts. While preserving the basic atomistic character of persons, social destruction is avoided.

But in the end, this maneuver tends to absolve persons of any social responsibility. Due to the intervention of a guiding principle, they are free to pursue their interests with little or no regard for others (Levinas 1996b). A positive outcome of their actions is almost guaranteed, with no effort on their part. Hence, the actualization of persons can never contravene the common good. Whatever behavior is exhibited is justified in the long run as beneficial, although in the present this result may appear unlikely. Indeed, a guiding hand is always operative to eliminate any problems. At this point, faith seems to be the operative principle.

In spite of this optimism, society remains fragmented according to this philosophy. Persons are encouraged to be selfish and disregard others since they cannot combat their true nature. What they can hope for is that everything will turn out for the best. Nonetheless, social responsibility is not necessarily part of this scenario. The outcome of personal behavior is not a product of interpersonal coordination, or any intentional acts, but an abstract mechanism that regulates the pursuit of happiness.

Realism and Domination

Realists make no pretense of caring about personal freedom. These writers emerged at times when their respective societies appeared to be on the verge of monumental change, possibly even collapse. Emile Durkheim (1966) popularized a term used to describe this condition, that is, anomie. Due to burgeoning industrialization and the focus on personal ambition and success, societies were becoming cacophonies of claims and counterproposals. Nothing seemed to be available to hold these societies together. Realists thought that they had a viable answer to this potential calamity and came to the forefront. Several of these writers, in fact, constitute nowadays the mainstream of sociological theory—Auguste Comte, Durkheim, and Talcott Parsons. Although writing in different times and places, they all concluded that order was in jeopardy and that social theory could provide a corrective.

What these realists proposed is that order required a unique foundation. But in a situation where norms and ideals were proliferating, another proposal would be insufficient to unite persons. A base had to be provided, in other words, that transcended growing conflicts. In more philosophical terms, order had to be given an ontological status superior to personal desires and opinions. With the new emphasis on individualism, the resulting freedom of expression was obscuring any sentiments that might be held in common.

To borrow from Durkheim (1983), society should be elevated to constitute a “reality *sui generis*.” In order to survive amidst competing perspectives, society needed a powerful identity. For this reason, these realists declared that only society is real and individuals are a product of this dominant outlook. These writers contend that society is not merely one perspective among others but represents a universal reality. And because this *sui generis* reality is removed categorically from often fleeting and contradictory opinions, a reliable basis of order is available.

The metaphors used by these realists tell the whole story; the body, machine, and system. The message conveyed by each of these descriptives is that persons are part of a much larger enterprise. Their behavior, accordingly, should conform and contribute to the maintenance of the collective vision.

Nowadays, the body and the machine, due to the emphasis on science and rationality, are somewhat outmoded as sociological metaphors for ultimate reality and have lost their ability to gain adherents. But the image of the system, as proposed by Parsons (1963), is clearly present and functioning as planned. Specifically, when described as a system, society appears to be overwhelming and immune to critique

and change. How many persons today feel that society is beyond their control and irresponsive to their demands? Furthermore, often they believe they are trapped in a maze of institutions and regulations that are autonomous and their adversaries.

Although this characterization may be problematic, and signal that something is wrong in such a society, realists are not worried about this outcome. They assume that in the absence of this intimidation, persons will run amok. In this regard, realists are more concerned with the preservation of order than personal expression or liberty. Without a dominant order, they believe that little else can be accomplished. Everything, simply put, flows from security and stability.

But here again, social relationships are left behind. As opposed to nominalists, however, realists do not try to create the illusion that individual actions are related to the creation of social order. Realists believe, instead, that if individuals are not suppressed, order will never prevail. Persons working together to produce a common bond, for example, is not a possibility. Too much personal latitude is involved. Accordingly, what matters to realists is that persons are controlled effectively, so that society, a complete abstraction, continues to function.

The Market and Society

In the current market environment, spawned by neoliberalism, both of these social ontologies are present. On the one hand, the benefits of individualism are extolled, while on the other, the logic of the market guides all behavior. Persons are encouraged to pursue their own aims as the market brings about social harmony. In point of fact, those who are successful, and move up in the social hierarchy, pay close attention to the signals emitted from the marketplace.

Although this scenario sounds similar to classical economics, particularly the principles of *laissez-faire*, neoliberalism is different from this philosophy in several crucial respects (Giroux 2004). Especially noteworthy is how the individual is portrayed. Persons are not simply unique, and possess different traits, such as motivation, but are described as atomistic. In this regard, individuals are removed categorically from one another. And due to this separation, persons have no social obligations. Their primary task, simply put, is to engage in personal enhancement; in the end, their only obligation is to themselves.

Margaret Thatcher, an enthusiastic supporter of neoliberalism, once declared that society does not exist. But such an announcement is surely not true! Everyday experience illustrates that persons are connected and that individual gains do not always culminate in social improvement. And a theory that is worthwhile, accordingly, must offer some insight into the collective side of existence. Neoliberalism is no exception.

In this theory, the logic of the market unites persons. Persons internalize, in varying degrees, the reasoning and behavior that leads to economic success. But persons are never joined, even indirectly, in contrast to the *laissez-faire* thesis. By following the logic of the market, persons avoid conflict, although any appearance

of unity is simply an abstract sum of collective wealth. In no facet of this calculation are persons presumed to have any interpersonal connection or responsibility (Hinkelammert 1991).

Since persons are fundamentally separated, for example, economic, health, or other disparities are not alarming. In the end, all that matters is the collective wealth of a society, and this value can be arrived at in a variety of ways. For example, if the overall wealth increases, even in the midst of a growing number of losers, there is no call for alarm. Continued growth signals that somewhere along the way general improvement is in the offing. But any policy that might enhance directly the collective good of society is eschewed. Remember that according to this model, society is merely a trifle.

But this situation is truly hostile, far worse than the *laissez-faire* position. In the classical tradition, for instance, there was room for Keynes (1997) and his doubts about the market and the need for periodic interventions. Keynes believed that an economy not only consists of markets but moral principles. Disparities could not become too great between persons or classes, or the quality of life of everyone could decline. In the neoliberal vision, there is no room for this sentimentality. Persons are truly on their own and meet only metaphorically at the cash nexus.

Life at this juncture, however, is incredibly bleak. All that matters is personal aggrandizement—all other values are dismissed as impediments to behaving correctly at the marketplace. Only fools or idealists believe that persons are linked and share a common fate. As long as some persons are making money, and the calculations point upward, any casualties are dismissed as unimportant. Within this context, the collective, at best, is equivalent to the accumulation of cash. The cost of doing business is that some damage might be experienced, and this aspect is included in the final outcomes.

In both realism and nominalism, persons are ancillary to an abstract, and domineering, regulatory mechanism. In effect, they are suppressed. Nonetheless, there is some recognition that individuals are related, at least indirectly. With the onset of neoliberalism, this minimal connection to others is set aside.

To use a phrase of Baudrillard's (1983), society vanishes in neoliberalism—any relationship to others is forgotten. In addition to being inner-directed, persons lead a solitary and anomic existence. They rise or fall alone and should not expect any external support, except, perhaps, from their families. But any wider involvement is unjustified and counterproductive. Those who fail do not deserve any special consideration. According to the neoliberal explanation, they engaged in unsound behavior and did not take advantage of the opportunities provided by the market. As a result, they received their just deserts and deserved to fail. A rational person learns from these observations and does not make similar mistakes.

Since there is no real basis for fellow feeling, empathy is out of the question. Those who witness these failures are simply receiving a good lesson in business. The message is clear: Do not make the error of not adhering to the logic of the market. The inability to carry one's own weight is costly to society and should not be tolerated for the benefit of everyone.

Nothing that could be considered morality traditionally conceived is operating in neoliberalism. Even religion was altered by this economic theory (Comaroff 2009). Rather than dealing with poverty as a need that should be addressed, as part of their ministry, many religions began to view poverty as moral weakness. In this sense, being poor is an individual flaw, and efforts toward helping others should distinguish between those who deserve care and those who do not (Wuthnow 1994; Elisha 2008). Those who failed to compete effectively at the marketplace, due to their own fault, began to be scorned. They chose their fate and should live with the consequences. Any intervention would foul up the cash nexus. The collective accumulation that represents society would be compromised, and thus everyone would pay a higher price than is necessary. After all, the price of failure is built into the overall calculation and should not be modified. Any tinkering will likely bring about inefficiency and slow the process of social accumulation.

Those who lose at the marketplace are thus expected to disappear. They should not make any claims or expect compensation. Any subsidies, accordingly, are demonized. What the market encourages, in this sense, is disrespect for others and resentment toward those who compete ineffectively. Everyone is a potential burden until a winner is declared. But even at that point, a new round of competition begins, and thus the fear of failure and marginalization never ends.

In a way, a neoliberal world is more than anomic. For example, most persons assume that anomie will end. But in the neoliberal scheme, competition is ongoing since the accumulation of cash is equated with growth and prosperity. As a result, a neoliberal existence might be best characterized as soulless. Everyone merely calculates and weighs options in hope of advancement. Those who seek a more peaceful or serene existence are viewed as weak and escapist, and hardly role models for an acceptable way of life. Endurance is the key principle at this juncture.

The Overlooked In-Between

Buber (1978) identified an overlooked dimension of social life with his rejection of the individualistic and collectivistic traditions. Both renditions, he believed, ignored a vital connection between persons, which resulted in a struggle to provide an adequate account of order. Buber's (1970) important claim is that dualism constitutes a trick that obscures an important revelation—that is, persons are not, and have never been, apart and in need of reconnection.

As already noted, for the most part, sociology has not recognized this fact. But even theories, such as symbolic interactionism, that have tried to overcome nominalism and realism vacillate between focusing on the individual and the collective (Blumer 1969). Due to a residue of dualism, the individual remains counterposed to the group. If the individual identifies with the group, for example, all of the positive traits associated with persons are sacrificed, such as creativity and freedom. In short, the uniqueness of the person is presumed to be lost.

Some other theories, such as phenomenology, do not have this problem. Although early writers, such as Husserl, were criticized for being solipsistic, Merleau-Ponty, Levinas, and others strove to overcome this shortcoming. The fundamental point of these later phenomenologists is that persons are fundamentally intersubjective and related to others (Murphy 2012). A primordial connection exists between persons, in other words, that has been ignored traditionally for a variety of reasons.

What phenomenologists advance might be called a non-egological position. They do not begin with individuals and then try to piece together these isolated egos. An important caveat, however, is that although the standard atomism is questioned, the agency of persons is not. The focus of this phenomenological critique is the dualism that secures the sovereignty of the individual at the expense of any social experience. Persons, in short, are illustrated to live fundamentally a non-egological existence (Lyotard 1983).

Experience reveals, argue phenomenologists, that persons are open to others; in other words, they always act in the face of others. For this reason, Emmanuel Levinas (1969) declares that ethics precedes ontology. His proposal is that persons are united, existing face-to-face, as he describes, before any abstraction is invoked to provide a semblance of order. Others, therefore, are basic to the structure of individuals. The “I” and “others” grow together; rather than existing side by side, in a serial manner, the one presupposes the other.

From this perspective, everything in the past must change. Others, for example, are not impediments to personal growth. In fact, as Levinas notes, now persons are joined in a moral relationship. He does not mean, however, that specific rules are suddenly available to sanction behavior. Rather, and much more profound, he is announcing that persons have always had a fundamental orientation toward others, and that this association has interpersonal consequences.

Although there are many implications of this shift in thinking, four of these will be dealt with at this time. Most important, however, is that when based on essential meeting, as described by Buber (1965), the nature of social existence changes dramatically:

1. Existing together should not be viewed as a burden. When atomism prevails, for example, others are thought to detract from personal concerns. After all, everyone should focus on themselves and their own interests. Anything that might compromise this commitment is extraneous and should be avoided.
2. Freedom is never absolute but is always tied to others. When the focus is on individuals, freedom appears to be almost unlimited. In view of such an inward orientation, primacy is given to personal desires and actions. Any mention of social implications, accordingly, is often rejected as restricting individual initiative and freedom. As a result, others become obstacles that should be avoided.
3. Social responsibility is not an imposition. As persons strive to enhance their positions, harm can be caused to others. But within the context of atomism, and the internecine rivalries, no one has the responsibility to offer care. Indeed, such an intervention is thought to entail great personal sacrifice. Those who take this path, accordingly, are rare and thought to be engaged in a fruitless task. Few

persons are thus motivated to engage actively in the promotion of social welfare. But in the absence of dualism, care for others is part of personal action.

4. Social life is basically a communal affair. Rather than a myriad of disparate competitors, persons share their lives with others. Sovereignty of the individual, in other words, reflects an economic or political commitment rather than an ontological condition. With the demise of atomism, in fact, persons are revealed to exist together. And like any communal relationship, disparities in treatment should be avoided. Likewise, care and support are the norm rather than unexpected.

The aim of this talk about communal relationships is not to deny the current hostile nature of social life (Harvey 2005). Without a doubt, survival has become increasingly difficult. Traditional sociological theory, classical economics, and neoliberalism have all supported this condition. But ignored by all of these theses is a fundamental experience: Persons are tied together and their fates are joined. And if guided by this principle, the social world would be a very different place.

Most important is that this insight sets the stage to move away from the current anomic conditions. Instead of a liability, relationships can be seen as vital and fostered. Rather than limited to a small circle, care can be viewed as an essential component of social life. When described as a community, rather than a marketplace, relationships become much more important, while competition and triumph—a scenario that can culminate easily in violence—are less pertinent. No longer understood to be a utopian dream, a we-relationship is within reach that has been momentarily obscured by political, economic, and other trends.

Conclusion

Persons seem to want a world where everyone matters. In point of fact, protesters around the globe are chanting that another, more humane world is possible. For this reason, dignity has become the focal point of many political discussions. Many of these new critics contend, specifically, that neoliberal policies are destroying communities and crushing the human spirit (Cox 1999).

But the usual options—individualistic or collective solutions—do not seem to provide a way out of this impasse. Similar to when Buber was writing, these remedies have been tried and failed. Both, in short, ignored the passionate relationships that persons desire; in each case, society is treated as an abstraction. The prevailing mantra is that persons want to connect with one another. And despite modern advertising campaigns, the links provided by modern technology are not necessarily satisfying (Dreyfus 2001, pp. 2–3).

Opponents of the emerging “network society” argue that these technical relationships are purely formal and entail little commitment (Castells 2000). In this scheme, persons are merely random nodes in an impersonal web. What persons seem to want, instead, is something more authentic that involves passion and support. Such relationships are possible but only subsequent to making certain philosophical

maneuvers. When order is based on intersubjectivity, for example, other persons are not optional. Indeed, the survival of order requires that others be engaged and treated equitably, otherwise society devolves into a mélange of personal fantasies and inertia.

But in the absence of the usual dualism, a new ethic is spawned whereby persons are joined in unmediated, authentic relationships (Dussel 1988). In the absence of a guiding mechanism, only the direct connection between persons is available to preserve order. The legitimacy of all behavior, accordingly, should be judged in view of this association. For example, acceptable or moral actions foster the dignity of persons.

In this sense, persons are not obligated to obey abstract ethical imperatives but act as if others are present and matter. When existing face-to-face, according to Levinas (1996a), persons are compelled to respect one another and act together. Protecting what is revealed in the face of others, their perspectives and humanity, thus becomes a guiding theme. In this regard, social responsibility is not a platitude but expressed in the face of others. This intimacy, in other words, demonstrates the need for care and mutual support. What better way is there to end the curse of violence—that is, to begin to base social discourse on authentic relationships rather than a caricature of others and order.

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Chapter 3

Neoliberalism and Education: The Disfiguration of Students

Jung Min Choi

Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity...or... it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.
R. Shaull in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

The story of neoliberalism is quite familiar to the millions across the USA whose lives have been ravaged by the “financial crisis of 2007–2008,” which led to countless families losing their life savings, homes, and businesses. Commercial media attempted to neutralize the nastiness of neoliberal policies that led directly to this unseemly situation by calling the global emergency “a financial crisis” or “economic downturn,” as if these events were unfolding as part of a historical movement or a cyclical part of economic laws. Yet, it was clear that this situation was a direct and logical outcome of the corporate wilding of America, where years of unchecked neoliberal policies have resulted in the greatest wealth gap to date in this country (Taibbi 2014). The resulting scenario is *violence*—but not necessarily the type of violence that media outlets typically portray. I am not talking about muggings, robberies, or even shootings. I am pointing to a much deeper and sinister type of violence: the type of violence that can be prevented easily, such as the violence of forcing people, especially children, to go perpetually hungry in a society of great abundance; the violence of having people sleep on the streets unprotected from the harsh elements when millions of homes are vacant across the country;¹ and the violence of paying people such low wages that they are unable to secure basic human needs such as clean water, healthy food, dental and medical care, a decent home, affordable transportation, and quality education.

¹ In 2014, there were about 1.75 million homeless persons and 18 million vacant homes in the USA (roughly 10 homes for every homeless). Please see National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty.

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To be sure, against the backdrop of a neoliberal society that creates desperate citizenry, trying to celebrate the importance of a “common good” is a difficult task. Simply put, a society that employs neoliberalism as *the* guiding principle cannot be democratic. For example, the basic principles of neoliberalism are antithetical to developing an economic system that is innovative and productive without exploiting labor. It resents a political system that serves the needs and interests of its citizens. And for sure, it cannot support a legal system that reflects the ideals of social justice. Indeed, as long as neoliberalism is at the heart of the USA’s major social institutions, egalitarian relations among individuals are not possible.

With respect to education, neoliberalism creates students who are socially illiterate (Freire 2004). According to Freire, illiteracy is not simply the inability to read and write (Freire 1970). He distinguishes literacy in two ways: (1) recognizing words—the ability to read and write and (2) reading worlds—the ability to understand and comprehend the social world that persons inhabit. For example, most Americans can read and recognize the word neoliberalism, but they are not able to explain, articulate, or comprehend its inner workings and its consequences. As surely as $2+2=4$, neoliberalism = violence, and yet, this goes unnoticed by those who support this social policy. Indeed, while most can read and write, many of us cannot make clear sense of the world we inhabit. How can we, when we continue to mistake receiving a diploma for being competent, mistake consumption for freedom, mistake information for knowledge, mistake bureaucracy for rational thinking, and mistake inequality and injustice for reality?

This state of affairs is not localized: This type of miseducation happens across the entire country by design, not by chance. It is not an accident that most universities do not offer a curriculum on democracy, such as democracy 101, 201, 350, 440, and so on. In a world fraught with social injustices, where billions of people live on less than US\$2 a day, would it not be appropriate to offer a major in social justice?

Indeed, how are we to even discuss the possibility of constructing a just society when we are a nation full of social illiterates? I am not suggesting that we give up or that there is no future. On the contrary, in order for us to discuss, debate, and construct a society that is open and shaped by egalitarian concerns, where violence has no place to stay, we need to move away from education that is based on an extremist logic of “survival of the fittest” to one that embraces a democratic worldview where the well-being of others is a primary concern.

Despite showing multiple signs of having been educated through a neoliberal system, I see many of my students not as people who are merely self-serving and driven purely by greed and competition. I see them as experiencing tremendous amount of pain and frustration by a society that seems irresponsive to their needs. Similarly, I share in their anger and frustration at having too many professors who continue to impose neoliberal values on their students and too few who speak out against the neoliberal agendas in academia.

Throughout K-12, schools try to defuse students’ energy and creativity by bombarding them with tons of disjointed information that cannot possibly be used to understand their existence. In college, we pack them in giant lecture halls hoping that somehow they will be able to learn something by sitting there for several hours

a week—as if learning happens through osmosis. The students, on the other hand, do their part by waiting patiently to download what is thought to be “important information” solely to do well on midterms or final exams. Indeed, the “banking model of education” is alive and well in our country (Freire 1970, p. 73).

Given this development, social illiteracy is in vogue. In fact, to be socially illiterate is to be normal in our society. Perhaps, this is why so many people do not hesitate to voice their opinions on trivial issues such as “who is the best of all time, Kobe Bryant or Michael Jordan?” or who is keeping it more “real,” the housewives of Miami or Atlanta? or how the “sweet little” Miley Cyrus ended up twerking on national TV. But when it comes to important social issues such as child poverty, racism, sexism, or the world food crisis, people either become silent or resort to accepting inequality and violence as a natural part of human life. Yes, Freire was right. Most of us only know how to read *words* and too few know how to read the *world*. Without knowing exactly the source of the problem, how can anyone develop effective strategies for resistance? When students are looked at merely as consumers and customers by academic institutions of higher education, the vast range of their creativity and talents becomes muted and obliterated, and yet, never cultivated. To be sure, the basic tenets of neoliberalism are antithetical to cultivating the development of a whole human being.

A Quick Look at Neoliberalism

Some time ago, a noted social philosopher, the late Jean Baudrillard lamented the disappearance of the “golden age of alienation.” Obviously, he was not proposing that people should feel separated or exploited. To the contrary, what he was getting at was that in previous generations (mid-twentieth century), people had a much better understanding of the oppressive nature of the capitalist system. People knew that they were being exploited and alienated from the products that they made, the communities that they built, and the social spaces that they had created. Although these people may not have had the political, social, and/or the economic power to defeat capitalism, many knew what and who was oppressing them. In the 1960s, accordingly, Baudrillard claimed that people recognized how they were alienated from society in various ways. Women, for example, demanded rightfully that they occupy a more central place in the economy. Likewise, there was an outcry from multiple minority groups, especially blacks, regarding racial, economic, and political marginalization rising out of the ashes of the Jim Crow laws. Students, of course, were on the forefront of many demonstrations and sit-ins with respect to the Vietnam War and Civil Rights Movement. The situation now is quite different. According to Baudrillard, people today do not even recognize that they are being alienated from the major institutions that impact their lives.

So, what changed? One major factor is the rise of neoliberalism in the USA since the 1980s.² As the brainchild of Friedrich Von Hayek, Milton Friedman, and the “Chicago Boys,” neoliberalism was unleashed in Chile in 1973 after the murder of democratically elected President Salvador Allende by General Augusto Pinochet and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA; Schmitz 1999). Immediately after the overthrow, Pinochet eliminated Allende’s socialist agenda in favor of neoliberalism, which created immense wealth for a handful of elites and just as much misery for the majority. And those who dared to challenge Pinochet’s regime were either disappeared or persecuted in a variety of ways. Nevertheless, the neoliberal agenda marched on and became a juggernaut when it was adopted and turned into a national policy by Margaret Thatcher (UK) and Ronald Reagan (USA) in the early 1980s (Kinzer 2007). Further paving the way for neoliberalism throughout the Americas were the assassinations of “left-leaning” presidents Jaime Roldos of Ecuador and Omar Torrijos of Panama a few months apart in 1981 (Perkins 2004, p. 186). And finally, in the early 1980s, the three largest economies in Latin America (Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico) borrowed heavily from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), shackling each country to the demands of *structural adjustment* and its crippling effect on social services and labor unions. In fact, many have argued that structural adjustment is a key facet of neoliberalism in forcing the borrowing countries to adopt a free-market-based economy that erodes and eliminates the rights of the workers and the poor (Green 2003).

Moreover, neoliberalism is not simply a set of social or political or even economic policies. Behind these policies lies a sinister set of ideologies that penetrate into the ethical dimension of social life. Neoliberalism is an ideology that supports these major ideas and policies: (1) the disintegration of the public good in the name of private gains; (2) selling off national resources to foreign investors; (3) suppressing human and labor rights to insure corporate profits; (4) glorifying free trade, deregulation, and fierce competition as rational thinking; and (5) conflating democracy with the ability to purchase and consume. In all, the logic of the market pervades the entire social life in a neoliberal world (Serrano-Caldera 1995). The outcome of this scenario is a form of “survival of the fittest” where concern for a fellow citizen or human being is deemed illogical and irrational. Indeed, the market serves as a role model in designing all aspects of human relations in a given society.

And because the market is thought to be divorced from personal biases, it is automatically given a seigniorial status. Because of the neutrality of the market, it is exempt from having to deal with ethical and social concerns, which is why corporations are able unapologetically to accumulate obscene amount of wealth at the expense of the poor. The rule of neoliberalism is simple: compete, adapt, or die. To be sure, this is a far cry from democracy. Neoliberalism, to be clear, is an antithesis to democratic planning because the needs and the desires of the citizens are not a part of privatizing and profit making. “Public goods,” once deemed as a centerpiece to

² Much has been written on neoliberalism in the past 20 years. Please see, among others, Noam Chomsky’s (1999) *Profit over People*; David Harvey’s (2005) *A brief History of Neoliberalism*; Raj Patel’s (2009) *A Value of Nothing*; Choi (2004), Jung Min and Murphy, John W. *Globalization with a Human Face*.

democracy, are now viewed as impediments to progress and a socialist conspiracy threatening personal freedom. This ideology of *laissez-faire* is so entrenched in our culture that a historic opportunity to implement a single-payer health-care system several years ago was rejected soundly by those who would have benefitted the most from it. Indeed, to borrow from Karl Marx, alienation reigns supreme in our society.

Neoliberalism and Public Education in the USA

It is difficult to find something more scandalous in a democracy than purposefully introducing a consumer-based educational system that creates passive citizens who have been stripped of their ability to imagine a society different than the present. As Mihailo Markovic illustrates clearly in *From Affluence to Praxis*, any education that mistakes what *is* for what it can *become* is destined to support a repressive society (Markovic 1974, pp. 8–12). And yet, that is exactly what is taking place in schools throughout this country. From K-12 and spilling over into higher education, schools nowadays look eerily similar to a business operation. In fact, highlighting this trend where schools are viewed as stocks to be parlayed at the market is the current US Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, who was a chief executive officer (CEO) of the Chicago Public Schools during 2001–2009. As the CEO, Duncan once claimed that schools were “stock investments [and he was] a manager of 600 [of them]... trying [his best] to improve the portfolio” (Giroux and Saltman 2008). Staying true to his neoliberal agenda, Arne Duncan attempted to create a “market in public education by urging public schools to compete against each other for scarce resources and by introducing ‘choice’ initiatives, [he wanted] parents and students to think of themselves as private consumers of educational services” (2008). With the help of neoliberal zealots like Michelle Rhee (Chancellor of Washington DC schools, 2007–2010) and the release of films like *Waiting for Superman* (2010), the charter school movement gained great momentum and was able to cut deeply into the already weakened public education system (Ravitch 2010). In other words, privatization of public schools became a fad throughout the past decade. With the nation’s secretary of education championing the values of neoliberalism, it was not difficult to reform public schools to resemble a business organization.³

Not surprisingly, then, higher education, which was once viewed as a fertile ground for novel ideas and revolutionary thinking, has now become little more than a credential awarding machine that leaves in its trails millions of college graduates with an unprecedented amount of student loans without a guarantee of decent employment or any employment at all. Colleges and universities now seem to serve

³ For an excellent and detailed examination of neoliberalism’s attack on higher education, please see Henry Giroux’s (2014) recent book, *Neoliberalism’s War on Higher Education*. Also, see Diane Ravitch’s *The Life and Death of Great American Schools*, which highlights the transformation of K–12 schools in the USA over the past several decades through neoliberal policies, such as privatizing public schools via the “charter school movement.”

the interest of private capital and are no longer on the side of supporting democracy and democratic planning.

But it is not only the institution that is in question here. Students, over the past several decades (directly related to the G. W. Bush administration's passage of "No Child Left Behind" policy at the federal level and continuing through Obama's "Race to the Top Initiative"), have truly been "dumbed down" by having to spend the majority of their school hours being bombarded by an avalanche of irrelevant, meaningless, and disjointed information preparing for the state and federally mandated standardized examinations. Some elementary schools are going as far as eliminating recess and using that time to tutor students for these exams. With all due respect to William Butler Yeats and Paulo Freire, the nightmare of schools where teachers simply stuff "facts" and fill "empty heads" has become a reality in this neoliberal world.

In short, modern day schooling has robbed students of what is uniquely human—the capacity to engage in *hope*.⁴ Because students are taught to view major institutions (such as the economy, education, political, legal, and so on) as impregnable and unchangeable, they spend most of their educational career figuring out ways to best fit into the existing system. Accordingly, education has become a site of training rather than a place that nurtures students to think critically about their existence, discuss the importance of social justice, and cultivate their sense of agency (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). Due to the constant assault on education through the adoption of neoliberal policies, colleges and universities produce students who believe privatization, competition, individualism, and meritocracy are central to maintaining a democracy. At this point, many students are not even aware that the very neoliberal values that they cherish are the same values that create a violent society in which they are likely to become victims.

But what has transpired in higher education to produce such twisted outcomes? First, faculty have lost governance of the university. Over the past 30 years, universities have hired more administrators while shrinking the size of the faculty. In fact, in many colleges and universities, administrators outnumber full-time faculty who are able to vote on the management of the institution. And due to funding cuts, public universities have increasingly adopted the "bottom line" approach where more emphasis is placed on hiring faculty who can secure outside funding sources through private and public grants. At the same time, the rising sentiment from the administrative body toward abolishing tenure in many circles has created a repressive culture in academia. Untenured faculty are in vulnerable positions with respect to sounding off against administrators who have the power to deny retention and promotion.

Second, the universities have invested in sports, technology, and new buildings at the expense of class size, new courses, and faculty development. It is common-

⁴ Hope in the existential sense that something other than "reality" is possible. The idea that society is not predetermined and can be changed and shaped according to the desires of its citizens. In our current situation, most people understand hope in relation to a personal fancy or the opportunity to buy or consume products in the near future. People hope for a better car, house, relationship, and so on, but rarely do they understand hope in the sense of having the real opportunity to change their social/cultural environment. If society is impregnable, then the notion of hope becomes silly and insignificant. But if hope is a human project that points to the collective awakening of our consciousness, then it is an urgent task that must be engaged as soon as possible.

place in academia where men's football or basketball (BB) coaches are paid 10 to 20 times more in salaries than professors. In the case of University of Alabama, The Ohio State University, Texas A&M, University of Oklahoma, Michigan State University, University of Kentucky (BB), University of Louisville (BB), and Duke University (BB), these schools pay their head coaches up to 50 times more in salary than to faculty.⁵ The diversion of funds from students and faculty to administrators, sports programs, technology, and new buildings have meant raising class sizes, hiring more lecturers, and focusing on technology as the primary way to teach and learn, which all culminate in the erosion of quality education.

Third, majors in humanities and liberal arts have been demonized culturally as worthless and useless. Philosophy and sociology students are bombarded regularly with the familiar question of "what are you going to do with that major?" or "what kind of jobs can you get with that major?" These questions presume that any field of study that does not lead directly to securing a job in the business world is worthless. Along with philosophy and sociology, disciplines that question status quo, such as women's studies or any branch of the ethnic studies program are accused of being politically biased and easily dismissed. The very idea that students should inquire about social justice, human rights, fair labor laws, and environmental concerns has no space in a neoliberal world where profit is the sole focus. Indeed, after years of taking "body-blows" from neoliberal policies, higher education has been brought to its knees and has relinquished the reigns of university control to administrators who act as the henchmen for the power elites.

This situation is by no means innocuous. What is at stake here is far greater than whether certain majors lead to better job opportunities. What is truly at stake is humanity (Choi and Murphy 1992). Neoliberalism is publicly waging a war against democracy...and winning! The aggregate outcome is not simply loss of wages and personal wealth. The ultimate casualty of this battle may be the soul and heart of humanity. Simply put, in this battle to determine the future direction of human beings, democracy stands in solidarity with free expression, critical thinking, and community building, while neoliberalism acts as a sniper in assassinating these ideas. So, what is to be done?

Moving Forward with Dignity: Rethinking the World Through Education

The argument, thus far, has been to show that a democratic society is not possible as long as we have an education system that is based on and organized through neoliberal policies where students are systematically disfigured from beings who are inquisitive, creative, and passionate about learning into "things" that are valued and

⁵ Football coaches at these universities all make over US\$4 million per year. In the case of UK, UL, and Duke, head basketball coaches, marked as (BB), make over 5 million per year, with Duke's Mike Krzyzewski making over US\$9.5 million. Please see *USA Today*, "Special Report: Coaches Hit Jackpot in NCAA System." April 2, 2014.

judged solely on their worth at the market. This type of economic extremism, when dispersed throughout society, creates a form of terrorism where citizens become paralyzed, muted, and marginalized in organizing their existence.

Nevertheless, as daunting as it may seem, there is a clear exit out of this bleak drama. Primarily, people need to stop organizing their lives around this extremist, unethical view of the world. Subsequent to the “linguistic turn,” persons no longer have to choose between a dichotomized position of adapt or die (Murphy 2012). A new, post-market philosophy is available to guide public discourse and all other aspects of human relations. For example, John W. Murphy describes this new worldview as “earthly morality” (p. 127). According to Murphy, because all persons are basically connected at the outset and “are mutually implicated in all behavior, [that] bond must not be violated” (Murphy 2012, p. 135). This perspective reveals the dignity aspect of being fully human. To borrow from Erich Fromm (2005), in order to fulfill the human project where persons are able to fully engage in loving the other and are able to see the other as an intimate part of oneself, the focus necessarily has to shift from *having* (neoliberalism) to *being* (democracy). Subsequent to this philosophical and ethical gambit, all areas of social life, and education in particular, need to be reconceptualized. Persons can no longer be content with just tinkering and changing the current policy, tightening loose ends, harping on raising standards, increasing funding, while leaving an outmoded worldview intact. Changes in education cannot be simply a reaction to neoliberalism. As long as people view reality as existing on its own, with its own logic and destiny, a communal society is unlikely. Education based on realism, in other words, must be shown to be antithetical in producing responsible citizens. An alternative educational culture must be established that represents a move away from the extremist radicalism of the market toward a horizon of mutuality within multiplicity. In the words of Ignacio Ellacuría, schools must ensure that “liberty is victorious over oppression, justice over injustice, and love over hate” (1990, p. 149).

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Chapter 4

The Entrepreneur as Hero?

Joseph J. Pilotta

This chapter is an exposition of entrepreneur as a cultural hero. Entrepreneurism has become iconic within the context of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is the philosophy of the market, the most prominent provocateur being F. A. Hayek (Hayek 1944). Entrepreneurship within neoliberalism is based on a philosophy of individualism, without a history or world, and with values of maximization of profit calculated by rationalized cost-benefit analysis. Neoliberalism promotes entrepreneurial values as the moral choice for each sector of society. This chapter will also explore the impact of neoliberal entrepreneurship; the entrepreneur as a mythological hero, in the classical sense; and the neoliberal version of entrepreneurship in the knowledge-based economy (KBE). The hidden side of entrepreneurship will be thematized as a possibility of both creative and positive practices of a “making-a-difference” orientation in society.

The Hero’s and the Heroic Adventure

There are many similarities between the hero in mythology and the entrepreneur. Finding such similarities has important implications regarding the mythos of entrepreneurship, the nature of capitalism, and government control over present KBEs. But the importance may be even deeper than this. Myths, to the extent that they are about the hero’s journey, were stories about self-discovery and the tapping of great creative power. They teach us how to find these possibilities in ourselves by showing us how the hero triumphs. To the extent that the hero and the entrepreneur are similar, there may be a heretofore unacknowledged dimension to capitalism if its essence is seen as entrepreneurship. Schumpeter (1962) saw capitalism as “unheroic.” He wrote, “I have called the bourgeois, rationalist and unheroic. He can only use a rationalist and unheroic means to defend his position or to bend a nation to his will” (p. 137) and “[Capitalist] civilization is rationalistic and anti-heroic”

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(p. 128). Showing how the entrepreneur is like the universal hero in mythology might help demonstrate that there is a chance that entrepreneurship points to the possibility for creative fulfillment and self-discovery within a more socially responsive form of capitalism or within an alternative form of social organization. If government economic policies and economic systems should be based on the will to seek adventure and self-discovery, and if entrepreneurs are like mythological heroes, is this a strong case for the superiority of capitalism (or some system that allows a large degree of entrepreneurship)?

The model of the hero's adventure presented here probably does not apply completely to all entrepreneurs. No single model could. But the evidence and views compiled here show entrepreneurship to be similar to the hero's adventure. The entrepreneur, however, is seen as a hero, not a saint. The adventure involves both creation and destruction. Negative aspects of entrepreneurship such as business failure and job destruction are just as real as the positive aspects. The entrepreneur, therefore, may be a trickster, another mythic figure, as well as a hero. Tricksters and heroes are both agents of change. Tricksters are as universal as heroes and may be creative or subversive. "Mischievous, cunning and humorous, tricksters are often seen as possessing the ability to switch between animal and human personae" (Willis 1993, p. 24).

The entrepreneur may be a bringer of death and destruction rather than a creator of boons. His or her journey may be one that prepares them for and develops their ability to cause harm to the community rather than to help it. Whichever is true depends upon the motive for starting a new business: maximization, or the spirit of adventure. While neoliberal economics assumes profit maximization, Schumpeter saw the spirit of adventure and the joy of creating as motives for entrepreneurship (Schumpeter 1983, p. 923). Perhaps, like many human actions, entrepreneurship results from mixed motives. In that case, then, the entrepreneur is both hero and trickster, and more.

This section provides a brief summary and description of the hero's adventure. The following summary of the hero's adventure comes from Sect. 3, the Hero and the God, which is in Joseph Campbell's *Prologue: The Monomyth in The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Campbell 1968).

The standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: separation–initiation–return: which might be named the nuclear unit of the monomyth. A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man (p. 30).

In short, "The myths tell of a dangerous journey of the soul, with obstacles to be passed" (p. 366). Examples include Prometheus who stole fire from the gods and Jason who found the Golden Fleece. The universal nature of the myth is proclaimed with "...whether presented in the vast, almost oceanic images of the Orient, in the vigorous narratives of the Greeks, or in the majestic legends of the Bible, the adventure of the hero normally follows the pattern of the nuclear unit above described: a separation from the world, a penetration to some source of power, and a life-enhancing return" (p. 35) and "Everywhere, no matter the sphere of interests (whether

religious, political, or personal), the really creative acts are represented as those deriving from some sort of dying to the world; and what happens in the interval of the hero's nonentity, so that he comes back as one reborn, made great and filled with creative power, mankind is also unanimous in declaring" (pp. 35–6). The myth helps us to understand "the singleness of human spirit in its aspirations, powers, vicissitudes, and wisdom" (p. 36). So, there is a basic pattern to the hero's adventure.

Entrepreneurship: Its Markings and Process

The entrepreneur is the man of action, declares Schumpeter, one who reaches out beyond one's grasps to seize a possibility in order to create something "new." The word entrepreneur comes from the thirteenth-century French verb *entreprendre* meaning "to do something" or to undertake. By the sixteenth century, the noun had emerged to refer to someone who undertakes a business venture (Cantillon 1730). For Cantillon, the bearing of risk when engaging in business without an assurance of the profits that will be derived is the distinguishing feature. The term was popularized by economist Jean Baptist Say, who in the early 1800s used the term to refer to individuals who create value in an economy by moving resources out of areas of low productivity into more productive areas (Say 1880). In 1848, J. S. Mill used the term in his popular book *Principles of Political Economy* (Mill 1909). The distinguishing feature of entrepreneurs, according to Mill, is they assume both the risk and the management of the business.

A brief, general description is given first. Then, the process of entrepreneurship according to Burch, Schumpeter, and Gilder will be summarized.

According to Burch'

Entrepreneurs are those people who are able to discover an opportunity for economic profit either through developing a new method of production that results in greater efficiency or by producing a new product. In either case, the entrepreneur must be both a creator and a risk taker. They are creators in the sense that they simply have an idea for a more efficient production process or a new product. If the idea were not new, the new method or product would already be used or on the market and there would be no creativity. In that case, no opportunity for economic profit would exist. This is because in a competitive environment economic profits will erode when new firms enter the market. They are risk takers because if it were absolutely certain that economic profits could be made, there would be no risk. It would have been clear to anyone that the economic profits were available, and in a competitive environment, entry of firms into the market would have again eroded away the economic profits. Since there is uncertainty, there is always some element of risk in starting any new business endeavor. The entrepreneur is always taking a chance that the new venture will not only fail to yield economic profits, but may fail entirely. Their actions are based only on a hunch. Why does an individual take such a risk based only on a hunch or their own creative work where no one else has done so before? What type of individual will be both creative and willing to take a risk?

For Schumpeter, the process whereby the innovations occur was called "Creative Destruction" (1962). This was,

The opening of new markets, foreign or domestic, and the organizational development from the craft shop and factory to such concerns as U. S. Steel illustrate the same process of industrial mutation if I may use that biological term—that incessantly revolutionizes the economic structure from within, incessantly destroying the old one, incessantly creating the new one. This process of Creative Destruction is the essential fact about capitalism. It is what capitalism consists in and what every capitalist concern has got to live in. (p. 83)

In the neoliberal period, the idea of entrepreneurship is developed further in light of the concern with maximizing profits and celebrations of the socially disruptive character of free markets. During this period, the socioeconomic evolution of wage labor transitions into the global postindustrial economy. The efficient market thesis had been replaced by an acknowledgement of market failure as essential to the sign economy (or KBE). The tradition of economics of information and knowledge coalesces with other disciplines to define the discourse of KBEs. The neoliberal reading is associated with the growth of sign economics and of finance capital within the global economy. Within the neoliberal reading of economic life, the entrepreneur is both a hero and is reconfigured as an embodiment of the pure rationality assumptions of economism. The entrepreneur emerges as an emblem of pure individuality and self-interest as driving forces of the global information-based economy.

For Gilder (1984), the entrepreneur and entrepreneurship make up what he calls the “real economy” in capitalism, not the “colliding multinational corporations, national industrial policies, and macroeconomic tides that overwhelm the simple energies and enthusiasms of individual entrepreneurs” (p. 31). Perhaps, the following passages best illustrate what Gilder thinks entrepreneurship is:

The entrepreneurial start-up is the most creative domain in American enterprise largely because it affords the best learning process. A man who builds a company from scratch acquires depth of understanding of what makes it work that an imported chief executive, however, effective his management information systems, however many cases he has explored in depth at the Harvard Business School, cannot easily command. The entrepreneur gains a dynamic and integrated view of his company and a realistic view of enterprise... Because he started in rebellion against established firms, he bears a natural skepticism toward settled expertise. Because he had to make scores of decisions before all the information was in, he recognizes that enterprise always consists of action in uncertainty. The entrepreneur prevails not by understanding an existing situation in all its complex particulars, but by creating a new situation which others might try to comprehend. The enterprise is an aggressive action, not a reaction. When it is successfully launched, all the rest of society government, labor, other businesses-will have to react. It entails breaking the looking glass of established ideas-even the gleaming mirrors of executive suites-and stepping into the often greasy and fetid bins of creation. (p. 247)

Gilder calls entrepreneurship an “irrational process” carried on by “orphans and outcasts” (Gilder, p. 275) in the face of a hostile environment.

The entrepreneur brings, through creativity, the unexpected boon by discovering the “unknown continents of the real economy” (p. 56). Entrepreneurship “requires a life of labor and listening, aspiration and courage” (p. 258) while being the “redemption of an oppressed and desperate world” (p. 258). This creativity comes from the immigrants, outcasts, and former employees who are outside the established, large, and dominant firms (p. 132).

To summarize these remarks, within neoliberal market discourse, entrepreneurship is a kind of creative, irrational rebellion committed in the face of uncertainty. The courageous entrepreneur sets out on a personal, path-breaking adventure pursued within the turbulent dynamics of the total market.

The Entrepreneur as Risk-Taker

It should be recalled that the hero either leaves his native land and takes the risk of facing a new environment alone or challenges the authority of his society. In either case, he is taking a risk based on a belief in his own personal integrity and creativity. Just like the entrepreneur, the hero is a creator and risk-taker. An entrepreneur must step out of the ordinary way of producing and imagine the way things could be to discover the previously undreamt technique or product. Engaging “fabulous forces” might lead to applying the assembly line technique or interchangeable parts to producing automobiles or building microcomputers in a garage. The mysterious adventure is the time spent tinkering in research and development. But once those techniques are discovered or developed, the hero-entrepreneur now has the power to bestow this boon on the rest of mankind.

Campbell (1968) also has a section called “The Cosmogonic Cycle,” which “unrolls the great vision of the creation and destruction of the world which is vouchsafed as revelation to the successful hero” (p. 38). The connection to Schumpeter’s theory of creative destruction is clear. A successful entrepreneur simultaneously destroys and creates a new world, or at least a new way of life. Henry Ford, for example, destroyed the horse and buggy age while creating the age of the automobile. But even more to the point is the fact that the hero finds that the world “suffers from a symbolical deficiency” (p. 37) and that “the hero appears on the scene in various forms according to the changing needs of the race” (p. 38). These changing needs and deficiency may correspond to changing market conditions or the changing desires for products. In the heroic mode, the entrepreneur becomes attuned to these changes before others and is thus the first person to bring forth a world shattering innovation and the boon of profits. Heilbroner (1989) provides a good historical example of this trajectory in James Watt, the inventor of the steam engine (p. 74).

A summary of some of the basic parallels between the hero’s adventure and the activity of the entrepreneur is as follows: Both the entrepreneur and the hero must go through separation. For the hero, this may mean leaving his native land. For the entrepreneur, it may mean leaving a present job or company to start out on his own. The hero is usually initiated by a mentor who teaches him the use of some supernatural aids. The entrepreneur may need to learn from his mentor how to manage and organize people and production (once the product has been developed) or perhaps some technical or research skills necessary to develop the new product. In the return stage, the hero brings back a “boon” to mankind. The entrepreneur steps out of his workshop and returns with an idea that also advantages mankind if only be increasing wealth.

The Twenty-First-Century Odyssey

In spite of its monomaniacal emphasis on efficiency and calculability, then, the contemporary celebration of the entrepreneur points to an irrational dimension to neoliberalism in the sense that recapitulates a long established heroic myth and re-configures it in terms of market rationality. The hero’s journey follows the Joycean format of the monomyth from Finnegan’s Wake articulated in Joseph Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1968). As Campbell indicates, the epic hero as we find in the Odyssey proceeds through the following cycles: separation, initiation, and return. The steps are as follows:

- A. Separation - —————> Take first step
 - Call to adventure - —————> Passion
 - Refusal of the call - —————> Is it practical?
 - Supernatural aid - —————> The harder you work, the luckier you are
 - The crossing of first threshold - ———> Market research
 - The belly of the whale - —————> Raising funds, business plus

- B. Initiation - —————> Building the team
 - The road of trials - —————> Striving to profitability
 - The meeting of the goddess - ———> First customer
 - Temptation - —————> Seeking short terms goal over long term goals
 - Atonement with the fathers- ———> Competing or collaboration with Big Guys
 - Apotheosis - —————> Realizing the core business
 - The ultimate boon - —————> New found acumen

- C. Return - —————> Is it all for naught?
 - Refusal of the return - —————> Don’t lose sight of the core
 - The magic flight - —————> Exit strategy
 - Rescue from without - —————> When competitor is your friend
 - The crossing of the return threshold - —————> The venture is a success
 - Master of two worlds - —————> You know what it takes; I can do it again
 - Freedom to live - —————> Financial freedom to pursue one’s passion

A few steps in the hero’s journey are worth highlighting:

A. Separation

It will be recalled that the “hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder.” In what way is there a separation and a venturing forth for entrepreneurs? Gilder (1984) makes many observations about entrepreneurship that indicate that a kind of separation occurs. These are:

1. The entrepreneur starts in “rebellion against established firms” (p. 247).
2. The “endlessly recurring miracles of capitalism” are carried out by “outcasts and orphans” (p. 257).
3. “The fastest-growing new firms often arise through defections of restless managers and engineers from large corporations or through the initiatives of immigrants and outcasts beyond the established circles of commerce” (p. 132).
4. “In the beginning of the entrepreneurial life there is nearly always a crisis of breaking away” (p. 26).

Shapiro and Sokol (1982) also report that many entrepreneurs start their ventures at their midlife crisis (p. 81). Reynolds (1991) reports that “those most likely to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities are those with post-secondary education, in their late thirties, and with an established career record” (p. 63). This process of getting and spending may be secondary because Burch (1986) argues that money and profit maximization are only secondary motives for the entrepreneur.

Supernatural Aid The hero receives aid from a mentor who himself has taken on his own adventures. The mentor is a protective figure who represents the peace of Paradise and the forces of nature. Here, Campbell (1968) also says that “the hero’s act coincides with that for which his society is itself ready. He seems to ride on the great rhythm of the historical process” (p. 71–72). Schumpeter, of course, has referred to this as creative destruction. Gilder (1984) says that the entrepreneur prevails by creating a new situation to which the rest of the world will have to react. It is the successful entrepreneur who is the source of the historical process of creative destruction.

The Crossing of the First Threshold When Gilder says that entrepreneurship makes up the real economy, he refers to the enthusiasm of entrepreneurs. The word enthusiasm means full of god, from the Greek, with *en* meaning in and *theos* meaning god. Campbell’s use of the term destructive–creative along with enthusiasm is notable because it is enthusiastic entrepreneurs who generate creative destruction in capitalism.

Gilder (1984) suggests that the entrepreneur must kill his ego as, “Entrepreneurs can be pompous and vain where it doesn’t count; but in their own enterprise, the first law is listen. They must be men meek enough and shrewd enough to endure the humbling eclipse of self that comes in profound learning from others” (p. 246). Again, the entrepreneur taps into the vast well of creative ideas not by being arrogant but by being humble enough to listen to others. “Their self-interest succumbs to their deeper interest and engagement in the world beyond themselves (this recalls separation and crossing the threshold) impelled by their *curiosity, imagination, and faith*” (p. 254).

B. Initiation

Initiation is the penetration to the source of power.

The Road of Trials Once the hero has crossed the first threshold and entered the belly of the whale, he faces a seemingly endless road of tests and trials with the aid of his mentor or the benign power of nature. He slays dragons at each trial, but only if he can constantly put his ego to death. Anyone who has started a new business given the rate of new business failures necessarily must face a road of trials that includes getting capital, land, and labor to mesh together efficiently and creatively.

There are long hours of work, bureaucratic regulations to deal with, irate customers, mechanical breakdowns, competitors, etc., that have to be overcome for the entrepreneur to succeed. “The entrepreneurial achievements of the 1970’s and the early 1980’s came in the face of a hostile press, resistant culture, and a stagnant ‘economy.’ The breakthroughs of these entrepreneurs are an amazing testimony to human will and ingenuity, vision and tenacity in defiance of the odds” (Gilder 1984, p. 56).

Apotheosis This is the act of making a god out of a person. To become a god or god-like, the hero must become selfless. But to become selfless, the hero must transcend pairs of opposites (especially birth and death) that make up the world as perceived by our rational minds. The hero must stand and be able to go between two worlds, the conscious and the unconscious, and see the divinity and oneness in all things.

The Ultimate Boon The ultimate boon results when the hero delivers knowledge of the divinity and oneness of all things to his community. This leads to the knowledge of the infinite creative abilities within each individual. It has already been noted that both Schumpeter and Campbell understood the importance of the process of creation and destruction.

C. Return

In Campbell (1968), this is the life-enhancing return that is necessary to the “continuous circulation of spiritual energy into the world” (p. 36).

Master of Two Worlds The two worlds are the known, material world the hero leaves, and the one the hero enters on the adventure and in which he discovers the creative power. Somehow the hero must be able to use the energy and creative ability discovered in his adventure for the benefit of mankind. He has to be able to delve into his unconscious and bring out what the world needs without letting common, everyday concerns distort his gift. He has this ability if he has killed his ego. Gilder (1984) writes something similar about the character of entrepreneurs: “It is the entrepreneurs who know the laws of the world and the laws of God. Thus they sustain the world” (p. 19). The entrepreneur clearly must be a master of two very different worlds.

Freedom to Live The hero is finally able, once he has killed his ego, to detach himself from the fruits of his own labor and sacrifice them to God. He has discovered the creative, divine power that was in him all the time. Burch (1986, p. 26) says that entrepreneurs are good at starting companies and making them successful, but not at managing them. Conversely, he argues that corporations tend to cease taking risks and are not run by entrepreneurs (p. 87). The entrepreneur is not a champion of the already existing corporation but of those that are becoming, to which he is giving birth.

As these themes illustrate, close parallels exist between the heroic archetype and the capitalist entrepreneur. Within the mythology of neoliberalism and its celebration of disruptive, uncontrollable productive energies, this narrative of the hero becomes even more pronounced. The celebration of the hero has even become prominent within popular culture, with the advent of television programs such as “The Apprentice” (Donald Trump hosting) and more recently the program “Shark Tank,” with competitors swimming with the successful sharks begging for capital from the predators. There are

many other programs celebrating the entrepreneur in diverse areas: from mega-pawn shops, to “pickers,” to aspiring master chefs and restaurateurs.

Entrepreneurship and the Global Knowledge-Based Economy

The background of liberalism, not just neo liberalism, is the will to power casting the market in a capitalist theology. This theology imagines the will free to make decisions as it needs. Furthermore, the distribution of wealth by the market is considered just and good. The market (or *market liberalism*) is viewed as a moral necessity for the correct working of all social relationships. This market theology enshrines the entrepreneur as the *elite class*. Neoliberalism may be viewed as a resurgence of the free-market economics in the 1970s and 1980s in the USA, particularly in the Reagan years. The rhetorical posture of individualism and free choice became the mantra of neoliberalism and the celebration of the “*entrepreneur as hero*.” The social institution of the entrepreneur is central to market liberalism. In the nineteenth century, most entrepreneurs were still private individuals. Under neoliberalism’s demand for flexibility, entrepreneurship becomes a standard lauded practice: Without the entrepreneur’s vision, there is no free market.

This emphasis on entrepreneurship is furthered by technology. The general character of neoliberalism is the desire to expand the market by increasing the number, frequency, repeatability, and formalization of transactions. Where private property is a central feature of liberalism, in neoliberalism the “contract” is key. The ideal of neoliberalism is the total interconnectedness of competition and transactions affecting each other in an infinitely short time. The expansion of interactivity means that neoliberal societies are networked societies, rather than the “open societies” of classic liberals.

The entrepreneur is thereby linked with economic power by means of networks, as they often have no fixed assets and must lease production capabilities. Such networks, in turn, become essential for the translation of the entrepreneur’s boon into commodities.

The shift to a KBE is said to be the driving force underlying the emergence of the entrepreneurial economy. The emphasis is on individual motivation, new ideas, and taking risk. Flexibility and innovation are viewed as critical to economic success. Accordingly, policy makers today count on entrepreneurial initiative to address contemporary economic and social problems of structural change, including unemployment and industrial stagnation. New firms move quickly to commercialize knowledge on a scale that can make broad social and economic impacts. To do this, firms must identify and match opportunities with resourcing ventures in a quick and delicate process. These opportunities do not come ready-made. They are outcomes of investment in new knowledge and ideas (Schumpeter 1962, 1983) and the accumulation of knowledge which is generated through the interlocking of the institutional curriculum of business, entrepreneurship, apprenticeship, etc. The

entire social field, down to the level of urban planning, becomes implicated in the gestation of entrepreneurialism, as firms seek to gain a competitive advantage by being located nearest to key sources of discovery and innovation, such as universities and global cities. Such firms outperform rival companies located elsewhere through what has been explained as localized knowledge “spillovers” (Foray 2004). Knowledge spillovers have been defined as original, knowledge generated somewhere that has become valuable and accessible to external agents, whether it be knowledge fully characterizing an innovation or knowledge of a more intermediate sort. This knowledge is “absorbed” and commodified by an individual or group other than the originator (Foray 2004).

Access to this spillover is offered by institutions that act as communication media. In this instance, accessibility and understanding are the Gemini of communication which accesses and translates know “how” and know “what” into spillover. *Absorption* of the spillover is a process that could be termed assimilation, consumption, or, in this case, appropriation. Appropriation means to make one’s own, and to appropriate is to be suitable to the situation, a practical–ethical injunction.

This process of gaining continued access to and absorbing external scientific knowledge can also be achieved by attracting managers and directors with an academic background. Neoliberal ideology created the dynamic between government, industry, and the university. A strategy of subordinating the university to neoliberalism’s value ideally employs an argument of economic scarcity to justify withholding resources to universities. Once realigned in accord with market imperatives, universities must compete for resources through competitive grants and align curricula with the goal of creating more entrepreneurial subjects. The grand institution of the old liberalism is thus transformed into an entrepreneurial university. Universities become quasi-market driven and subordinate themselves to “market forces” operating on national and global scales. Thus, a “knowledge economy” is created based on a Trinitarian relationship in which “science,” reformulated as market-oriented technological speculation, plays the critical role.

Technologies can be expected to develop as interfaces between sciences and the economy. This mutual shaping of market and technoscience is a positive feedback loop that can be “locked in” (Leydesdorff 2006). A knowledge-based system is grounded in reflexivity and discourse. Knowledge enables us to codify the meaning of information. Information can be more or less meaningful given a perspective. Providing meaning to an uncertainty can be a first codification. Knowledge alliances select or deselect some meanings and retain others in a second layer of codification. Knowledge itself can also be codified, and codified knowledge can then be commercialized. As a consequence, a knowledge-based system operates in recursive loops that one would expect to be increasingly selective in terms of the information to be retained: One layer of institutional relations constrain each other’s behavior and a second layer of functional relations which shape each other’s expectations with reference to the future. The second order interaction termed (the knowledge base) remains an historical result of the first-order intentions in the knowledge infrastructure. A monopoly can immunize against markets for a long period of time; however, these locked-in relations can be expected to erode due to the

ongoing process of creative destruction spurred on by recombination of elements on the basis of insight (Schumpeter 1943). Finally, interaction effects rising from negative feedbacks may lead to global crises that require restructuring of the codifying layer of institutions (Freeman and Perez 1988).

While the market can be considered in a first approximation as an open network seeking equilibrium, innovation requires closure of the network in terms of the relevant stakeholders (Callon 1998). Innovations are generated and incubated by locally producing units such as scientific labs and communities of instrument workers in interaction with markets. This provides innovation with both a market dimension and a technological dimension. The two dimensions interact at the interface. What can be produced in terms of technical characteristics encounter and are filtered in the form of what can be diffused into relevant markets in terms of service characteristics (Frenken 2006). Within this context, user–producer relationships contribute to maintenance of the system.

The “knowledge-based economy,” in short, comprises a field of elements conditioned by neoliberal ideology to produce and quickly commodify technological innovations. The expansion of this field tends to circumscribe the purpose of liberal institutions such as universities and refocuses their functions on the production of technical expertise. The entrepreneur emerges as *the* heroic figure in the context of this economic field of relations, which supplants all other sources of value. Neoliberalism is more than an economic policy. It is a quasi-philosophy answering the questions, “why we are here” and “what should I do”? The answers proffered by economism are, “You are here for the market, and you should compete.” If one does not participate in the market, one has failed the neoliberal personal ethic, the vision that every human being is an entrepreneur managing their own life and should act *accordingly*. Moral philosophers call this a virtue ethic that allows people to compare themselves to how an ideal type would act. In this case, the ideal entrepreneur is one whose friends, hobbies, sports, and social and romantic “partners” effectively maximize their status. That is, all these elements effectively “network” on a system of purely economic values. Such social action is monetized and extends the market principle into noneconomic forms of life. In general, the ethical precepts of neoliberalism can be summarized as:

- Act in conformity with market forces
- Within this limit, act also to maximize the opportunity for others to conform to the forces generated by your actions
- Hold no other goals

In brief, neoliberalism is a narrative of economic maximization. The maximization principle is consistent with Schumpeter’s articulation of the entrepreneur as man of action. In contemporary society, the definition of the human being as *Homo Faber* has been reinterpreted in terms of commodified man-machine making. Making now involves the capability to bring about transformations or “disruptions” within a social environment defined solely in terms of the market (Mickunas 1997, p 177).

Neoliberalism is the dominance of free-market rationalities and the extension of economic globalization. It is marked by freedom of capital with unintentional weak-

ening of national economic autonomy. Privatization, deregulation, and reduction of spending on health, education, and welfare support the needs of globalized capital at the expense of the traditional role of the liberal state. There is a consequent reorientation from public good to “civic” responsibility under the sign of neoliberalism. These trends perpetuate the entrepreneurial subject at a global scale

The shift to the global arena changes the site of power from national government to global, decentralized power. Under liberal democracy, the critique of inequality and demand for redress have some political force. Sovereign states were required to respond to public opinion to support their legitimacy as democratic states whose basis for existence was the welfare of their citizens. Public opinion under neoliberalism weakens in terms of holding governance accountable. Yet unbound in this way, government gains extensive leeway for transforming areas of the globe in line with neoliberal aims, as witnessed in George W. Bush’s administration as an adjunct to the neoliberal establishment. Neoliberalism breaches the line between state and society to allow the value and rules of markets to reform all spheres of life. The rise of surveillance through the formation of an “audit culture” tightens control of monitoring citizens, as all conduct is viewed through an economic calculus that determines accountability.

The contemporary field of entrepreneurial activity is therefore marked by opposing tendencies. On the one hand, there is the urge to overturn all existing relationships through a thoroughgoing process of creative destruction. On the other hand, there is the counter urge to map and freeze all social relations in the effort to control and insure the reproduction of the existing social field. The attempt to resolve or at least to navigate this opposition is key to understanding the neoliberal apotheosis of entrepreneurship. To go beyond opposites is the “essential” character of the hero of mythology.

Critique of Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurism has been appropriated by neoliberalism as a mechanism for generating market values while at the same time denying the nonmarket creativity required for innovation practices. By reappropriating entrepreneurship from the grip of neoliberalism, it is possible to view business and economics in a reconfiguration grounded in embodied creative activity within history.

The heroic entrepreneur possesses the ability to “create.” But what does that mean? A creativity is not a power or potential waiting to be actualized. Production is not a potency, a power to shape things and to “make” institutions. According to Eugen Fink, the grounding focus is the autonomous “will.” Will and action cannot be separated. Action processes are not confronted by pre-given objects but emerge with them, as well as with the plan of relations that are subjectively constituted rather than “already there.” Planning pervades the material and infuses it with directions which are not found in nature. This *emergence* is more fundamental than the “freedom of our engagement” with a continuous constitution of something which *is not*

yet choice. Freedom is the basis of our political self-understanding and a base for technological interpretation of “making” and Homo Laborans.

Creativity may in addition be understood as “play,” as activity that primarily occurs without rules. Play rules emerge in playful deliberation. They stem from a “need” to play in opposition to serious tasks. Accordingly, this foundation has the ability to transform, subsume, or modify sense formations. Sense formations intersect, break up, and recombine without finality. This allows one to *play* with institutional foundations, as they do not have a pre-given foundation. In this sense, technological innovation is a playful imagining of what is not yet available. Play draws its formation out of a “nothingness,” which sets no ontological criterion. Playful freedom is creation brought forth in self-understanding with others. Playful freedom is broader than and undercuts the mercantile notion of freedom of choice. The constant formation and maintenance of playful relationships comprise a field in which we reestablish institutions by enacting a novel “sense.” As Merleau-Ponty (1945, p. 241–242) notes, “What we have there at the outset . . . a certain perceptual field against the background of a world. Nothing here is thematized, neither object nor subject is posited.” There is a perceptual dialogue between subjectivity and the visible, a dialogue that manifests itself in an evolving “style” or a *coherent deformation* of the visible through playful activity.

Merleau-Ponty’s exploration of passivity and meaning led him to adopt a stance emphasizing the possibility of permanent reformation, an “ultra-liberalism” that nonetheless is not offered as absolute (Merleau-Ponty 2003, p 163). Ultra-liberalism is beyond the typical interpretations of liberalism. This term refers to the lived history of our social world, which comprises embodied, perceiving individuals taking up the natural and social patterns of the past and present, attempting to gain recognition within them, and to move them in new directions. History moves—individuals seek recognition for a full range of their human needs and do so within the context of already existing history. Entrepreneurship can be reimagined on such terms as a *playful, difference-making institution*.

Thus, a non-economistic KBE would allow one to ride the wave of play-freedom, celebrating the creation of ideas and their capabilities without having them distorted into a mercantile form. The journey of epic heroes had a consistent mythological structure of separation–initiation–return. This is the old and new road of self-discovery illustrated in myth and classical literature. The *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* together form a complex meditation on the basic value of Western civilization, both the good and bad, as brought together in the crucible of war. The good includes marital love and reconciliation, household tranquility, filial piety, and legitimate government. The bad includes piracy, vengeance, slavery, and patriarchy. As is common in classical literature, Homer gives us the problem and not a set of answers: a polar interweaving of these strands. Therefore, Odysseus as a heroic myth outlines basic features of the hero/entrepreneur. The hero is

1. Not a moral exemplar.
2. One who is set apart from everyone else yet immersed in the everyday life of one’s society.

3. Is called to do something special.
4. Engages in special tasks to acquire skills, learn lessons, and/or expiate past sins (including enduring symbolic death).
5. Returns home with greater knowledge, faith, and humility. The change is often reflected in a name change in order for the reintegration into culture or household at higher level than before.

The entrepreneur of ultra-liberalism, of the KBE, *retains* this mythological journey as a possibility and lives its ethos. Today, this journey takes the form of a “*how to*” *voyage*. This voyage includes a more self-conscious awareness that one makes it up as one goes along. The entrepreneur pursues openings in the given world, recursively transforming such openings into boons; a cosmic spiraling through temporality to plumb all possibilities. We thereby return to the hero of myth, the one who breaks rules and old forms in a process of creative destruction that transcends economism. Entrepreneurialism can therefore be reconstructed in light of a critical ethos. The heroic entrepreneur must operate with the self-consciousness of leading a process of coherent deformation to bring back the boon of ultra-liberalism. Such an ethos and style of comportment align with three major motifs:

Motif 1 Entrepreneurship: The Odysseus mythologem rewritten in terms of creativity, as a philosophy of “making a difference” in a context of high probability of failure. Heroic activity requires significant knowledge/insight and access to financial networks resulting in navigation of a market while displacing *The Market*.

Motif 2 Ultra Liberalism: Entrepreneurship as a self-conscious process of continuous deformation of the visible in which new technologies and networks of the KBE transcend and dissolve the economic myth of the market as the source of all value.

Motif 3 Permanent Renewal: The institution of entrepreneurship reconfigured as playful creation that delivers the boon by recombining the past with reference to the future in the living present.

The Narrative

In political economy, the tragedy of the growth story is contrasted with the equilibrium story. All equilibrium stories end up in the same place. In equilibrium, there is no role for a hero tragic or otherwise. Even the true protagonist, the Auctioneer, is hidden. Growth stories in contrast are more open-ended, uncertain, and path dependent. In growth stories, history matters. Even tragedies which end up predictability must have some sort of beginning.

For Adam Smith, the hero was the prudent man with virtue of frugality, foresight, and self-control. Marx, who also wrote in the growth genre, had a hero: The radical intellectual who could pierce the veil of false consciousness. The hero was the economist as expert or savior. The expert driven government can reign in capitalism destructive tendencies sufficiently to realize capitalisms’ ongoing benefits. As we have said, for Schumpeter, the hero was the entrepreneur, the agent of innovation,

and the pivot on which everything turned. Capitalist economics go up and down, but grow over time, regardless of the volatile business cycles. (Schumpeter 1983)

For Schumpeter, equilibrium analysis of the passive price-taking agent with continued permanence was at odds with the observable, real-world business behavior and continual disruptive changes. The entrepreneur as hero and innovator propels capitalist economics upward along a bumpy path. The narrative demands (we align with Ricardo) more workers, more capital, more capital per worker. For Schumpeter, only change is constant in capitalist economies' evolution. It evolves not smoothly but discontinuously. Evolutionary change is punctuated rather than gradual. The disruption of entrepreneurial innovation occurs as "*irregularly regular*" intervals.

For Schumpeter, competition drives innovation, but also begets imitation "swarms copying their rival's innovation, attracting investment and leading to a boom and so on and so forth. However, Schumpeter's desire for exact economics abandons the uncertainty and complexity of "irregularly regular" for the intervals of three cycles wave theory of business: Medium 40 months, Long 8–11 years, Very Long 50–60 years. While Schumpeter's subjects of innovation, entrepreneurship and business strategy are a part of business school curriculum, they are largely absent from Economics Departments as the work has proven too difficult to formalize, as noted in John Lorinc's article *From Dream to Reality (U of T Magazine, Winter 2015)*. According to Thomas McCraw, (2015) Straus Harvard Professor of Business History, the maximization cum equilibrium method still defines academic economics. "The ideas are the easy part," "once you peel away the mythology surrounding Microsoft's creation you can see Bill Gates pursued a path of discovery that entrepreneurship experts constantly emphasize with aspiring innovators such as [Hanna] Janoss and [Ryan] Love." "He [Gates] didn't start with a product ... he started with a sense of what people wanted to do" (Lorinc 2015). Successful entrepreneurs refine a discovery so the resulting product or service solves real problems for their target audience.

Bringing a novel technology to market requires a relentless search for unsolved problems, talk to potential customers and reorient their work to reflect what they're learning about market (p. 38).

The economic exchange of knowledge was first developed as distinct from the exchange of commodities within the context of a market economy. For instance, patents provide a format for codifying knowledge contents for other than the internal requirement of quality control in scientific communication. Patents package scientific knowledge contents so that new knowledge can function as the interfaces of science with economy and be incorporated into knowledge-based innovation (Jaffe and Trajtenberg 2002).

Yet as noted earlier, a KBE is unpredictable. How, then, can an economy be based on something as volatile as knowledge? How does a KBE differ from classical market-based political economy? Knowledge production adds a new dynamic (Schumpeter 1983), in the sense that technological *innovation* continually upsets the equilibrium-seeking dynamics of the market. The resulting social system consequently is based on nonequilibrium dynamics (Li and Yorke 1975). Technologies develop in terms of generations based on internal performative criteria, that is, along the time axis, while markets operate as selection environments that intercede in the development of technologies at select moments of time.

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Chapter 5

Neoliberalism and the Production of Enemies: The Commercial Logic of *Yahoo! News*

Christopher M. Bingham and Eric Kramer

Theories of Media and News Production

Traditional flows of corporate media content from producer through distributor to consumer have become less dominant as the Internet democratizes access and the distribution of content. Advertisers, who traditionally would have had to deal with broadcasters (the “old guard” of traditional distribution), can now publish advertisements globally and immediately using the Web. Additionally, relative newcomers such as Netflix and Hulu, companies built on a platform of digital distribution, are increasingly bypassing traditional content producers (broadcasters and studios) to create their own content. Just as the nature of ad content changed with the inception of product placement, advertising practices have changed in response to the Internet’s promise of unconstrained, individualized distribution.

This phenomenon extends practices that are common within traditional media, such as the so-called *native advertising* where corporations pay news sources to have their journalists write stories for the company’s products (Williams 2014). For example, the Xerox Corporation has paid content distributors—including *Forbes*, *Esquire*, CBS, and *The Week*—to write and publish articles designed to increase public awareness of services offered by Xerox (Basney 2014). Marketers do not see a problem with corporations paying for the news they want distributed as long as the quality remains high and the arrangement is somehow noted (Grensing-Pophal 2014; Murphy and Schram 2014). Native advertising blurs the line between ads and news by presenting both in an identical format, one that mimics the style of traditional news articles. The links aggregated on *Yahoo! News* function in a similar way.

Because these advertisements masquerade as news stories, they illustrate the commercialization of news content, a topic that has long interested media theorists who examine the role of the press in society. Many of these theories are considered

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“normative” in that they prescribe a set of best practices journalists are expected to follow. McQuail describes normative media theories as those that explain “how media ought to work,” (2002, p. 16). However, defining what an industry *should* do always presents the theorist with a moving target in relation to contemporary social reality. One of the central debates about normative theory is whether corporate news media should be held responsible for their actions in relation to the public good or if enforcing such expectations would be an imposition on their rights to freedom of speech (McQuail 2010). Typical normative media theory springs from specific assumptions about the relationship between the media entities and the society in which they exist. Specifically, normative theories assume that the media exist in a democratic society and that the media play a role in the political process. If societies are truly democratic, citizens should have their say in the political realm. Therefore, the role of the media is to provide accurate information to the public, so that people can make the best possible decisions when voting or otherwise participating in the political process (Lichtenberg 2010).

In theory, media are cognizant of their power in relation to the political process and have established specific principles to uphold in order to avoid manipulating the citizenry. McQuail describes “objectivity” as the “core value” of journalistic integrity (2002, p. 283). In opposition to bias and subjectivity, striving for objectivity requires that the news practitioner present only what is factual and do so in a way that is impartial (McQuail 2010). Lichtenberg (2010) describes the role of the press as that of a “watchdog,” alerting the public to things that are often obscured from view.

The practice of the press conference ideally illuminates the nature of how the press tries to counteract bias and influence. Instead of independently investigating events, journalists report on politicians who have specific and conflicting perspectives on issues under popular examination. Journalists will therefore not report facts and instead report on the speech of deliberating parties. However, this second-order reportage, which reports that “Democrats say this while the Republicans say that,” comes at the expense of examining actual data and pursuing independent expert analysis. In this way, the news is packaged into meaningful blocks for consumers based on genre conventions that signify “legitimate” news reporting. As Tuchman (2010) notes, a news story cannot be idiosyncratic, but instead must be molded into formats known to audiences.

The ways in which news services construct parcels of meaning are central to the process of newsgathering and have been approached by a number of scholarly theories. Entman (2010) describes the phenomenon of framing, in which media construct news stories in ways that increase audience salience for specific aspects of the story or particular interpretations of its content. Tuchman (2010) argues that media frames provide for the audience an explanatory schema for interpreting information. In other words, the way a news story is told does more than simply convey information; it tells an audience how to make sense of the event, implying that audience members are not completely free to apply their own explanatory frameworks. Under the broader heading of agenda setting, Lowery and DeFleur (1983) have posited that—at the very least—the news focuses public attention: not so much telling persons what to think, but reinforcing what they should think about.

In the propaganda model, Herman and Chomsky (2006) detail why certain topics get filtered out of news content as a result of the media's overarching political economy. Several interlocking filters—private oligopolistic ownership, funding, sourcing, flak, and fear of communism—interact to severely and consistently limit the range of information citizens routinely encounter. These filters shape the routines of newsgathering and insure the reporters do not cover stories that will either disrupt access to influential sources (political mouthpieces), anger key constituencies (biased audiences), or threaten advertising revenues (Herman and Chomsky 2006; McQuail 2010).

One need not look far to see examples of how media processes support specific political positions. In his oft-cited work on media concentration, Bagdikian (2004) extends the political economic approach and posits that Rupert Murdoch uses his control of numerous media outlets to push a conservative agenda. Additionally, Bagdikian (2004) notes that during the 1980s, corporations began to buy media organizations outright to gain access to and control investigative journalists. Once these journalists become employees of larger conglomerates, they can easily be silenced. The strategic infiltration of journalism by partisan politics can also be seen in the case of *The Washington Times*, a politically slanted news source that emulates the format of a traditional newspaper.¹ Even the name, *The Washington Times*, mimics established news sources such as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* so that the casual observer and uncritical reader will be unable to tell the difference between journalistic and unabashedly partisan news sources.

Scholars such as Bagdikian (2004) and McChesney (1999, 2013) have mapped ownership patterns of traditional media, focusing on the ways that horizontal integration has worked to limit the role of competition in the media market, which in turn has limited the diversity of media content in the USA. This trend is becoming visible on the Internet as well. While originally hailed as a space where individuals will have great freedom to create and access content, the Internet, particularly the platform of the World Wide Web, is quickly being redesigned to serve corporate interests (cf., Burgess and Green 2009 on YouTube). Today, the emergence of the Internet has prompted many corporations to vertically integrate, meaning that production and distribution processes are owned by the same parent corporation. As a result of this trend, the overhead costs of running a media corporation are less, and marketing costs are minimized because the same company owns both the studio and the outlets where media content is advertised and distributed. Whereas the old system had content producers and distributors, as well as advertisers who needed access to both, the Internet allows all three components of media production to be handled by a single company. The process of media concentration that has reorganized traditional media outlets has therefore continued into the era of the Internet as companies scramble to regain the monopolistic control of content distribution they held in the past. Recently, this has taken the form of the widespread purchase and commercialization of once-independent blogs. Streamlining the Internet as a system

¹ *The Washington Times* was founded by the Unification Church of Korea a specifically an anti-communist “news” paper.

of private content distribution is especially important for advertisers. The Internet is not only a cheaper option for distribution than television; new advertising formats and strategies continuously become available on this medium. The popular example is the ability of low-budget advertisements to “go viral,” and spread spontaneously because of the actions of independent Internet users. Attempts toward “viral marketing” are themselves efforts to commodify interpersonal networks in such a way that informal communications among friends and acquaintances become laced with promotional references (Jacobson and Mazur 1995). The Internet, therefore, provides an excellent contemporary example of how privatization transforms media.

Yahoo! News and Internet Advertising

On July 21, 2014, one could access the *Yahoo! News* Web site to become more informed about the day’s events, US cultural commentary, and celebrity gossip. At first glance, nothing seems out of place on *Yahoo! News*: The content, structure, and design of the Web site mimic those of many other contemporary news Web portals. Some important stories covered on July 21 include an incident on the border between Texas and Mexico where US border patrol agents were shot at by narco-traffickers, a commentary on the potential impact of gay rights legislation on religious freedom, and a story on the LA Lakers’ re-signing basketball player Nick Young to a multiyear contract. Nestled among these typical examples of daily news fare was an article titled: “Debt Collectors Harass Debt-Free Woman for Years.” There is no information present on the *Yahoo! News* Web site to indicate that this story would be different from any of the others.

Clicking on this headline takes the viewer to a Web page on *Yahoo! Finance* where the full article is presented. The article, written by Christine DiGangi (2014), details the story of Francis Marshall, a North Carolina woman, and great-grandmother, who has been receiving threatening calls from debt collectors even though she owes no outstanding debt. As the text of the article continues, the author also includes links to help people resist intimidating debt collectors. Five out of the six links present in the text take the viewer to the Web site for Credit.com, a company that advises customers on financial decisions for a fee. In short, this entire article, presented as a news story, functions as a way to traffic *Yahoo! News* users onto Credit.com’s commercial Web site.

Christine DiGangi’s (2014) article entitled “Debt Collectors Harass Debt-Free Woman for Years” is a type of advertisement, although one that has a specific and nuanced format. Considering that the link to this story was present on an Internet news portal, and the article was presented as a news story, one must wonder if there were any indicators present that would signal the commercial nature of this article. The symbol next to Christine DiGangi’s name is a Credit.com logo that indicates that her “press affiliation” is actually a financial advising company. The Credit.com logo next to the author’s name is small and easily missed by the casual reader. Attention to detail and intentional effort on the part of the viewer is required to notice the subtle (one might say hidden) aspects of the Web page that distinguish it from a news story.

One way that the Internet has changed the patterns of media production and distribution is that online delivery systems have made the dissemination of content cheaper. Twenty years ago, it would not have been possible for the advertiser (Credit.com) to plant a commercial ad into a news story without having to make extensive arrangements with a large broadcasting corporation. Today, placing content onto the Web is easy, fast, and inexpensive. The content of persuasive “news stories” found on *Yahoo! News* illustrates how the flattening of media industry processes made possible by Internet distribution has resulted in new ways to blur the line between advertising and news content.

The format of *Yahoo! News* mimics that of many contemporary news Web sites. Most of the Web site’s content appears in the form of a list of similarly formatted hyperlinks. Each link provides the title of the article, the first several lines of the story, and a photograph. These links form a list running vertically down the center of the page. Each link also cites the source of the story, such as Reuters, The Associated Press (AP), or *Yahoo! News*. The left margin contains links to other branches of the *Yahoo!* Web site, while the right margin provides ads and links to stories that contain video. The advertisements at the heart of this study appear as news stories, in the center column alongside links to other stories, and often look exactly like the links for other, actual news sources, such as Reuters or AP. Most of the time, there is no difference in presentation between an actual news story and an advertisement. Two specific types of persuasive articles were found in a review of *Yahoo! News* between June and September 2014. One type focuses on selling commercial products and services, while the other promotes political agendas. Both types of articles are indicative of changes to Internet-based media content as an outcome of neoliberal commercial interests. Additionally, both types demonstrate how news content facilitates the production of enemies, which in turn normalizes expectations of violence in contemporary society.

Selling Products

The Credit.com article, written by Christine DiGangi, about creditors harassing a debt-free woman, is a prime example of this trend in advertising parading as a news story. Like many advertisements on *Yahoo! News*, the link to this story did not contain any indication that it linked to an advertisement. Not only is the link presented as a normal news story, but after clicking the link, the reader is directed to a page that emulates the style of “real” news. This portion of the Credit.com Web site is written in the prose of news copy and contains in-text hyperlinks similar to many contemporary blogs. However, these hyperlinks do not take audience members to other sources for support or previous related stories; instead, these links direct the user to Credit.com’s services, which are for sale.

Credit.com is hardly alone in this practice of presenting advertising as a news story. Instant Checkmate, an Internet company that allows users to access criminal records, employs the same tactic for their online advertising. Unlike Credit.com,

Instant Checkmate's link on *Yahoo! News* did carry a small "Ad Choices" arrow. However, when users click on the link they are taken to a Web page that emulates perfectly a professional news Web page. Additionally, the faux news story by Jessica Ruane (2014), while it exists on Instant Checkmate's corporate URL, uses aesthetic choices to distance its "news" page from its sales page. For example, the article utilizes a different logo than the page from which someone orders Instant Checkmate's services. The logo on the news site uses the acronym ICM PR, while the main page has a logo that features the entire name of the company. The faux news appears different than on the main page, specifically in ways that mimic other news sources whose logos often employ acronyms (e.g., CNN, MSNBC, BBC, etc.).

Photos and emphasized quotes within the text, along with a prose that sounds like news copy, set the stage to make this advertisement feel like a news story. The news portion of Instant Checkmate's site even contains links to other news stories along the right margin and below the text of the story, thereby emulating many other news sites. However, the links only direct the user to other stories on the Instant Checkmate Web site (i.e., the user is never directed off of the Instant Checkmate Web site).

Both of the examples listed above (Credit.com and Instant Checkmate) provide the reader with something to fear. Credit.com tells the story of an innocent woman, targeted seemingly at random by immoral debt collectors, while Instant Checkmate relies on the uncertainty one feels when encountering new people. Articles like these only work to the extent that the reader finds credible a general hostility toward them in the world. When discussing the mean world syndrome, Gerbner posited that as television viewing increased, so did an individual's assumptions about the dangers of their immediate environment. Regardless of the antecedent of such feelings, the reception of these news stories is predicated upon assumptions about credible threats. When one feels legitimately under threat of debt collectors and untrustworthy acquaintances, then the advertisements discussed above seem both plausible and ultimately helpful. News stories that market in political partisanship also rely on fears and assumptions about the hostile nature of contemporary society to sell their agendas.

Selling Partisanship

In addition to the advertisements present on *Yahoo! News*' Web site, many links contained other forms of persuasive content, specifically regarding political partisanship. While the advertisements described above break the norms of journalism by demonstrating bias for a commercial service, these political stories demonstrate bias in terms of how they are positioned relative to specific political parties. Often, one can map the biases present in these stories by following each article's editorial lineage. Take as an example the article titled "Obama's LGBT Executive Order Threatens Religious Liberty, Say Advocates," by Kate Patrick (2014). While this article was listed on the *Yahoo! News* Web site, clicking the link takes the viewer

to a site named the *Daily Caller*. The *Daily Caller* is a news Web site founded by Fox News personality Tucker Carlson and Neil Patel, a former aide to Dick Cheney.

A conservative lean was not the only form of political bias found in these articles, as a number of stories were also linked to liberal sources. The story “Yes, Obama’s Whitehouse is More Secretive than Bush’s,” by Justin Lynch (2014) is an example of liberally biased content linked to from *Yahoo! News*. While the story is hosted on *The Week* (a British news magazine), the author Justin Lynch lists his organizational affiliation as *The Weekly Wonk*, another news source that is owned by the New America Foundation. While the foundation claims to be a bi-partisan think tank in search of better ways to approach politics, the board of directors contains mostly democrats and a couple of self-described “anti-war conservatives.”

To say that a news venue claims a political territory is nothing new. While such a statement may seem in opposition to journalistic ethics, journalistic practice is a different issue. Adhering to journalistic norms, these news stories report on facts, but only certain types. The politically partisan news stories present on *Yahoo! News* seem to focus on facts that would make members of a specific party angry. There are numerous examples of this approach to political reporting present on *Yahoo! News*.

Consider *Yahoo! News*’ article titled “Read Hillary Clinton’s 1971 Letter to Saul Alinsky,” by Dylan Stableford (2014) who writes for *Yahoo! News*. Following the link to the article (also hosted on *Yahoo! News*), one finds a news story that details the correspondence between Clinton and an assistant of noted community organizer and author of *Rules for Radicals* (1971), Saul Alinsky. In addition to quoting passages from the letters in the article, a PDF of the correspondence is provided, which includes a photocopy of the envelope Clinton used to mail the letter. What does this story do and how is that “news?” While politically liberal individuals may see this information as a nonissue, conservatives may view the connection as proof of Clinton’s connections to a “radical” left, an offense worthy of conservative anger.

Another article on *Yahoo! News* draws attention to an attack ad against President Obama that some allege portrays him as a perpetrator of spousal abuse. In addition to describing the video, the article also shows it by using an embedded video player on the story’s Web page. The video depicts a woman who describes a relationship that has gone sour (an allusion to her voting for Obama). The video is placed alongside tweets that argue that the video is insensitive to actual victims of spousal abuse. The headline of the article paraphrases succinctly its argument: “Ad Paints Barak Obama an Awful Lot Like an Abusive Boyfriend,” (John 2014), a notion that may instigate democrat anger against the producers of the video.

These articles present facts as well as supporting evidence by placing items in question directly into the text of the story. The PDF of the Clinton–Alinsky correspondence is provided in photocopy realism. The video of the anti-Obama attack ad is embedded in the Web page. The appearance is created that these articles exist as exposés, documenting damning evidence. Both stories highlight aspects of political parties that would instigate anger in members of the opposing party. In addition to documenting the “facts” of each case, these facts are supported by embedding the “evidence” of alleged wrongdoing. In short, these advertisements—under the guise

of “news”—exist to reignite anger for individuals of one political party against the other. In short, these stories manufacture enemies.

When discussing the enemies next door, it always seems as the stakes could not be higher. In the article on Clinton, the author uses Alinsky’s suggestion to listen to the disenfranchised in order to paint a picture of Clinton fostering unrest and violence in inner city, motivating the lower classes to call for real social change. Indeed, the American way of life seems under threat from the secretive meetings of Clinton and Alinsky. While in the article about the advertisement equating Obama with an abuser, the article’s author argues that the producers of the ad (a group supporting the Republican Party) discount the lived experience of abuse and the lives of the women who have felt that violence firsthand. Indeed, the ad is painted as an affront to our honor as civilized people. The institutions seemly under attack in these articles—our “way of life” and honor—fit the description of ideographs (McGee 1999), strategically ill-defined words whose meaning everyone is expected to agree upon and support (or decry in the case of negative examples). The connection between ideographs and violence lies in the fact that anything, even immoral acts, is justified in defense of these ideographical concepts and values. If Clinton or the Americans for Shared Prosperity are threats to our honor or way of life, it becomes less and less surprising that potentially violent action could follow.

This trend in online news raises the question of to what extent this material can even be considered news or the products of journalism. More broadly, one must examine how in this genre of news coverage and reportage grow out of efforts to commercialize news distribution on the Internet and how this process links news to private global interests.

Internet News and Commercialized Media

The above example illustrates a trend in contemporary online content production which parallels the transformation of earlier media as they were commercialized. Historically, commercialization has transformed media content and formats in profound ways. Regardless of whether one examines newspaper, magazines, or, later, radio and television, the entry of advertising into the media business model transforms each medium from a content delivery business into an audience delivery business: Audiences become the basic product manufactured by media to sell to advertisers (Pope 1983; Smythe 2006). This devil’s bargain insures that advertisers gain the power to shape media content and to demand that both presentation formats and content reflect their need to set a consistent buying mood (Leiss et al. 2005; Sivulka 2012). The examples drawn from *Yahoo! News* illustrate how the division between advertising and news content breaks down and becomes consciously adulterated through commercialization. While such a mixture between news content and persuasion is not new, critical scholars must acknowledge the ways in which advertising is changing in the Internet Age and is in turn transforming the Internet itself.

In part, these *Yahoo! News* stories reflect the influence of postmodernism on journalism in the sense that there has been a breakdown of the belief that opinion and news are clearly separate and should be presented as such by news media. The old notion of factual authority has been decentered as the line between subjective opinion and objective truth has blurred. This breakdown of facticity has been convincingly traced, at least in part, to the impact of promotional culture on social and political institutions. As scholars like Daniel Boorstin (1971), Neil Postman (1985), and Stuart Ewen (1996) have shown, commercial media require that news be produced on schedule, either for primetime broadcasts or to fit the continuous news cycle of cable outlets. This means that rather than simply reporting the infrequent and unpredictable breaks with daily routines that would naturally count as news, media outlets become news factories dedicated to manufacturing news on a rigorous schedule. Moreover, an entire public relations industry springs up to insure that news is reliably delivered to the media, and the media increasingly become dependent on these sources for news. The result, as Boorstin details, is a form of constructed facticity, an “image” of the world that is neither true nor false, but an elaborate theatrical production wedded to special interests—including political interests that benefit from the constant struggle. The proliferation of media channels extends this process as sponsors struggle to find channels that can hold audiences long enough to be exposed to their advertising messages. The process of commercial segmentation splits audiences into smaller units that can be more effectively targeted by commercial messages. Accordingly, the 24-h news channels market themselves as having a particular political slant. Audience members can thus tune into the bias they prefer and never touch the dial again. In this commercialized context, the only remaining measure of journalistic integrity and authority is based on ratings, which index which stations make the most money for sponsors—in other words, which outlet is most effectively “programmed.”

Postmodern theorists have given academic justification to this situation, which in earlier times would have been dismissed as cynicism. This condition was described powerfully by social critics such as Vance Packard and Jules Henry, the latter identifying the emerging dominant epistemology as “pecuniary truth”—truth being simply what sells (Henry 1963, p. 8). Criticism is impossible in this context because everything is merely an interpretation with no allowable criteria for judging which positions are most true, rational, or accurate. When all positions are equally valuable as vehicles for attracting audiences, values become interchangeable. Accordingly, the cornerstone of all critical thinking, the exposure of false consciousness, is rendered irrelevant.

This collapse of the difference between truth and opinion dovetails with major shifts in media ownership patterns, a process George Gerbner and Hamid Mowlana (1996) described as the “invisible crisis.” Because media tend to not report on themselves except as business news, there is rarely any widespread suggestion that commercial media monopolies have political consequences. Shareholders and media power brokers do not care about the truth as much as about the profitability of their investments. Their motto, as Malcolm Steve Forbes regularly repeats, is “the best way to predict the future is to make it.” Inconvenient facts, even quantita-

tive data, can be simply reinterpreted or rewritten. Everything becomes endlessly debatable, not as an aspect of rich democratic deliberation but out of a contrived effort to draw and retain audiences to sell to advertisers. This situation suits those in power because such obfuscations disguise, confuse, obscure, and divert attention from their actions while producing a tangible enemy in the neighbor whose political views differ from one's own. Paired with the war rhetoric of contemporary politics, the only thing one can feel sure of is that the enemy is dangerously close.

Many scholars have shown that audiences routinely confuse journalism and opinion (Chomsky 2002; Edy and Meirick 2007; Meirick et al. 2011). This situation is worsened by the process of segmentation, which insures that no topic is brought up for serious debate and that any opinion can be validated by a change of channel. The, "I don't give a damn what the facts are" attitude is continually endorsed by commercialization. Belief provides sufficient ground to deny facts or to interpret them to fit preconceived worldviews. Indeed, people are less likely to bow to facts because they are taught that facts are socially constructed. Facts and reality can be manufactured and are in fact manufactured around the clock as a basic part of the media's business model. Because this organization of media erodes democratic deliberation and isolates people into increasingly smaller audience segments, this commercial affirmation of belief removes the individual from the political process and leads to conformity to the will of the powerful, as Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky detail in *Manufacturing Consent*.

Illustrations of this process abound in contemporary society, whether in the way climate change denialism is treated as just another valid point of view or in the inability to subject the USA's endless "war on terror" to the thorough national debate it merits. The goal of the powerful in a commercialized postmodern democracy is to cloud the picture of reality, not to win the battle over truth. Substantial debate is not only unnecessary but practically impossible because it endangers the narrow interests that control the economy and government institutions. By contrast, the production of enemies and churning up of hatred in the context of news-entertainment formats not only is profitable and diversionary but also reinforces the political status quo (Herman and Chomsky 2002). Commercialized media strategically defocus reality; they use illuminated screens to create murkiness and spread darkness.

Clearheadedness impedes powerful interests from building armies of fanatical acolytes willing to march off on a crusade. Their efforts thrive when people are fatigued and confused about what is going on in their world and only are able to find irreconcilable versions of reality linked solely by the effort to sensationalize reality rather than inform. The epistemic confusion produced by commercialization eviscerates the notion of false consciousness because something cannot be false if there is no truth. Everything becomes just a matter of commercially manufactured and circumscribed interpretations distributed under conditions that prevent dissenting interpretations from seriously being compared or reflected upon.

A second important aspect of commercialism pertains to collective memory. Even the shortest of short-term memory can influence people's understanding and reactions. Recently, all the major news outlets spent copious time covering events that include a professional football player being caught on surveillance cameras

punching his girlfriend, people dumping cold water on themselves to raise money for medical research, the soaring stock market, beheadings by religious extremists in the Middle East, and five confirmed cases and two deaths from Ebola in the USA. Meanwhile, other much more important issues that will concretely impact people received much less coverage. These items include the fact that while stocks soared and US companies collectively moved their headquarters overseas to avoid US taxes, so-called corporate inversion, the wealth gap in the USA and around the globe continued to widen dramatically and rapidly. Another trend hardly mentioned in the media was the story of the media itself. The unrelenting commercialization of the Internet accelerated at a rapid clip along with eroding freedom of access as companies continued to pursue pay-per-view tiered systems that would severely limit access to information and transform the Internet solely into an adjunct to entertainment services.

While agenda-setting theory famously asserts that a few powerful producers of news can teach audience members what to think about but not what to think (McCombs and Shaw 1972), this somewhat comforting evaluation of audience activity has also been challenged (McCombs and Stroud 2014). George Gerbner's (2002) theory of cultivation effects is one such qualification of the agenda-setting model. Gerbner's theory is in part an effort to explain why Americans believe their country is far more violent than is actually the case. Gerbner argued that this judgment arises because people are inundated by news stories of violence and mayhem that dramatically misrepresents the amount and nature of violence in American society. Over time, this consistent representation of violence has led Americans to think about crime, law enforcement, youth, and race in exaggerated ways. In this sense, people's views about the world are "cultivated" over time as the result of processes that are endemic to commercialization.

Among Gerbner's claims, for instance, is that violence is profitable, especially the kinds portrayed in the media featuring cartoonish actors engaged in small-scale actions against individuals as opposed to much-more-difficult-to-portray forms of systemic violence. Because of its scale and because it is couched within powerful, almost archetypal narratives, people easily relate to these portrayals and have a readymade context for imagining themselves as victims of violence. Additionally, because violence is captivating, it is an ideal programming tool in a commercial context in which programmers strive to attract audiences to sell to advertisers. Moreover, because this type of violence is easy to understand, it plays well across cultural boundaries. Television content and films featuring violence can therefore be easily distributed globally to expand profits. Violence is a pervasive feature of the contemporary world, but it is complex and occurs at many different levels of social organization. When encountering violence in a commercial context, though, one is most likely to be presented a manufactured and exaggerated "face of the enemy" (Keen 1986) that is both profitable and, in accord with the propaganda model, implicitly legitimizes endless war against those that "hate us."

What Gerbner and his colleagues have demonstrated is that cultivation effects are not the result of a single powerful message but instead arise from the cumulative effect of years of media consumption. This model recognizes the interpersonal and

intertextual referencing (the multistep, multidimensional appreciation for the life of messages within social interaction) that occurs as people make sense of media content but also recognizes efforts to give violence a systemic organization, justification, and normalization for the sake of profits. This effort to construct cartoonish enemies interlocks with other forms of systemic violence that are much more likely to impact people. For example, Bagdikian (2004) argues that years of consuming corporate-produced pro-business, antigovernment propaganda has had a cumulative effect on the electorate and reinforced the belief that government institutions are corrupt, inept, and, as Ronald Reagan argued, the enemy. By continually suggesting that corporations working exclusively within the private sector can do everything better and more honestly than public institutions, this propaganda implicitly justifies the neoliberal undermining of democratic institutions.

Bagdikian (2004) demonstrates that journalism has been increasingly displaced by advocacy messages that masquerade as normal news, as well as massive spending on nonproduct advertising by corporations that attempt to generate and maintain positive feelings about corporatism. He argues that media oligarchs need not literally hold secret meetings in back rooms and coordinate an agenda to produce a one-dimensional, conflict-laden picture of the world. On the one hand, these oligarchs share essentially the same perspective on corporate power and seek to extend it. On the other hand, the commercial logic insures that a worldview consistent with these interests is constantly produced and distributed across the great majority of media outlets. There is accordingly great concern to commercialize the Internet and effectively seal off access to the diversity of voices that still participate in this medium. In the few years since its popularization, for instance, the World Wide Web has quickly been colonized by corporate interests and transformed into an invasive surveillance platform that services both advertisers' need to track consumers and the State's need to monitor an increasingly disaffected citizenry. This systematic transformation of the World Wide Web clearly illustrates the multileveled manner in which symbolic violence operates within commercialized media.

Neoliberalism can be thought of as propagating what Dalton and Kramer have termed the Third Sophistic (Kramer 1997; Dalton and Kramer 2012). According to Philostratus, a sophistic is a historical period when education is equated with persuasive speech. This name has been given to eras that are dominated by skilled public communicators who argue to persuade and win their interest rather than to reveal a truth. These ages are characterized by the ascendancy of populist demagogues. According to Plato, Socrates was the first to expose sophists as those who care little for objective truth but who argue to secure their personal interests. The essential difference between sophistry and philosophy—which is occasionally obscured—is that sophists claim to have all the answers while philosophers insist that their search begins in ignorance.

The First Sophistic represents the rise of analytical philosophy around the fifth century BCE. This era culminated with Aristotle's epistemology, including his rudimentary notions of experimental testing and nomenclatural organization of observations, combined with his emphasis on inductive reasoning and symbolic logic. After the collapse of Republican Rome, with its democratic institutions of the Senate

and the Courts, the Second Sophistic rapidly developed. In first-century Rome, the resurgence of sophistical rhetoric was unsuccessfully countered by the revival of philosophy, as personified by Quintilian. Education abandoned methods of independent testing and observation and consolidated as the triumvirate curriculum of grammar, rhetoric, and logic. Yet there was precious little emphasis on logic until the rebirth of Aristotelian thinking a 1000 years later with scholastics such as William of Ockham at Munich, Peter Abelard at Saint-Denis, Dons Scotus in Scotland, and Albertus Magnus at Paris.

The Third Sophistic is marked by the sudden emergence and sustained prominence of “public address.” This form of communication stands in contradiction to philosophy. Professionalized communication is central to this sophistic era, and media are central to efforts to persuade people to adopt one interpretation of the world or another. Contemporary society is therefore inundated by a myriad of unsubstantiated, even false claims, so much so that the Princeton Professor of Philosophy Harry Frankfurt (2005) was moved to write his famous pamphlet “On Bullshit.” Much current public discourse is sophistic in the sense that it is designed solely to enervate and persuade. Not surprisingly, much of this content features a rejection of expert analysis and scientific research in favor of anti-intellectualism and antiscience populism.

Commercialization fragments audiences and prevents them from encountering information that challenges their biases. Worse, it cements one’s biases as neutral, painting all opposition as antagonistic—enemies. Yet debating alternative interpretations of events and policies is central to a democratic polity. The decline of public institutions, and the limitation of government to its policing functions, creates an alienating social environment in which people avoid points of view they dislike (Levendusky 2013; Kuklinski 2009). This process involves what is known as confirmation bias. This bias used to be interpreted in cognitive terms, but recent research has shown that confirmation bias has an affective component that leads to increasing attitude and belief polarization (Lodge and Taber 2013; Mooney 2012; Fritz et al. 2004; Lord et al. 1979) and stubborn belief perseverance (Cordelia 2006; Kelly 2007). In other words, confirmation bias leads people to ignore information that contradicts what they already believe while deriving pleasure from encountering content that confirms their biases. The scholarship on hostile media effects also documents that audiences choose which media to consume based on partisanship (Coe et al. 2008) and that individuals with different political beliefs will rate the same content as biased in different ways, but always in opposition to one’s own position (Schmitt et al. 2004). Clearly, this affective and interpretive logic is central to the operation of commercial media because it suggests that sensationalized, highly biased content is most likely to appeal to alienated audiences, who can then be sold as distinctive market segments.

As this analysis demonstrates, the study of commercial media, including the still-developing formats of the Internet, provide an excellent way to understanding the normalization of violence in the contemporary neoliberal context. Media play several key roles in a largely privatized society that operates through fear and coercion. For one, media are a linchpin in a system of segmentation and surveillance that insures that people are increasingly isolated from each other. Not only are they

unlikely to recognize their collective interests but they actively distrust one another based on the production of enemies. Commercial media have developed a profitable model applicable to both news and entertainment content that foregrounds and exaggerates select kinds of violence perpetrated by exaggerated enemy figures. Fear, hatred, and a yearning for retaliation are thereby cultivated as normal, rational attitudes among the populace. People then try to make sense of their complex world by using these simple interpretive frameworks that validate the industrial and financial machinery of perpetual conflict, both real and imaginary.

Conclusion

Is there any way to break through the feedback loop of commercialization that has led to the polarization of contemporary society and the breakdown of democracy? Ironically, one source of hope lies in the way people make sense of media content. For instance, no matter how involved people are with the media, they make distinctions between news and fictional content. They also have complex ways in which they interact with and disregard or selectively use advertising messages. In dealing with news, people employ criteria to evaluate what makes the content believable; the events reported, for instance, must be at least plausible. Unlike fiction, the assumption is that stories are only “news” if the public trusts that the world exists and that this world accords in basic ways with what is reported. In this regard, fact and fiction have very different referents, and their distinction refers one to a phenomenology of lived experience that cannot be extinguished by mediation or commercialization. Therefore, when presenting “the facts,” news must always index the intersubjective world of embodied human beings in some valid way.

An audience member’s selection of news sources can therefore indicate a perspectival approach to news consumption (Kramer 2013), wherein one is free to choose a perspective on the world based on knowledge of different options. The indexicality of media points one back to a human subject capable of exerting choice, even within a sociopolitical context that pares down options to what is offered by the market. This realization is important for political news as well as advertising because it suggests that people are not inevitably duped by mixtures of facts and opinion as presented in media but have expertise in recognizing the difference even in the increasingly sleek portrayals of the Internet. Lamenting the current state of the news, accordingly, does not mean that journalism is passé, but that new forms of expertise (some may say literacy) are necessary to interact with media and that this level of sophistication is not inaccessible to human beings—on the contrary, people routinely make complex but unacknowledged decisions about what counts as “real” within media content. Identifying facts and navigating truth claims may be more confusing than in the past, but improved reading is possible. Although the news may be framed and reality skewed, this process is not beyond recognition and critique. Even the attempt to manipulate memory and construct enemies can be penetrated. In the end, reflection and judgment are ubiquitous. These abilities of the human

being can be nurtured and developed and can lead to more critical approaches to knowledge consumption. Only time will tell if these abilities can be redirected in ways that enhance freedom and democracy.

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Chapter 6

Slicing Up Societies: Commercial Media and the Destruction of Social Environments

Vicente Berdayes and Linda Berdayes

Because commercial media are basic institutions of the global order, an analysis of these institutions is key to understanding the connection between neoliberalism and broad forms of social violence. In recent decades, neoliberal policies have pared away ownership and content regulations across the globe, resulting in the growth of transnational media oligopolies. These organizations in turn consolidate global markets by manufacturing a communications environment exclusively focused on producing and training consumers. Commercial media turn to violent content as an easy way to draw audiences, and violent content plays an important ideological role that serves the interests of state and corporate elites. But another more extensive source of violence is inherent to the way media reorganize social settings in pursuit of global markets. In their role as delivery mechanisms for advertising, commercial media disaggregate and segment populations in order to reconstitute them as audiences. This commodification of populations exemplifies the complex forms of symbolic violence perpetrated on the social environment by private media. Each of these forms of violence, violent content, and the commodification of social life contributes to the overall political economy of media violence in the neoliberal period.

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The Political Economy of Violent Media Content

The most common way to think about the relationship between media and violence is in terms of content. This topic is part of a well-established research tradition that tends to echo the state's interest in understanding and controlling the conditions under which popular aggression is expressed. But a more sophisticated approach to this topic explores the role of media and violence within the broader political economy of society. This approach shows that violence is politically and economically useful and that commercial media content is a conduit for amplifying and channeling violence in ways that perpetuate rather than threaten existing social relations. The political-economic approach identifies a complex of social relations that manufactures and broadcasts certain kinds of violence.

The distinction between the commercial model and other ways to organize media systems is fundamental to this approach. Media systems tend to be organized in ways that parallel the sociopolitical organization of a nation (Seaton et al. 1981), and the easiest way to discern how a society really operates, as opposed to what its spokespersons imagine themselves to be, is to examine its media policies and organizations. Examining state control of media content, the direction and scale of information flows through national territories, patterns of ownership or state control, the legal and policy frameworks under which media operate, and other such questions provide a quick index of whether a country exhibits authoritarian or democratic tendencies. In the USA, a model of "public ownership of the airwaves" limits ownership of mass media, and provisions for a system of public broadcasting were introduced in the twentieth century to recognize mass media's special role within a democratic order while validating the primacy of private ownership.

This system immediately began to erode. For instance, educational and public radio broadcasters were legally displaced to lower portions of the radio spectrum as corporate broadcasters recognized the value of radio licenses and monopolized middle and higher broadcast frequencies, which offered better signal quality. Since the 1970s and the rise of neoliberal policies, the underlying principle that the communications environment should be regulated to at least in part remain separate from the market has largely disintegrated as governing agencies and both Republican and Democratic administrations have continually loosened regulatory controls on ownership (McChesney 2015; Bagdikian 2004). Technological innovations have also dramatically reduced the portion of the total communications environment that is regulated to guarantee public access to information and substantive participation in society. Even if one argues that innovations such as the World Wide Web have created new opportunities for participation that dramatically outstrip those imagined by governmental regulators, governments around the world are developing effective ways to curtail this promise through technical systems of surveillance and censorship. Through coordinated efforts, media conglomerates have also colonized these new communications domains as adjuncts to their entertainment empires and to prevent a public interest regulatory model from gaining political if not popular acceptance (McChesney 2013). These developments underscore the

fact that technology alone cannot guarantee the existence of a healthy public sphere. To use Jacques Ellul's (1973) phrase, there is no "technological fix" that will deliver people from having to take responsibility for designing and maintaining a just and equitable social order. In spite of the epochal changes in communications brought about by the Internet, authoritarian monopoly capitalism continues to advance, in part through control of global media systems.

As Ben Bagdikian documented in several editions of *The Media Monopoly* (2004), market liberalism has opened national media systems to privatization and allowed much of the world's communications to be controlled by media conglomerates. Privatization and conglomeration, in turn, narrow and reshape communications as any concern with public interest becomes marginalized by the drive to increase profits. This process can be seen operating in broadcast and cable news. In the USA, for instance, broadcast networks once maintained foreign bureaus and correspondents as matters of professionalism and the assumed duty to inform the public. The commitment to "media professionalism" served as a partial counter to the profit imperative (Hallin 2008). However, these institutions have been decimated as conglomerates swallowed broadcast and cable networks in the current period of neoliberal consolidation as expensive investigative resources were largely liquidated to bolster profit margins. This is a striking development in an era of global news networks in which people are evermore globally interconnected.

One outcome of conglomeration is that the responsibility to inform is reinterpreted in terms of an effort to entertain. Whereas market liberalism justifies this goal in terms of the efficient satisfaction of consumer demand, the political-economic model foregrounds ways in which this exclusive focus on entertaining serves elite interests through a combination of distraction, distortion, and censorship Soley 2002. A cornerstone of the political-economic approach is the propaganda model developed by Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky in *Manufacturing Consent* (2008). As the title suggests, Herman and Chomsky argue that commercial media systematically manufacture propaganda in service to corporate and governmental interests. In line with the institutional approach of political economy, this propaganda is understood to derive more from the routine operation of institutional processes than the machinations of individuals (though ideologues certainly hold key positions within such a system). According to Herman and Chomsky, the interaction of several "filters" consistently shape media content. As media theorists have noted, these institutional constraints limit what content producers, whether in news or entertainment, tacitly recognize as projects that can be pursued without endangering one's employment. The institutional matrix creates a shared taken-for-granted context in which "everyone knows" what gets one either slotted for advancement or fired (Tuchman 1980). A propaganda machine can therefore exist without conscious skewing of content or overt censorship.

When focusing on violence, the most important of Herman and Chomsky's filters was originally termed "anticommunism" by the two authors, but Chomsky tends to generalize this filter as a process of generating "fear of real or imagined enemies" (Chomsky 2011, p. 69). The fear filter operates by manufacturing enemies and amplifying their supposed threat to the USA and Western interests. Originally,

the USSR and other nominally communist regimes served as this convenient enemy, but Islamist radicals now play the role of archfiends diligently working to destroy the West. The key point Herman and Chomsky stress is that the enemy is a construction whose capacity for destruction is exaggerated beyond recognition by the media. Indeed, in the case of ongoing Middle East conflicts, the enemy's capacity for destruction depends on armaments directly or indirectly supplied by the USA, a fact rarely foregrounded in corporate media coverage.

Other filters interlock with the fear filter to maintain consistent media portrayals of a threatening and highly polarized world. The media's dependency on official sources of information, for example, insure that a steady stream of individuals with ties to the military, current political administrations, or the defense and security industries, provide a sharply skewed and self-serving picture of the world in which the threat of the enemy looms large and immediate. Complimenting this "sourcing" filter, private "ownership structures" create fundamental conflicts of interest as companies with financial interests in maintaining military expenditures also control key media holdings. A glaring example is General Electric, for decades one of the largest US government contractors whose commitments from the Department of Defense alone totaled well over \$ 2 billion in 2013 even as the company maintained large ownership interests in NBCUniversal and its portfolio of broadcast and cable stations (Top 100 Contractors 2013). When these assets were sold to Comcast that same year, the deal only served to illustrate the pattern of increasingly concentrated media ownership in the USA.

With good reason, Robert McChesney (1999, p. 11) identifies neoliberalism as "the immediate and foremost enemy of genuine participatory democracy." Commercialism generally and neoliberal policies more explicitly fundamentally threaten a free press and the idea that media must play a role in sustaining democracy. Yet, champions of privatization celebrate conglomeration and concentration of ownership as expressions of the free market in service to consumer demand. According to this point of view, conglomeration produces economies of scale that benefit investors and consumers alike, because as corporate profits grow, consumers benefit from synergistic relationships among the range of a conglomerate's media assets and production facilities. Media content, moreover, continues to be efficiently validated by return on investments and ratings systems that indicate the level of consumer interest in the content. The greater the ratings, the "better" the content in the sense that it satisfies consumer desires. At its most elaborate, this model of "market democracy" interprets all aspects of social life—including the political order—as forms of consumerism, so that cars, ideas, or political candidates are all thought to circulate in comparable ways as commodities (Sandage 1989).

What Herman and Chomsky demonstrate is that this form of consumer control over content occurs at the most superficial level of a system that broadly sets the agenda for what can be encountered or discussed. There is, indeed, a military-industrial-entertainment complex and it operates in part by manufacturing the impression that citizens face an imminent threat of cataclysmic violence. Whether encountered in biased news content or in entertainment fare, mediatised enemies serve elite interests in several ways. For one, the worldview disseminated by corporate

media justifies ever-growing military expenditures and a state of perpetual warfare. In a manner reminiscent of Orwell's *1984*, a convenient and pervasive sense of emergency can be maintained by manufacturing the spectacle of enemies who are at any moment ready to pounce and destroy the "homeland."

People reconcile themselves and even celebrate intrusive forms of mass surveillance that are considered necessary to root out subversives, and they vote for politicians that expand military budgets and commit the USA to endless series of wars even as they move to eliminate the meager remains of the social safety net. Demonized portrayals of the enemy also tend to erase nuanced discussion of issues in favor of polarizing narratives that suggest differences between people are unbridgeable. As a result, any form of opposition to the existing market order can be demonized as political extremism. The suspicion of legitimate resistance to neoliberal policies further justifies pervasive surveillance to monitor signs of dissent. As Franz Hinkelammert (1985, pp. 6–7) argues, the totalized conception of the market that underlies the neoliberal order validates an "antisubversive total war" whose goal is to extinguish all opposition. In this sense, violence becomes a resource that can be manufactured, coordinated, and that is central to the operation of the neoliberal order. Mediated forms of violence consumed as spectacles in the industrialized world are complemented by concrete forms of repression directed at people outside these areas who oppose efforts to overturn their lives in the quest for profits.

As members of the Frankfurt school noted decades ago, commercial media in conjunction with modern advertising techniques comprise "psychotechnologies" of consumer capitalism (Horkheimer and Adorno 1972, p. 123). They are institutions consciously designed to produce alienated but pliant consumers and must be considered a single instrument of social control. Creating fear and anxiety is useful to corporate media whose role is to serve up alienated dollops of audiences to advertisers. The "funding" filter, which identifies commercial media's advertising-based revenue source, therefore also plays a role in the political economy of violence. Advertisers feed off of fearful and needy people by offering an endless stream of commodified nostrums to cure their ills. Not only sex, but fear and violence sell by supporting the commercial media's economic role of generating and amplifying negative or positive buying moods that channel human needs toward consumerism.

In the mature phase of consumer capitalism, violence enters into the process of selling goods in a new way. Advertising in the first half of the twentieth century almost exclusively presented goods as magic charms that kept one from breaking social taboos. Buy this product, ads signaled, and avoid being ostracized! In this sense, commodities functioned as charms that protect one against violating the social order. In the 1960s, an important shift occurred wherein ads increasingly offered consumers fetishes to help them break taboos (Frank 1997). Even as institutions became more regimented and repressive, goods began offering magical deliverance from the need to conform. Opening a can of soda now liberates one from all social and organizational constraints amid sprays of confetti. The imposition of the personality against social norms has emerged as a basic framework for selling goods, but one that reframes the dialectic between the individual and society in terms of fashion and consumerism. In *Culture is Our Business* (1970), Marshall

McLuhan noted that the mass quest for identity propelled by technology is closely allied with violence. Technological innovation, for McLuhan, collapses traditional norms and generates a social environment akin to a frontier, and as “the man on the frontier is seeking a new identity. Violence and experiment are thus inevitable” (McLuhan 1970, p. 44). The solution to this quest for identity proffered by consumer capitalism is an inexhaustible frontier of goods. Consumer capitalism, to use Erich Fromm’s (1941) phrase, opens a path through which people can “escape from freedom” by being able to both transgress against society and conform. The person is delivered from the burden of establishing their independence while still having their sense of individuality confirmed through acts of consumption. According to Thomas Frank (2001), this form of “liberation marketing” displaces healthy self-assertion onto consumerism and reframes rebellion in terms of superficially transgressive expressions of consumer identity.

In this type of superficially open but functionally regimented society, violence takes on a spectacular quality. Destructive acts of global or, in the case of highly profitable science-fiction fare, of interplanetary scale are regularly featured in hyperrealistic detail that reflects the popular fascination with violence and retribution. Genre conventions such as digital special effects, slow motion, and the repetition of scenes of destruction coalesce in such programming as expressions of an erotics of violence that is consummated in the act of watching. Staple programming such as crime dramas and news complements this material by suggesting that people are continuously threatened by interpersonal violence. Echoing the market-based view that society consists only of *anomic* individuals seeking to maximize satisfactions, the narratives presented in these programs feature individuals threatened on all fronts by violence: Everyone from strangers, to neighbors, to close relatives pose a threat to one’s safety. The appearance of new forms of mediation such as video games have only extended this relationship to violence by constructing players as marauders—most popularly as “first-person shooters”—acting out gratuitous violence within an increasingly immersive spectacle. The concept of spectacle, first foregrounded within social theory by Guy Debord (1994), accordingly continues to have relevance within the neoliberal period. As Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri note in *Empire* (2000, p. 323), the current society of the spectacle destroys “what was once imagined as the public sphere, the open terrain of political exchange and participation.” In place of the ideal of participatory democracy and community, they argue, fear “is what binds and ensures social order, and still today fear is the primary mechanism of control that fills the society of the spectacle” (p. 323). Media content is a chief mechanism for instilling this pervasive sense of fear.

Finally, profitability makes mediated violence an economic linchpin of the global entertainment industry. George Gerbner (1999) has noted that mediated violence is one of the USA’s chief exports because it easily translates across cultures especially when bundled with simple but compelling narratives such as those that have come to dominate the international market for films. Again, the current use of special effects as well as the turn to what have traditionally been thought of as children’s stories featuring comic book heroes or staples of children’s literature makes for visually captivating content that requires no nuanced understanding of other

cultures to be able to play across the world's screens. With yearly revenues in tens of billions of US dollars, this type of content now dominates the global film market (Statistica 2015b). Western control of global media flows furthermore insures that these narratives spread easily across the globe, so that films with financial losses in the domestic market are virtually guaranteed a profitable return through global expositions. Violent content, in short, is a readymade inoculation against economic risk in the production of global entertainment. As Gerbner (1999, p. 12) argued, conditions at the end of the twentieth century insured that such content increasingly supplants traditional avenues of socialization as "children are born into homes where mass-produced stories reach them on the average more than seven hours a day. Most waking hours, and often dreams, are filled with these stories. The stories do not come from families, schools, churches, neighborhoods, and often not even from their native countries. They come from a small group of distant conglomerates with something to sell." As Gerbner details, a basic tool of this global enterprise is violence.

So far the discussion has focused on what can loosely be referred to as the violent ideological content of media. Whether one examines entertainment or news content (the two are increasingly indistinguishable within commercial media), violence infuses the substantive content of media as well as drives out opportunities to present topics in nuanced detail. Violence is central to the political economy of content production within commercial media. This situation exemplifies what Jürgen Habermas has referred to as "systematically distorted communication," (1970) in which the linguistic resources through which people reflect on their world is manipulated in an effort to prevent the emergence of critical self-understanding and political *praxis*. This is the gist of the idea that privatized media "manufacture consent." In furthering private interests, these institutions generate a communications environment that systematically undermines the forms of participatory dialogue required to sustain democracy.

As Robert McChesney (1999) has documented, in settings where it must contend with a participatory heritage, neoliberalism thrives by reducing politics to "formal democracy" in which public deliberation is severely circumscribed. The remaining veneer of democracy nevertheless suggests that an electorate has ratified policies that are obviously designed to go against public interests. Examinations of neoliberalism therefore tend to point to commercial media as ideological control centers of this type of political order (Harvey 2005). In a process that James Aune (2001) characterizes as "selling the free market," elites must clothe neoliberalism's repressive social policies in a language that make them palatable to those they most hurt. It is through the distortions of ideology and by closing off opportunities for participation that neoliberalism advances.

This line of argument has been persuasively articulated by the authors described above and their extensive documentation of the process of consolidation and privatization of media. With corporate control of media comes a programmatic effort to shape media content to further elite private interests. These efforts involve, on the one hand, overt efforts to censor media content, as for instance, in the many ways in which advertisers dictate the acceptable range of content in newspapers, magazines,

and other media (2002). On the other hand, privatization and consolidation also generates an institutional ecology that reproduces itself by filtering content in routine and largely unconscious ways. If not a full-blown “worldview,” then certainly a mindset develops among media workers that limits the range of acceptable content in an anonymous, taken-for-granted way. One element that easily passes through and is amplified by this anonymous filtering process is violence.

Commercial Media and Symbolic Violence

The concept of violence, however, can also be extended to provide an understanding of how commercial media transform societies through their mode of operation rather than through their content. The globalization of commercial media exerts a powerful transformative effect on societies, but this transformation does not result only from the dissemination of media content. The manner in which commercial media actively reorganize societies is also crucial to this process. In this approach, commercial media play an important role in manufacturing new types of social subjects rather than merely distorting perceptions. This transformative role, though, is usually not recognized by market-based theory.

Classical economics places human beings as central actors within the political economy of media. Individuals are thought to direct the process of content production through their role as consumers who willingly enter the “marketplace of ideas” in search of gratifying content. The relationship of a population to a media environment is defined in terms of the aggregate demand for content placed on the market by audiences seeking to maximize their satisfactions. From this perspective, content is validated simply by its ability to draw audiences, which is taken as a *prima facie* index of quality, and media companies are assumed to be serving the public interest to the extent that they remain commercially viable by profitably supplying what the public wants, that is, by satisfying divergent consumer “tastes” for content. The proliferation of delivery channels accordingly makes this process more efficient by diversifying the range of products media can disseminate to serve the market. Thus, the range of options offered to consumers is considered qualitatively better under a system that includes cable distribution than one that relies solely on broadcast distribution, as seen in the tendency of channels to increasingly narrowcast content in much the same way that magazines target narrow bands of consumer—boys with interest in modifying their trucks, for example. A key point in this line of thinking is that the ownership structure of media does not substantially affect the expanding efficiency of content delivery and is actually thought to produce synergies and economies of scale across a corporation’s media holdings (McChesney 2015). Mergers and acquisitions simply lead to “win–win partnerships,” according to one celebrated CEO (Allison 2014). In any event, the market’s inherent tendency to upturn existing institutions through a process of creative destruction insures that monopoly control is fleeting unless propped up by pernicious government regulation. From the perspective of classical economics, then, the market for media content is

just one, unexceptional sector of a universalized market whose functioning is based on unalterable principles. Interpreted in economic terms, this market's social role is limited to efficiently responding to autonomous consumer demand for content. Media privatization and consolidation is just the institutional expression of liberty.

The critical perspective provides a fuller understanding of media by turning this analysis on its head and pointing out that the product manufactured by commercial media is its audiences. In contrast to a subscription-based model such as premium cable, where people pay directly for media content, or a publicly funded model, the commercial format is based on selling advertising time or space. This way of organizing media industries developed in the nineteenth century when newspapers and then magazines were transformed into commercial venues oriented primarily toward selling ad space in their publications (Pope 1983). Radio and television were quickly converted to the commercial model in the twentieth century (McChesney 2015), and though disruptive to these more established media for a brief period of time, the World Wide Web is quickly being consolidated as a commercial medium and integrated as an additional channel for delivering advertising messages (McChesney 2013).

In the commercial model, the content of any medium, whether a song on the radio or an essay on a web site, has little economic role except as bait designed to lure people to media outlets so that they can be aggregated as audiences and sold to advertisers (Smythe 2001). Media outlets develop content to draw audiences with specific demographic qualities such as age, gender, and ethnicity. When this model is fully developed, a media conglomerate will have a portfolio of commodified "audience segments" consisting of an array of audiences drawn to the content across the conglomerate's media holdings (Leiss et al. 2005). Because of extensive media consolidation, these holdings typically now consist of combinations of cable and broadcast channels, radio stations, online outlets, magazines, and newspapers (McChesney 2015). The current options facing advertisers seeking to place ads are so complex that the traditional media planning and buying functions of full service advertising agencies have been spun off and are now a separate industry organized within larger media holding companies such as WPP (originally Wire and Plastic Products) and Omnicom (Shimp and Andrews 2013).

On the other side of the industry equation, advertisers—meaning parties needing to communicate information about some product to some audience—enter the media marketplace to purchase access to specific audiences. An advertiser's basic goal is to communicate product information to a specific "market segment." A product such as an automobile, for example, will be designed to appeal to only a certain range of consumers, based, again, on demographic features such as age, gender, and ethnicity. At its most basic, an advertising campaign involves the purchase of an audience segment from a commercial media outlet by an advertiser needing to communicate with a market segment. For this system to function, an audience segment has to align fairly closely with the intended market segment or the ad will miss its "target." The scale of this industrial system is reflected in global advertising revenues for 2016, which are projected to exceed US\$ 660 billion, most of which will flow through commercial media (Statistica 2015a). It follows that the history of

commercial media can be distilled as a process of developing increasingly targeted content designed to draw narrower and “purer” audience segments (groups with shared demographic traits) that align with the most sought after market segments (Leiss et al. 2005). In this sense, commercial media truly comprise a mechanized industry designed to manufacture audiences.

A crucial point is that audiences are not equally valuable within this commercial system. The most valuable groups are those with whom advertisers are most eager to communicate and will pay top dollar to access. As Chomsky (2011, p. 68) notes, the basic business model involves, “major corporations selling fairly wealthy and privileged audiences to other businesses.” This means that content production within commercial media is systematically directed toward developing material that draws the most valuable audience segments. The audience segments are the product produced by the commercial system. There is therefore unyielding economic pressure for commercial media to subdivide people into audience segments and to develop programming that targets the most valuable of these groups (Leiss et al. 2005). Conversely, in a logic that mirrors economic redlining by banks (Gandy 1993), the same economic pressures insure not only that less valuable audience segments have little content produced for them but also that efforts are made to exclude such groups (Turow 2000).

The fact that at the far end of this system, individuals exercise some choice about what content they will watch is relatively marginal to understanding media industries, because choice is limited to the range of options that emerge from the commercial content factories, and which, as described above, are extensively constrained by the filtering process. The influence this commercial system has on content production and distribution can be quickly apprehended by surveying the magazines one encounters in supermarket check-out aisles and noting how extensively this homogenous content is tied to the machinery of publicity and middleclass consumerism, and, also, how “sales communications” engineer the social environment to provide access to specific groups at strategic points of interaction (Dawson 2003). Under such technocratic conditions, the category of “choice” is almost vacant of content: The term simply indexes a point of indeterminacy and manageable risk within a complex, integrated system of commodity production and consumption.

Audience segmentation is thus part of a technological system that shapes other areas of social life. As marketers discovered decades ago, preferences for media content are one element of broader “lifestyle choices” that distinguish clusters of the population within the consumer economy. By collating information from dozens of sources of digital information, geodemographic programs have long been able to classify fairly homogenous groupings of people (Bishop and Cushing 2008; Weiss 1988). These databases typically contain hundreds of millions of records on individuals and are part of the surveillance system of contemporary consumer capitalism (Turow 2011). A well-known example is the PRIZM system now owned by Nielsen, which collates information relating to consumer media preferences, lifestyles, attitudes, and shopping behavior from credit card transactions, public records, and dozens of other sources. PRIZM subdivides the US populations into 66 segments or clusters—units like “Winners Circle,” “Young Influentials,” and “Shotguns and Pickups”—and provides costumers detailed information about the

consumer behavior that typify each cluster as well as sketches of their political and social attitudes. Since the computing revolution of the 1980s, the use of increasingly refined and powerful systems exemplified by PRIZM have been extended well beyond their original intent of increasing the efficiency of advertising campaigns by more precisely isolating audience segments and bringing to light their consumer habits (Weiss 1988). Originally, geodemographics were seen as a way of harnessing computers to eliminate “waste” in traditional advertising efforts by more effectively bridging the gap between market segments and audience segments (Turow 2000, 2011). As powerful as geodemographic programs are, they are dated in comparison to systems that collect real-time consumer information from the World Wide Web.

All such systems (Nielsen itself offers four distinct versions) are the basis for planning political campaigns in which population clusters receive targeted communications based on a calculus that identifies handfuls of swing voters capable of deciding an election’s outcome. Urban planners allocate resources such as schools, parks, and fire stations based on migration patterns brought to light by these sources of “big data,” while land speculators now routinely purchase real estate and plan the character of new neighborhoods and shopping districts by studying the demographics of these same migrations (Bishop and Cushing 2008). As a consequence, a traveler can have the disorienting experience of visiting identical shopping districts and neighborhoods throughout the USA that are carefully keyed to the socioeconomic characteristics of the surrounding neighborhoods and even of neighborhoods scheduled to appear in the coming years. Though the topic of media violence seems distant from the arcane technical process of commercial urban planning, the two are simply aspects of a broad process of commercialization of social space oriented around the production of consuming publics (Mosco 2009). The taste for specific media content is echoed in specific design choices—items such as architectural motifs selected in urban or suburban commercial developments—which appeal to the consumer “tastes” of specific clusters of people (Bishop and Cushing 2008). The entire social field is thereby progressively colonized and reshaped by capital seeking to mine select veins of consumers.

In short, media content in its widest sense comprises a portion of a broader commercial technocracy. Although resulting in forms of social homogenization, this programming of the social environment has a corpuscular quality that reflects the advanced logic of commodity production and consumption. It is in this sense that Vincent Mosco (2009) links the political economy of communications to a process of social spaciation—a shaping of space and time in line with the economic needs of global corporations. As only certain groups are selected as objects of profitable attention by marketers and developers, the process of redlining continues in this thoroughly privatized environment, where planning is increasingly the purview of private interests (supported with public funds) focused on economic rather than social development. The effort to streamline and make this system more efficient insures that groupings of people either fall out or are purposely excluded from the consumerist portion of the technocratic system—though they are made objects of other components of the neoliberal planning by being swept into prisons or pushed out of neighborhoods by premeditated gentrification efforts (Smith 2010).

The commercial shaping of social space tears apart and reorganizes the preexisting field of meaning that sustains social action. In this sense, commercial spaciation is closely connected with the deployment of symbolic violence. As developed by the Pierre Bourdieu, this term refers to, “the *violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity*” (emphasis in original; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p. 167). Symbolic violence does not require physical coercion, though mechanisms of physical violence may interlock with its deployment. Rather, symbolic violence depends on the power to construct a system of meanings that human bodies act out in the context of everyday activities—what Bourdieu refers to as their “habitus.” Because such meanings facilitate social action and are the basis for experiencing the world and relationships with other people, they are empowering. For example, people can identify forcefully not only with the things they purchase but also with the rituals of shopping. The ability to shape the social environment creates conditions under which human beings conform to a hierarchy of predefined positions within the social order through a seemingly natural process of habituation (Bourdieu 2002). The coercion involved in the deployment of symbolic violence thus remains in the background of social life. For this reason, many people in subordinate positions internalize and tacitly consent to their domination.

The operation of symbolic violence can be illustrated by returning to the topic of media content. As noted, this content is designed to draw in some people and repel others. Individuals are bundled, harvested, and sold to advertisers as commercial audiences. Using related Althusserian terminology (1971), one can say that the programming works discursively to hail and interpellate human beings into the system of consumer capitalism. A media artifact hails a person by drawing them in and offering certain experiences rather than others. Those generic experiences comprise specific “subject positions” programmed into the world of consumer capitalism. As discussed, a highly targeted radio program or magazine interlarded with commercials points beyond its content and indexes a broader set of “lifestyle choices” slotted into the commercialized social environment. Though they may resist this rendition of their identity, the listener or reader is articulated as a particular type of consumer as they engage commercial media content, and this identity is part of a broader hierarchy of subject positions (66 of them in PRIZM’s mapping) programmed into the consumer system. That people are validated and feel empowered as they interact with this consumer-based system reflects the characteristic of misrecognition that Bourdieu assigns to the operation of symbolic violence in the sense that conformity to programmed choice is habitually experienced as the pursuit of free choice.

The consolidation of global media systems is based on articulating this form of symbolic violence across the globe. As media systems become privatized and integrated into global conglomerates, they begin subdividing foreign populations according to the same commercial logic that drives Western media. This effort can be analyzed at different levels. For instance, local and regional advertisers turn to media in an effort to sell their products, and in this sense they help constitute “emerging markets” that maintain a partial cultural link to the traditional social environment. Nevertheless, at this level the process furthers commercialization by

commodifying everyday culture. At a broader level, global media begin dismantling societies in ways that reflect the needs of *transnational* corporations. Following the well-known work of Theodore Levitt (1983) in the 1980s, global marketing efforts have been oriented around the promotion of “world brands,” meaning consumer goods whose brand identities are crafted to transcend national boundaries and cultures. *Sony*, *Apple*, *Nike*, and many luxury goods are examples of such brands. At both levels of analysis, a process of hailing begins directed at specific elements of local populations. Three key segments addressed by commercial media in such efforts are: (1) an elite governing and economic strata usually having nominal ties to the local culture but cosmopolitan in tastes and affiliations, (2) a relatively narrow band of middle-class consumers that manages to emerge in the context of neoliberal economic development, (3) children and adolescents still receptive to the media’s socializing influence and whose future behavior can be oriented toward global patterns of consumerism and sustaining ideologies.

Extending the process of commercial spaciation, global media facilitate the “dendritic” advance of capitalism associated with neoliberal economic policies (Guattari 1984). Select groups become objects of targeted communications and socialization efforts directed both at constituting new consumer markets and producing coterie of elites that can be integrated into the governing structures of the global “network society” (Castells 1996). Meanwhile, large portions of local populations fall outside these calculations or are taken into account only as impediments to economic development needing to be “managed.”

This process sets portions of a population against each other, if not through outright violence then through the operations of a colonialist variety of symbolic violence that transforms social actors and makes them almost unrecognizable to each other. Naomi Klein (2002, p. 118) identifies one outcome of this process in her description of the “global teen, a transnational cluster of “logo-decorated middle-class teenagers, intent on pouring themselves into a media-fabricated mold.” These youthful consumers, according to Klein, are spread across the globe and united by the taste for world brands and a globalized variant of consumer culture. Accordingly, this group is highly valued by marketers. According to Klein, ads and programming incessantly hail such proto-consumers with a “kaleidoscope of multi-ethnic faces blending into one another: Rasta braids, pink hair, henna hand painting, piercing and tattoos, a few national flags, flashes of foreign street signs, Cantonese and Arabic lettering and a sprinkling of English words, all over the layered samplings of electronic music.” Appropriated as marketing tools, these emblems of traditional group affiliations are recast as a pastiche of culture symbolizing a manufactured consumer identity, “not American, not local, but one that would unite the two, through shopping.” Not surprisingly, these efforts to engineer identity in service to consumerism involve pitting global teens “against traditional elders who don’t appreciate their radical taste in denim” (Klein 2002, p. 119).

This broad level of analysis reveals the complex relationship between global media and violence. The formation of global media oligopolies opens the world to commercial efforts directed at reorganizing societies on a market model, and multiple forms of violence pervades this process. As they extend the market for commercial

programming, media use violent content as an easy way to draw additional profits from content produced in the West. Violence is both easy to understand and plays an important ideological role within commercially produced content. More extensively, the way media subdivide populations in search of profitable audiences involves symbolic forms of violence focused on the meanings that underlie social action. Commercial media distort the communications environment in service to the market, and these organizations discriminate against people who have little or no economic value within the commercial system. Because media are intertwined with other dimensions of capitalist reorganization, the marginalization of groups within media reflects a broader level of political and social marginalization that follows the advance of market-dominated society. Consequently, the intertwined processes of privatization, commercialization, and conglomeration facilitate the usurpation of communications resources by private interests in ways that undermine the possibility of creating open, participatory societies. The neoliberal privatization of media systems is practically synonymous with the deployment of violence.

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Chapter 7

Neoliberalism and the Transformation of Work

Luigi Esposito

Various writers see the dramatic concentration of power and wealth that currently exists in the USA as constituting a new Gilded Age (e.g., Krugman 2014; Reich 2014; O’Hehir 2014). Similar to the extreme inequalities and abuses of industrial capitalism that were rampant in the late nineteenth century, this new Gilded Age is promoted by a radical pro-market agenda associated with the term “neoliberalism” (Harvey 2005; Giroux 2008a; Steger and Roy 2010). Neoliberalism can be regarded as an ideology, a form of governance, and a set of norms, policies, and practices that seek to eliminate or at least minimize the welfare state, discourage civic values such as solidarity and social/economic justice in favor of competition and individual freedom, and establish a society based on the rule of the market. In fact, under neoliberalism, the calculating logic of the market—one that submits every action and policy to considerations of profitability—serves as the guiding principle of virtually every aspect of social life.

The realm of work has been particularly affected by the neoliberal agenda. Indeed, workers in the USA and elsewhere have, especially since the rise of neoliberalism in the late 1970s and the early 1980s, been increasingly deprived of various rights and guarantees that were once associated with a strong welfare state. Accordingly, an adequate understanding of neoliberalism requires an analysis of how this economic philosophy has transformed labor standards, the nature of work, and the lives of workers. The discussion will take up four key points. First, I discuss the historical context that led to the rise of neoliberalism as an ideological counterforce against the labor movement, progressivism, and Keynesian economics. I address Reagan’s attack on labor unions in the 1980s, Clinton’s pro-business/antilabor policies in the 1990s (which include NAFTA and welfare reform), and more recent pro-business policies and Supreme Court decisions as part of a larger neoliberal business rebellion against progressive policies and organized labor. Second, I discuss how neoliberalism not only encourages but also normalizes violence against working

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people in the form of, among other considerations, insufficient wages, precarious employment, social and economic insecurity, the loss of subjective well-being, and the denigration of those who do not succeed at the marketplace. How neoliberals vilify laws or policies that seek to avoid these outcomes as “irrational” impediments against market freedom and prosperity will be discussed. Third, I draw from the work of Loic Wacquant (2009, 2010) and others to address how neoliberalism, particularly in the USA, has also encouraged a penal state to deal with the breakdown of the welfare state and control those who are no longer useful in a changing labor market. Finally, I discuss how violence promoted by the neoliberal assault on democracy and labor standards has generated oppositional energies worldwide that seek alternatives to the current neoliberal status quo.

Progressivism and the Roaring Twenties

Many regard the progressive era in the USA (1890s–1920s) as a milestone in US labor history. Particularly, during the first decade of the twentieth century, demands for workers’ rights became part of a broader progressive movement that challenged many of the problems associated with the first Gilded Age of the late nineteenth century—an era characterized by worker exploitation, corporate greed, political corruption, and increasing inequality between the rich and the rest of the population (Cashman 1993). In their effort to challenge these injustices, those associated with the progressive movement called for sweeping reforms that included providing a living wage to employees in all occupations, prohibiting child labor, enforcing the right of all workers to organize, limiting the workday to 8 h, establishing protective mechanisms against irregular employment, instituting safety and health standards for various industrial occupations, and compensating workers for work-related injuries (Progressive Platform of 1912 (1912)). Yet despite the fact that a large segment of the American population supported these reforms, progressivism receded from the national scene by the 1920s, and the USA entered a period of relatively little government involvement in markets and business activities.

Indeed, the three presiding administrations of the 1920s—that is, that of Warren Harding (1920–1923), Calvin Coolidge (1923–1928) and, at least during the first part of his presidency, and Herbert Hoover (1929–1933)—espoused *laissez-faire* economics and sought to turn the USA into a “capitalist paradise” by, among other measures, cutting taxes, curbing government spending, and slashing business regulations (Hughes 1999). Furthermore, the technological advances of this time, combined with Fredrick Taylor’s scientific management, led to dramatic increases in productivity that flooded the market with all sorts of commodities. Goods that were once available only for the wealthy (e.g., automobiles and appliances) became readily available for the middle and working classes. Nonetheless, for most people, the presumed prosperity of this time—which is euphemistically referred to as the “roaring twenties”—turned out to be a thin veneer, as *laissez-faire* capitalism eventually led to critical problems, including speculative investment, irresponsible lending,

monopolization due to an emphasis on deregulation, and increasing inequality in income and wealth (Harvey 2005). By 1929, these problems converged to form a “perfect storm” that led to the Great Depression. Soon after, millions of Americans lost their jobs, their earnings, and struggled to survive (Hughes 1999). The dangers of an unfettered market became all too real for the vast majority of people.

Keynesianism, the Welfare State, and the “Golden Age of Controlled Capitalism” (1940s–1970s)

The severity and longevity of the Great Depression convinced leading economic thinkers of the 1930s, most notably John M. Keynes, that organizing an economy on the basis of an unregulated market was untenable. Contrary to what is commonly proposed by supporters of *laissez-faire* economics, Keynes suggested that markets are rooted in human decisions and hence are not self-regulating. A relentless pursuit of profit, for example, typically motivates businesses to pay their workers the lowest wages possible. This minimizes workers’ purchasing power, which, in turn, leads to a decline in demand for goods and services. The end result is a loss of jobs among those who supply those products and services, and ultimately an economic crisis. Therefore, rather than leaving the market “alone,” Keynes argued that avoiding these sorts of crises requires massive state intervention in the form of constraints and regulations on businesses, as well as government spending to create new jobs, lift consumer spending, and stimulate the economy.

Efforts to correct the economic crisis of the 1930s drew from Keynes’ ideas. In many crucial respects, Keynesian economics was consistent with the progressivism of the early twentieth century, as both called for an interventionist state that would ensure economic viability and some degree of security and fairness in the marketplace. As is well known, during the 1930s, President Franklin Roosevelt pushed for a series of Keynesian-like reforms that came to be known as The New Deal. Although Roosevelt remained a staunch supporter of property rights and a capitalist economy, he followed Keynes’ directives and played a pivotal role in instituting, among other things, Social Security, maximum wages and minimum hours for most workers, an unemployment compensation system, and a massive federal employment program that put millions of people back to work. Also, consistent with Keynesianism, the New Deal called for tighter regulation of industry, high taxes for the rich, and the promotion and strengthening of labor unions.

The political implementation of Keynesianism became widely successful both in the USA and other Western societies. In fact, by the end of World War II, what emerged was a “golden age of controlled capitalism”—an era that lasted until the mid-1970s (Steger and Roy 2010). The economy during this time was based on mass production and what came to be known as the “virtuous circle of growth”—a type of highly regulated growth aimed to benefit all people and not just an elite class (Smith 2012, p. xxiii). From the mid-1940s to the mid-1970s, America’s companies paid high wages and good benefits, tens of millions of families had steady incomes

that enabled them to purchase what was produced, and millions of workers had lifetime pensions (i.e., workers were guaranteed a percentage of their salary for the rest of their lives once they retired). According to Robert Reich (2008), profits from mass production during the post-World War II era (particularly, the 1940s and the 1950s) were divided up between giant corporations and their suppliers, retailers, and employees. Workers had strong bargaining power that was enforced by government action. In fact, about a third of the workforce belonged to a union. Economic benefits “were also spread across the nation—to farmers, veterans, smaller towns, and small business through a series of state regulations and subsidies” (Reich 2008, p. 17). Furthermore, profitable corporations and high taxation on the wealthy led to the expansion of the welfare state both in the USA and other Western countries. These progressive policies were further expanded in the 1960s under President Lyndon Johnson, who spearheaded the Great Society, a series of government programs that were designed to reduce poverty and challenge racial inequalities. Even conservatives, such as President Nixon—notwithstanding his diatribes against the political left and his sympathy for business interests and free enterprise—adopted these interventionist policies in the early 1970s. Propelled by popular pressure, Nixon also followed Keynesian principles when he presided over the expansion of several new federal regulatory agencies, including the Environmental Protection Agency and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Smith 2012). In 1971, Nixon famously stated that “we are all Keynesians now,” showing how even conservatives like him accepted the role of government in keeping people employed and the economy stable when the private/corporate sector failed to do so.

Neoliberalism and the Business Rebellion

Contrary to Nixon’s declaration, it was also in the early 1970s that the popularity of Keynesianism was declining, as economic growth slowed and inflation increased. Many of the political and economic elite during this time became increasingly open about their contempt for progressive interventionist policies (including strong labor standards) that had, in their estimation, erected barriers to economic freedom and prosperity. In his book *Who Stole the American Middle Class*, Hendrick Smith (2012) gives a vivid account of one such elite, Lewis Powell, a corporate lawyer and former president of the American Bar Association, who subsequently became a Supreme Court Justice in 1972. In 1971, Powell wrote a private memorandum that sought to “spark a full scale political rebellion by America’s corporate leaders—what [some] called the ‘Revolt of the Bosses’—to change the political and policy mainstream in Washington and put the nation on a new track, a track more favorable to business” (Smith 2012, pp. 6–7). In effect, Keynesian economic principles, along with the progressive movements and policies that had supported an activist government and regulated capitalism, had obligated the corporate sector to make too many concessions to labor and was, in the mind of Powell and other pro-corporate elites, increasingly victimizing the business sector. What was needed, therefore, was a new set of ideas that would revitalize America’s free enterprise system.

It was during this time that the ideas of a group of radical economists, notably Friedrich August von Hayek, gained popularity. Hayek had founded the Mont Pelerin Society in the 1940s, an organization that consisted of various like-minded luminaries (including Ludwig von Mises, George Stigler, and Karl Popper) who sought to promote a “free” society on the basis of free market principles (e.g., Hartwell 2005). Vowing to challenge the “rising tide of collectivism” associated with Keynesianism and activist governments, Hayek and his colleagues insisted that a planned economy not only stifles prosperity but also undermines freedom. Espousing the assumption that all human beings under conditions of freedom are naturally competitive, calculating, and self-serving (a conception of human nature they adopted from classical liberal portraits of *homo economicus*), Hayek and his colleagues contended that any impediment to these natural human tendencies in the name of promoting lofty ideals such as social justice or equality is incompatible with a free society. In effect, the idea of deploying the power of the state to pursue these ideals implies a repressive form of social engineering that leads society on a “road to serfdom” (Hayek 1944). Rather than centralized state planning, therefore, a free and open society must be organized around a free market.

Far from simply a theoretical construct, Hayek and many of his colleagues conceived the market as a “force of nature” that, if left untainted by human/political intervention, exists in a state of equilibrium, similar to an ecosystem. As discussed by Steger and Roy (2010, p. 15), Hayek and others associated with the Mont Pelerin Society were firm believers that an unfettered market would function as a “self-regulating engine of human freedom and ingenuity” that would “spontaneously” create an optimal order.

The American Nobel prize winning economist Milton Friedman was very much influenced by Hayek and also made the case that as people freely pursue their self-interests, the market organizes their self-serving actions into an order that benefits all without central planning or political intervention (Friedman 1982). In effect, in its ideal form, the market operates on the basis of an extremely efficient and seemingly inerrant logic that is unburdened by bureaucracy, politics, or ideology. Only a self-regulated market, according to Friedman, ensures that the right number of products are produced at the right costs and workers are paid the right wages. Any problems such as poverty, unemployment, and economic recessions are therefore attributed to corrosive forces, such as labor unions, political intrusions, ideological commitments, and/or cultural/social practices that undermine market rationality. The way to deal with these problems is thus to give more autonomy to the market by, among other measures, cutting taxes, curbing government spending (particularly on social services), slashing regulations, and doing away with unionized labor as much as possible to create a social, legal, and political environment that is conducive to business.

By the 1980s, these ideas further solidified the anti-Keynesianism, antiprogressive sentiments that had emerged in the 1970s and inspired an all-out business rebellion against “big government.” Indeed, the rise of neoliberalism led to a powerful, pro-business political force that quickly established a significant presence in Washington. For example, according to Hendrick Smith (2012, p. 11), the number of companies that set up offices in Washington for the sole purpose of lobbying the

federal government to support pro-corporate/pro-market policies and abandon pro-environmental and labor policies/programs that were considered “anti-business” rose from 175 in 1971 to 2445 in 1981. In fact, by the early 1980s, the business sector had formed broad coalitions and founded new, pro-market think tanks such as The Heritage Foundation and the CATO institute, both of which are still very active today. Drawing from Hayek, Friedman, and others, these think tanks were instrumental in disseminating pro-market ideology and promoting the neoliberal agenda as synonymous with a struggle toward “freedom” and prosperity. Central to this agenda were efforts to weaken the gains made by the American labor movement.

1980s–2010s: Reaganism, NAFTA and Welfare Reform, and Corporate/Business Hegemony

According to various critics, the attack on labor reached new heights under President Reagan. Dick Meister (2011, para. 2), for example, suggests that “Ronald Reagan was, above all, one of the most viciously antilabor presidents in American history, one of the worst enemies the country’s working people ever faced.” Although Reagan had at one point supported labor unions, as president he became a radical opponent of organized labor. In fact, soon after the start of his presidency in 1981, Reagan confronted the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO) after its members went on strike to demand higher wages and better working conditions. Reagan ultimately fired thousands of the striking workers and effectively undermined their union. The mass firing was not simply an isolated incident but rather “an unambiguous signal that employers need feel little or no obligation to their workers, and employers got that message loud and clear” (Meyerson 2004, para. 5).

Consistent with the radical neoliberal agenda, Reagan saw unions as a threat to free enterprise and appointed antiunion bureaucrats to control federal agencies that had been originally designed to protect workers’ rights. Most notably, he appointed neoliberal ideologues to manage the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), an agency responsible for investigating and correcting unfair labor practices, among other things. Reagan’s appointees included NLRB chairman, Donald Watson, who openly declared that “unionized labor relations have been the major contributors of the decline and failure of once healthy industries” and have led to the “destruction of individual freedom” (as quoted by Meister 2011, para. 10).

Not surprisingly, under Reagan and his neoliberal appointees, the NLRB virtually ignored union-busting efforts, abandoned its legal obligation to promote collective bargaining, and became largely a pro-business agency. In addition to his attack on labor unions, Reagan also attempted to lower the minimum wage for young workers, weakened anti-child and anti-sweatshop labor laws, closed about a third of Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) offices, and reduced OSHA penalties against offending employers by almost three fourths. In fact, Meister (2011, para. 18) argues that under Reagan, workplace safety laws were “so titled in favor of employers that safety experts declared them virtually useless.” All these

measures, which came to be known as constitutive of the so-called Reagan Revolution, were part of a larger, radical neoliberal agenda to eliminate all significant regulations/constraints on business in the name of “freedom and prosperity.”

There should be little doubt that Reagan’s radical antilabor positions have lingered long after his presidency. In fact, during the 1990s, the same neoliberal agenda to support business at the expense of labor rights continued under democratic president, Bill Clinton. Clinton was also a staunch proponent of free market principles and signed into law the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which came into effect in 1994. NAFTA was a neoliberal agreement that essentially represented a template for the rules of the emerging global economy. Among other outcomes, NAFTA allowed US corporations to relocate production and sell back cheap products to the USA, strengthened the power of US employers to make their domestic workers accept lower wages and less benefits with threats of outsourcing jobs (i.e., American workers were told to accept lower wages or lose their jobs to Mexican workers), eliminated thousands of living-waged American jobs, and decimated the Mexican agricultural and small business sector, thereby dislocating millions of Mexican workers and their families and stripping them of their livelihoods (e.g., Faux 2013).

Also during the 1990s, President Clinton signed into law the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, otherwise known in the USA as “Welfare Reform.” Spurred by the idea that government assistance to the poor creates laziness and a culture of dependency that discourages responsible behavior and upward mobility, the Clinton administration encouraged congress to reform welfare in a way that would avoid these undesirable outcomes by (1) limiting the amount of time people can receive assistance (i.e., placing a lifetime limit of 5 years of federal benefits) and (2) requiring people to work as a requisite for welfare eligibility, among other measures. The idea, in effect, was to dismantle welfare as an entitlement program and encourage more responsible, industrious citizens that would no longer “milk” the system and instead contribute to the economy. According to critics, however, these measures were not accompanied by the creation of stable, living wage jobs and, as a result, the majority of welfare recipients remained in poverty. In fact, according to some analysts, the imposed entry of poor people into the labor market resulted in a larger pool of low-skilled workers that, in turn, drove wages down and further de-incentivized employers to provide benefits (e.g., Hill 2013). As with other pro-market, neoliberal measures, Clinton’s welfare reform ended up benefitting the business sector, often at the expense of punishing the poor (more will be discussed on this topic later).

Lamentably, for those who value social and economic justice, the situation for lower and middle class Americans seems to have gotten even worse in the past few years. As an example, the recent US Supreme Court decisions, most notably *Citizens United vs. The Federal Election Commission* in 2010 and *McCutcheon vs. The Federal Election Commission* in 2014, have virtually eviscerated campaign finance laws, thereby giving major businesses/corporations and other wealthy entities almost unlimited control over the US Congress and the electoral process. The end result has been the reinforcement of a political and economic system that prioritizes

the interests of businesses and the economic elite over everything and everyone else (e.g., Gilens and Page 2014). There should be little surprise, therefore, that corporations have made record profits in recent years (US\$1.68 trillion in 2014), while the number of *working* Americans living in poverty has soared (see U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2011). Furthermore, in the past 35 years, the income among the top 1% of Americans (who currently own nearly 40% of the country's wealth) has quadrupled while the income for the rest of the population has stagnated (Taylor 2011).

Neoliberalism and the Normalization of Violence Against Working People

Important to note at this point is that the sort of inequality promoted by neoliberalism and its radical attack on organized labor are forms of violence against working people. While violence is typically understood as something that is direct and deliberate, a host of scholars—particularly those working within the field of peace studies—have argued for quite some time that violence can also be indirect, non-deliberate and structured into cultural values, social norms, and institutional practices. Johan Galtung, for example, is well known for his work on violence, particularly his idea of structural and cultural violence (Galtung 1969, 1990). While structural violence refers to patterns of injustice or exploitation that are built into a particular social or economic system and its attending policies (e.g., policies and institutional practices that generate enormous wealth for an elite minority at the expense of exploiting vast numbers of people and denying them—often unintentionally—of their basic needs), cultural violence pertains to the prevailing values and belief systems that make patterns of avoidable inequality, injustice, and suffering seem natural and beyond question. There should be little doubt that these two intersecting forms of violence are built into neoliberalism.

Indeed, neoliberalism entails both a set of pro-market policies that have proven detrimental to the needs of working people (i.e., structural violence) and a pro-market ideology and culture that normalizes an attack on labor rights and social well-being (i.e., cultural violence). Culturally and ideologically, neoliberalism promotes violence by advancing an atomistic conception of the world in which “society” is little more than a heap of individuals pursuing their self-interests as they compete with one another at the marketplace. The individual, in effect, is understood as the only viable unit of concern and analysis. What this also suggests is that all social problems are conceived as private troubles that must be resolved at the personal level. Thus, for example, the poor are encouraged to work harder in order to overcome their poverty, the unemployed are encouraged to acquire skills that might make them “more marketable,” and workers who are laid off or subjected to low wages and harsh working conditions are encouraged to seek alternative employment. In brief, rather than strengthening the so-called social contract and harnessing the power of government to effectively address public concerns such as poverty, unemployment, and labor rights violations, neoliberals seek to “shrink government”

and give individuals the “freedom” to resolve their own problems. Those who cannot overcome their own problems are typically regarded as inept, lazy, irresponsible, and deserving of their unfavorable positions (i.e., deserving of the violence inflicted upon them).

Furthermore, because the individual is prioritized over any notion of a social realm, self-serving values such as personal liberty, self-reliance, competition, and consumerism are encouraged—through various means—over values that emphasize the integrity and worth of others (i.e., values such as solidarity, social responsibility, and altruism). These pro-market values and accompanying neoliberal policies/practices related to privatization, deregulation, de-unionization, and outsourcing weaken the social bonds and promote a Social Darwinian universe in which the free pursuit of self-interest and profit-making become not only acceptable but also the very essence of freedom and democracy. Indeed, people in a neoliberal market society are typically taught that an optimal order is one that “allows individuals to manifest their egoistic drive for material accumulation (profit) through the market, which results in benefits to all members of society” (Iadicola and Shupe 2013, p. 92). Yet as argued by Henry Giroux, within this market-driven universe, those who do not have a great deal of power or wealth (i.e., the vast majority of people) become devalued, disposable, and “barely acknowledged as human beings” (Giroux 2008b, p. 64).

There should be little doubt that people who are most vulnerable to being dehumanized within a neoliberal global economy are workers (particularly low-skilled, and, increasingly, even-skilled workers), as they are too often seen by the business sector as little more than production costs. As corporations (entities that, under the law, are considered individuals) prioritize their self-serving commercial interests and evaluate the worth of their workers in terms of profitability, production becomes a process that, to a large extent, is severed from nonmarket considerations related to justice, sustainability, and human rights. What results is a system of violence against workers that is legitimized in the name of free enterprise. Below I address examples of how workers are subjected to forms of violence that are often normalized within a neoliberal global economy.

Wage Stagnation, Unaffordability, and Job/Economic Insecurity: The Rise of the Precariat

One of the clearest indicators of structural violence is when prevailing laws, policies and/or institutional practices systematically and unjustifiably deprive people of their basic needs (Galtung 1969). A myriad of recent studies and reports reveal that millions of working Americans find it increasingly difficult to afford basic needs. These include housing (Viveiros and Brennan 2013), food (Brown 2013), healthcare (Luhby 2013), and tuition at state/public universities (Kingkade 2013). The end result is that for millions of working Americans, the so-called American dream (a comfortable, financially secure life) has become virtually unattainable.

Although the prevailing neoliberal market culture described above would encourage understanding this sort of deprivation (and the implied violence) as the result of laziness and personal failure, closer inspection reveals quite clearly that the problem is not simply a personal one. The issue of stagnant (or falling) wages for those outside the top 1% is certainly relevant. According to data published by the US Census Bureau, full-time male workers in the USA earn less than they did 40 years ago (U.S. Census Bureau 2013). In 1973, the median income for full-time male workers in inflation-adjusted dollars was \$51,670, compared to \$49,398 in 2012 (a US\$2272, or 4% decline). Considering that basic living expenses, such as housing, food, and healthcare, have dramatically surpassed wage increases since the 1970s, the fact that millions of working Americans struggle to afford basic needs is a predictable outcome. Also predictable is the fact that as wages have stagnated or declined for the vast majority of workers, the elite class (those who comprise the top 1%) have seen their income share skyrocket. In fact, while the average American CEO earned 42 times as much as the average worker in 1980, today they make more than 300 times as much. Furthermore, in the aftermath of the so-called Great Recession, from 2009 to 2012, 95% of economic gains went to the top 1% (Saez 2013). This growing inequality in income is particularly problematic when one considers that workers in the USA work longer hours today than at any time since statistics have been kept (e.g., Schabner 2013).

Although several states have, in recent years, increased minimum wages, the most recent proposal to raise the federal minimum wage to US\$10.10 was blocked by the US Senate in April of 2014. While this has generated quite a bit of debate, what is often ignored is that US\$10.10 an hour is itself insufficient to live on in most parts of the country. Those who oppose wage increases in general, of course, typically make the argument that raising the minimum wage is an artificial imposition (another example of “big government”) that violates free market principles and leads to unintended consequences, including further incentivizing businesses to outsource jobs to cheaper labor markets. In effect, the typical neoliberal mantra that whatever is bad for business is bad for everyone seems to be the central justification employed by those who reject wage increases for low-income workers. Not only are millions of workers in the USA dealing with stagnating or falling wages, but job security also seems to be increasingly rare. Currently, roughly 30% of American jobs are part-time, contract, or otherwise “contingent” jobs, and this number is expected to grow by at least a third within the next 4 years (Soni 2013). Typically, these temporary jobs have no benefits, no consistent schedules, and, perhaps most importantly, no security.

All the conditions noted above have given rise to the so-called precariat, a class of people who live precariously—that is—without predictability and security (Standing 2014). Typically, these are people who are in debt, struggle paycheck to paycheck, and live at the brink of personal financial disaster, all of which affects their physical, mental, and social well-being. However, it is important to emphasize that from a neoliberal perspective, these patterns of inequality and deprivation and the implied violence inflicted on millions of people are “natural,” insofar as the market determines them. In effect, this is all a product of “freedom” and apolitical

laws associated with supply and demand. The solution, therefore, is for those who are earning low wages, lacking basic needs, and/or living precariously to make better choices and become more competitive at the marketplace.

Attack on Labor Unions: Making Workers Defenseless Against Employers

The important role that labor unions have played in protecting the rights and well-being of workers is well known. There should be little doubt that without the sort of collective bargaining that labor unions offer, things such as safe workplaces, paid sick leave, and livable wages would be little more than fantasies. Yet since the 1970s and especially since the 1980s, one of the central objectives within the neoliberal agenda has been to undermine labor unions—an objective that has had significant success, particularly in recent years. In fact, in 2012, the US Department of Labor reported that the percentage of US workers who were union members reached a 97 year low of 11.3%—compared to 35% in the mid-1950s and 20.1% in 1983 (see Greenhouse 2013).

According to a report published by the Economic Policy Institute, in 2011 and 2012, state legislatures around the country launched a series of neoliberal laws and initiatives that aim to weaken labor unions and lower labor standards (Lafer 2013). Among their findings: 15 states (most famously Wisconsin) passed laws restricting public employees' collective bargaining rights or ability to collect union dues through payroll deduction, 19 states introduced "right-to-work" bills, and 2 states (Michigan and Indiana) passed "right-to-work" laws that weaken labor unions by prohibiting workers in unionized workplaces from having to pay union fees. Although these measures are often supported in the name of individual liberty and protecting the rights of nonunion workers, the result has been to essentially disempower organized labor and weaken workers' earning potential.

During the same time (2011–2012), some states have adopted a series of bills that seek to scale back workplace safety regulations. Michigan, for example, adopted a Bill in 2011 that makes it impossible to pass stricter workplace safety regulations than what current OSHA rules (which were originally enacted in the 1970s) mandate. These rules fail to recognize injuries such as repetitive motion injuries, which affect 28,000 Americans every year. Even meal breaks have been under attack in recent years. In 2012, the New Hampshire House of Representatives voted to repeal a requirement that employers allow workers a 30-min unpaid meal break after 5 consecutive hours of work. Those who supported this repeal saw the required 30-min meal break as "unnecessary overregulation" (Lafer 2013).

Not surprisingly, all the aforementioned measures to weaken organized labor and lower labor standards have been supported by major corporate lobbies such as the Chamber of Commerce, the National Federations of Independent Businesses, and the National Association of Manufacturers. It should also be emphasized that these sorts of measures pale in comparison to the attack on organized labor that has been

witnessed in recent years in other countries. As a particularly egregious example, in the past two decades, more than 2500 trade unionists have been assassinated in Colombia by pro-business paramilitary groups that regard labor unions as breeding grounds for “guerillas.” Accordingly, lawsuits have been filed by the International Labor Rights Forum against US companies such as Coca-Cola, Dole, and Drummond for allegedly having ties with Colombian paramilitary groups that murder trade unionists with almost absolute impunity (see *Violence Against Trade Unions in Colombia 2011*). In brief, all these attacks on organized labor—from the more subtle to the more extreme—are examples of the violence unleashed by the neoliberal commitment to prioritize business interests over everything else.

Globalization, Automation, and Disposability

Writers of various disciplines have been arguing for quite some time that the profit motive that drives market capitalism makes this type of economy antithetical to national boundaries. Although global trade is not new, the current process of globalization is aided by technological innovations that have made physical space increasingly irrelevant. The digital and electronic transfer of capital and information via satellite and Internet has created an instantaneous and interconnected world that was difficult to imagine just a few years ago.

Most important is that because globalization is currently dominated by neoliberalism and its emphasis on deregulation and free markets, economic relations and modes of production are “deterritorialized” in a way that gives corporations access to cheap labor around the globe.

Indeed, within the current neoliberal global economy, corporations no longer depend on their local labor force and therefore workers are often competing for jobs not simply with members of their community but with people in other corners of the world. What has resulted is a “race to the bottom”—that is—a race among multinational corporations to find the cheapest, most exploitable sources of labor available on the planet, all of which undercuts workers’ job security and bargaining power. This so-called race to the bottom gained momentum from the 1970s to the 1990s, as millions of American manufacturing jobs (which at one time had ensured millions of workers a decent livelihood) were outsourced overseas to cheaper labor markets. These are markets where wages and labor standards are far lower than in the USA. As has been well documented, what resulted was a massive process of “de-industrialization” in the USA that has had devastating consequences, particularly in urban areas (e.g., Wilson 1997).

In the past several decades, workers in the USA and elsewhere have had to compete not only with other workers but with increasingly sophisticated machines. Although the prospect of technology replacing human labor has been discussed since the rise of industrialization, new technologies up until the end of the twentieth century typically created more jobs than what they destroyed. One central reason was that these new technologies still needed human workers to operate them, and so new technologies led to a demand for new skills and new jobs. Thus, for example, weavers became typists, typists became computer programmers, and so on. This,

however, appears to be changing in the current era. For example, in their book *The Second Machine Age*, Erick Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee argue that whereas innovative technologies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (i.e., technologies such as the steam or internal combustion engines) automated muscle power and thus still required human operators, much of today's technological innovations (in robotics, artificial intelligence, etc.) are designed to automate cognitive tasks, thereby rendering human operators almost entirely obsolete (Brynjolfsson and McAfee 2014).

Consistent with this development, the impact that digital technologies have had on minimizing labor demands in various industries cannot be overstated. Ian Leslie (2014), for example, gives the example of Kodak, a company specializing in imaging and photographic products that was founded in 1880. At its peak during the mid-twentieth century, Kodak employed more than 145,000 people, with many more indirectly engaged through other suppliers and retailers, and provided decent, stable jobs for generations of skilled workers. Today, however, with the advent of sophisticated digital technologies, similar companies do not need this type of human labor power. The end result has been that these new technologies have reinforced already existing inequalities. As Leslie puts it,

...in a wired world, it costs virtually nothing to reproduce a photo or an e-book or a piece of software and send it across the world. Small teams of designers or engineers can make products consumed and paid for by billions, creating vast wealth for the originators. Yet the wealth doesn't 'trickle down' because digital goods require so few people to make them, and digitally organized workplaces require fewer people to run them (Leslie 2014, p. 14).

By making human labor increasingly unnecessary, new digital technologies and an increasingly wired world have allowed small companies like Instagram, WhatsApp, and others—companies that employ remarkably small number of people—to be valued (and sold) at billions of dollars, thus creating enormous wealth for their originators without the benefit of generating jobs.

While some might argue that the advent of digital technologies has benefitted the quality of people's lives in many ways (increasing people's consumer choices, making communication easier, etc.), there should be little doubt that, overall, these technological innovations have a clear underside. Stated simply, for billions of people around the world with little skills and little opportunities to acquire them, new technologies have increasingly compromised their ability to make a decent living. The implied obviation of human labor, combined with the neoliberal emphasis on profitability over every other consideration, is yet another form of violence in that increasing numbers of workers have become disposable within the neoliberal global economy.

Job Loss and Subjective Well-Being

As millions of people in recent decades have lost their jobs due to outsourcing, automation, and other conditions associated with the neoliberal economy, it is important to understand that the loss of a job is not simply a financial burden but also detrimental to people's subjective well-being (i.e., how satisfied they are with their

lives). According to Cristobal Young (2012, p. 610), “the non-pecuniary cost of unemployment can be devastating: the unemployed are stripped of their economic identity, left with a searching sense of failure and filled with doubts about their future place in the world.” Furthermore, eligibility for unemployment insurance and even reemployment only partially mitigate the detrimental effects of job loss, as people who experience losing a job—irrespective of family income or financial status—are often left with a deep and lasting sense of worthlessness, hopelessness, restlessness, and depression that persists for prolonged periods (Young 2012). Of course, those who are in a financially precarious position have the significant added burden of feeling a heightened sense of financial insecurity, which adds to their feeling of hopelessness (Knabe and Ratzel 2011).

One of the reasons why persons who experience being out of work see a dramatic decline in their subjective well-being has a lot to do with the way people in a neoliberal market society often associate unemployment with a lack of moral character, work ethic, and general competence. Consistent with neoliberal ideology, public opinion surveys find that the unemployed are often regarded as lazy, undisciplined, lacking motivation, and personally responsible for their unemployment (see Young 2012). These beliefs are often internalized by the unemployed themselves, as they “accept the negative judgments, and come to feel unworthy, incomplete, and inferior” (Young 2012, p. 611). This all ignores, of course, the larger structural factors noted above (e.g., outsourcing, automation, etc.) that promotes unemployment irrespective of workers’ competence, moral character, and work ethic. To borrow from C. Wright Mills (1959), the tendency to blame the unemployed themselves for their lack of work has to do with turning a public issue into a personal trouble. In short, as millions of people are stripped of their roles as productive agents and made to feel inadequate, they experience a remarkable loss of self-confidence and personal well-being, all of which is another form of violence perpetrated by the neoliberal economy and its radical, pro-market ideology.

The Rise of the Neoliberal Penal State

Another form of violence associated with neoliberalism has to do with the rise of what Loic Wacquant (2009, 2010) refers to as the “penal state.” Stated simply, the neoliberal assault on the welfare state, along with other neoliberal trends such as the stagnation of wages, cutting of work benefits, and outsourcing of jobs, led not only to an increase in social and economic insecurity among millions of people but also to a more punitive state designed to “discipline the precarious factions of the postindustrial working class” (Wacquant 2010, p. 198). In effect, as life under neoliberalism became more difficult for vast segments of the population starting in the late 1970s and the 1980s, the state retracted from its traditional function as a guarantor of social well-being and became increasingly repressive (see also Harcourt 2011). What emerged was a penal state that encouraged the mass incarceration of those who might in any way disrupt the prevailing neoliberal/market order—that is—the unemployed or otherwise unskilled, precariously employed,

predominantly minority laborers who were made dispensable through the process of de-industrialization, are stuck at the bottom rung of a low-wage labor market, and embody a phenotype that mainstream American society has traditionally associated with criminality.

The simultaneous retraction of the state's social welfare policies and expansion of its punitive function continued during the 1990s and into the new millennium. The passing of Welfare Reform (i.e., the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunities Act) in 1996 was a clear measure to discipline the poor by waging what historian Michael Katz (2008) referred to as a "war on dependence." As noted earlier, welfare reform dramatically reduced benefits for the needy and required the poor to work as a requisite for receiving benefits, thus resulting in a type of "workfare." At the same time, criminal justice policies became increasingly punitive during this same time, with several states instituting three strikes laws, zero-tolerance policing strategies, and other measures to "fight crime." As discussed by Wacquant (2010, p. 203):

The gradual erosion of public aid and its revamping into workfare in 1996 has entailed restricting entry into the [welfare] system, shortening stays on the rolls, and speeding up exit, resulting in a spectacular reduction of the stock of beneficiaries (it plummeted from nearly 5 million households in 1992 to under 2 million a decade later). Trends in penal policy have followed the exact opposite track: admission into jail and prison has been greatly facilitated, sojourns behind bars lengthened, and releases curtailed, which has yielded a spectacular ballooning of the population under lock.

As of 2014, there are more than 2.2 million people in the USA who are in jail or prison. As has been well documented, those who experience incarceration are disproportionately poor and nonwhite, and a significant number of inmates are incarcerated for nonviolent offenses, mostly drug-related charges (Alexander 2010). Most importantly, the majority of people currently in prison (close to 70%) are not there for the first time. Considering all this, various critics contend that the current US system of mass incarceration does very little in terms of deterring or rehabilitating offenders, and instead, in large part (whether intended or not), punishes people who have been brutalized by the prevailing neoliberal market economy. The fact that a significant percentage of inmates, particularly people of color, come from urban communities that, in the past three to four decades, have experienced a dramatic loss of jobs, investment, and public services is at least partly *because* of the neoliberal global economy. As various studies have shown, once these people have a criminal record, the overwhelming majority of them have an even more difficult time getting a job in an already precarious job market (e.g., Pager 2003). When they do find jobs, they tend to earn less than non-convicts. Furthermore, as Michelle Alexander (2010) has made clear, people with a prison record are often relegated to a permanent second-class status and are barred from voting, serving on juries, or having access to all sorts of government benefits. In turn, these patterns of exclusion and the implied violence on former inmates (and their families and communities) are rationalized in the name of "justice" and "public safety."

Those who do benefit most from the current system of mass incarceration are entities associated with the so-called prison industrial complex—that is—mostly elite member of the business and political community. These include for-profit private

prisons that have become increasingly popular during the past several years; major companies that get government contracts to build and equip state-run prisons, jails, and detention facilities; companies that use prisoners as a reliable and cheap source of labor; and politicians who gain votes from fearful citizens by professing to remain “tough” on crime. And while there has been more talk in recent years about the need for criminal justice reform and doing away with the country’s obsession to lock up people, many (if not most) of these discussions are centered on the market-centered question of cost-effectiveness—i.e., how can we run the criminal justice system in a less expensive way(?)—while essentially downplaying the *social costs* of mass incarceration (Perez and Esposito 2012). In short, as neoliberalism eroded the welfare state, destroyed job stability and economic security, and left millions of already underprivileged people in an increasingly dire position, a neoliberal penal state emerged that further punished those already victimized by the neoliberal economy (e.g., the poor, unemployed, and low-skilled workers, particularly urban people of color).

Conclusion: Challenging Neoliberal Violence

Recent decades have not been kind to working people. Particularly in the USA, the neoliberal revolution that began in the late 1970s and the 1980s has, in recent years, continued in the form of an unprecedented, corporate-backed, legislative attack on labor standards, especially at the state level (Lafer 2013). This erosion of labor standards, coupled with growing inequality, stagnant wages, dramatic increases in cost of living, automation, outsourcing, flexible labor markets, and weakening of labor unions, has, to a very large extent, lowered the quality of life and undermined the economic security of millions of workers and their families. Furthermore, since the 1980s, millions of people who have been made expendable by the neoliberal economy have also been further punished by the rise of a neoliberal penal state that is still very much in place today.

This attack on working class people has, in recent years, also spawned oppositional energies worldwide that seek alternatives to the neoliberal status quo. The Occupy movement is one recent example of that resistance. Although many claim that the Occupy movement has lost its momentum, there should be little doubt that the activists associated with this movement have managed to shift the public discourse and bring more critical attention to the idea that the sort of extreme inequality that currently characterizes the US and global economy is neither inevitable nor compatible with a just and democratic society. These and other recent anti-neoliberal activists have increasingly focused their attention not only on ways to challenge structures of inequality, but also on the need to transform the culture of violence that drives the current neoliberal market economy.

As discussed by Henry Giroux (2013, para. 3), the current forms of everyday violence that exist in neoliberal societies such as the USA are not merely anomalous or marginal private retreats into barbarism, but rather have become the “currency of

a market-driven culture which takes as its model a Darwinian shark tank in which only the strong survive.” As the unfettered pursuit of profit and self-gain under neoliberalism is celebrated as synonymous with freedom, a predatory mindset is promoted that dissolves democratic social bonds and encourages people to overlook one another’s humanity. In the USA, this sort of mindset has led to a sharp decline in levels of empathy and perspective taking. Indeed, a 2011 study of the US college students found that the average level of “empathic concern” (i.e., people’s feeling of sympathy for the misfortune of others) declined by 48% between 1979 and 2009, while the average level of “perspective taking” (imagining other people’s point of view) declined by 34% during the same period (Konrath et al. 2011). At the same time that levels of empathy have declined since the 1980s, levels of depression and anxiety during the same period have soared. According to Jessie Klein (2012), these are all symptoms of what she calls a “bully society”—a society that promotes and normalizes violent and competitive behavior, all of which takes a toll on people’s personal and collective well-being. Of course, the rise of this bully society coincides precisely with the rise of neoliberalism and its assault on the welfare state, as well civic values related to solidarity and social/economic justice.

As it pertains to the realm of work, the erosion of labor standards and general struggle of workers in the USA and around the world cannot be fully understood outside the forms of structural and cultural violence that are promoted by neoliberalism. Accordingly, for those who seek to challenge the abuses of neoliberal capitalism, particularly as they relate to workers, the implications of this realization are fairly straightforward. Stated simply, while the struggle for workers’ rights must necessarily continue to involve progressive policy/legislative reforms such as increasing minimum wages, passing laws guaranteeing more robust benefits to help working families, strengthening labor unions and collective bargaining, passing stricter workplace safety regulations, and overturning decisions that empower the corporate sector to control the political process (i.e., repealing the now infamous *Citizens United vs. The Federal Election Commission* decision, etc.), the struggle for labor rights must also entail a shift in values. Specifically, the market values that encourage profit-making activity over everything else must be replaced by a type of economy guided by a very different set of values and priorities. What is needed, in effect, is a new political economy in which the Hayekian tendency to associate social or economic justice with tyranny and inefficiency is abandoned through an ongoing collective effort (via government, schools, the media, and so on) to promote a culture that emphasizes compassion, fairness, and equity. Consistent with the so-called Bamako Appeal of 2006, what many anti-neoliberal activists are calling for is a new “universal civilization” rooted in a “new collective consciousness” that prioritizes social/economic justice and human well-being (see Bamako Appeal 2006).

Subsequent to this shift in culture and consciousness, terms such as “wealth redistribution” will no longer sound to much of the public as an offensive attack on freedom. The ongoing corporate quest to seek the cheapest, most exploitable labor available; the trend toward making workers “accept” low-waged, temporary jobs as “better” than having no job; or the development of technologies that make millions

of productive human beings expendable and disposable will no longer be accepted as a “normal” part of the global economy. This new economy would take seriously Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which calls for the right to work, protects all people against unemployment, and emphasizes the “right to just and favorable remuneration” that ensures workers and their families “an existence worthy of human dignity and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection” (see Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 23). In brief, only through these sorts of deep cultural and structural reforms can the current patterns of violence against working people be challenged, and only then can the economy be transformed into an institution that benefits all.

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Chapter 8

Globalization, Neoliberalism, and the Spread of Economic Violence: The Framework of Civilizational Analysis

Algis Mickunas

There have been various claims to universal civilization, but modern globalization is phrased in terms of a direction and purpose that benefits all humanity. At one level of modern Western globalization, there is a conjunction of two civilizations—the Mid-Eastern and the Western scientific enlightenment. Their conjunction and identity is premised on the metaphysics of the will, regardless of the interpretation that any articulation of this conjunction might assume. Yet, two major interpretations are relevant for the analysis of globalization: the first is the Mid-Eastern theocratic civilization, where the world and the human result from a creative edict by the will of a solitary paternal figure. Nothing can escape this will. As we will see later, this tradition also has variants that flow from Persian divine autocracy through Byzantine empire Russian autocracy renamed as Marxism–Leninism, and varieties of fascisms. These articulations of civilization are all imagined to “save the world” from a fallen state that is due to the cunning of evil persons who deviate from the laws and edicts of an absolute authority.

The second interpretation of universal civilization, the scientific, takes on the primacy of the will and locates it in humans. This move allows the claim that “man is the measure and maker of the world.” But to be such, the modern Westerner had to posit two directions of thinking: first, ontological, claiming that the world is a sum of homogeneous parts, inaccessible to perception, and, second, a metaphysical domain, a variant of Neoplatonism, where the basic language that can access this ontology is formal-quantitative, equally inaccessible to perception. Deeming this metaphysical composition equally to be a human construct—premiered on will—the human is in a position to calculate and arrange the indifferent homogeneous matter in accordance with his calculations and make the environment a reflection of his own constructs. (Hegel still wanted to make this structure into an absolute dialecti-

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cal process and thus save Mid-Eastern paternal theocracy). In principle, there is an assumption that all events can and must be controlled and explained causally: hence, the composition—establishment of material conditions and getting material results. Instrumental reason and technology will become recognized later as modern Western civilization with its grand social experiments, attempts at behavioral modification, social functionalism, and belief in teleological progress.

It is no wonder that even philosophers of science talk about world making or paradigm construction, and even of “verification” that itself has to be logically verified. This reflexive circle indicates that there is suspicion of perceptual awareness of the world and that constructed awareness that is willful is to be trusted. In this sense, the world has to be constantly monitored by something that is not part of the world to the extent that the perceptual world is inadequate and must be transformed by a higher constructive logic. Nevertheless, the higher constructive logics have no criteria by which they can be judged in terms of the experienced world. This metaphysics of the will without criterion accordingly becomes predominant so that quotidian experience is abolished in favor of logical rules founded on the arbitrary will. Such rules have no grounds in the experienced world apart from being arbitrarily posited.

The economistic version of globalization now sweeping the planet is an expression of this abstract logic of the will, which necessarily eviscerates the everyday world of experience and interpersonal relationships. This globalizing process promises to improve everyone’s life and to liberate all peoples from want and oppression; yet neoliberalism is premised on the claim technical-active intervention in the world oriented by the abstract logic of the market is universally valid. This intervention requires that all peoples anywhere and anytime must relate to their environments solely as material resources for technical transformation and exploitation. The term “liberation” has at times been thought to be synonymous with “humanization” in the sense that we, as natural beings in a natural environment, are subjected to forces that are not under our control—forces that are alien and inhuman. Whereas once the environment and our lives are subjected to scientific and economic “development,” we will enter a humane era liberated from natural necessities. At this level, the universal claim provides a rationale for teleology and progress by proposing that there is a stage in which humans will be total masters of the environment and themselves. This claim then provides a standard on the basis of which others, those who have not yet joined human history, will have to judge their positions and lives as inferior. This is the logic offered by numerous theories of development and is also the justifying logic of economic progress in which societies are contrasted in terms of the degree to which their social fields have been monetized, giving rise to the idea that there are first, second, and third worlds.

The universal claim underlying the logic of globalization grounds various theories of power. At the outset, the very instrumentalization of method and theory applied on the material homogenized world has an implicit premise: The increasing application of our methods and the transformation of the environment in terms of our own controls lead to an increasing ability to master and control more domains of the environment and, therefore, to acquire greater power over the environment and

ourselves. It is to be recalled that the methods and theories are not given objectively but are constructed as instruments to reshape the environment, and as instruments they are the service of autonomous will. The world, conceived solely as a field of interchangeable monetary units, thereby appears as raw material to be rearranged at the whim of the autonomous will. This will, materialized as “the consumer,” sets its own criteria for increased mastery and increased power to master. This is the reason that Nietzsche and his followers give precedence to the will to power. Indeed, modern scientific methods and theories are intended to master, control, and increase our power. Science as will to power: Economy as will to power. What Nietzsche, on one hand, and the Austrian School of economists, on the other hand, have done is to make this intentionality of modern life obvious. This is why the rhetoric of globalization cannot avoid articulating a view of the world in terms of a power free to completely reorganize the world. Indeed, any attempt to restrict this play of the will is interpreted as a recrudescence of inhumanity within the expanding field of power.

Neoliberal Economics: The *Great Achievement*?

Let us survey the case made for the benefits of globalization. One of the major tasks faced by countries comprising the globalized field is couched in terms of the elimination of poverty. According to various announcements, in recent decades, 1 billion people have been lifted out of poverty through the process of global development, and efforts have been renewed starting with the year 2015 to eliminate poverty permanently. Of course, the West cannot accomplish this alone—it is a global task involving all the developed world. Celebrations of the inevitable success of this effort range from the right wing conservatives in the USA, who credit capitalism, to the autocratic leaders of China, who credit their macro-managerial efforts. These claims and their variants are accepted globally without mention that capitalism and communism are major systems invented in the modern West. In this sense, an acceptance of one or the other rendition of globalization by other civilizations entails a partial acceptance of the West. Both articulations of global order implicate people in a foreign conception of economics and of technological instrumentalism, as well as the social and political results that these worldviews create.

The poor have been a major topic of debate for economic theorists and philosophers for ages. The basic approach has been centered on how to reduce poverty without harming the economy. Yet this debate has been framed within the very narrow assumptions of economism: The economy must continue to grow instead of simply satisfying the basic needs. Within this framework, the poor take on a strategic importance for economic policy. In Europe from the sixteenth century on, the poor began to be seen as a necessity for a healthy economy. Economists such as B. de Mandeville bluntly noted that without slavery the economic wealth of a nation depends directly on vast numbers of working poor. This means that that economic development is at odds with the need to diminish poverty. Whatever measures were pursued remained superficially ameliorative; they were not intended

to relieve poverty but only to help the poor in catastrophic cases through the light interventions of the welfare state or private charities. This economic approach to poverty is today complemented by a crudely ideological moral discourse whose economic categories of thought are easy to discern. Thus, conservative voices claim that people are poor because of their own faulty character, because of their lazy, ungodly, or lustful lives.

The preacher T. Malthus was a major propagator of this view. For him, economic progress depended on technology that might help the poor, but due to their profligacy the poor will reproduce at a rate that outstrips all the ameliorative efforts and guarantees that there will always be poor people. His views prompted new regulations that outlawed relief for the poor and forced them to rely solely on wages and the disciplining effect of the market. In a similar economic vein, A. Smith proposed only a vague solution to poverty in terms of the taxes that the rich pay, but no consequences flowed from his vision. Marx, of course, proposed the abolition of private ownership of the means of production, thereby allowing the “masses” to take control of such means and thus become owners/workers. Lenin attempted to implement Marx’s views but all that was achieved in spite of the productive achievements of the Soviet Union was a life slightly above the poverty line for the majority and a luxurious life for the minority “revolutionary elite,” who emerged as de facto owners of all property, though in the name of the people. This effort never ceased to be a form of what, since Djilas time, is known as “state capitalism.”

In the twentieth century, many calculations were undertaken in efforts to scientifically validate, but as productive capacities grew, the new consumerist base of society had to be expanded if the capitalist order was to persist. J. M. Keynes pointed out that what is important for economic growth is consumption and reducing poverty is the only way to absorb commodities. Following this reconception of poverty as detriment to growth, an explosion of evidence indicated that any increase in poverty correlates with decreases in investments and innovation. Economic models consistently demonstrated that the unequal ability to obtain credit keeps the poor from investing in education or small business ventures, resulting in diminished growth for the total economy. These views and the crisis of the Great Depression undermined, if only briefly, the myth that poverty exists because the poor lack character. The newer economic models demonstrated to public officials that lack of education, health care, and proper nutrition keep people in poverty. As a consequence, an expanded welfare state took a role in regulating and funding education, health care, and work conditions. One outcome of such thinking was Brazil’s *Bolsa Familia* plan which gave poor families money as long as their children were attending school. All this occurred within the framework of sustaining orderly economic growth.

The limitations of economic frameworks for identifying and alleviating poverty became visible at the end of the twentieth century and are exemplified by “the great achievement,” a phrase used to describe the rapid economic growth of what are known as the BRICS countries (Brazil, India, Russia, China, and South Africa). As the twentieth century ended, the BRICS countries accounted for a jump from 38 to 50% of world output (calculated in terms of purchasing power) and projections

indicated that these countries will eclipse the economic output of the developed countries by 2050 with large portions of their populations entering the middle class of consumers. The BRICS, then, represent the largest economic transformation in human history. Its surge comprised not only an elimination of poverty for vast populations but also “catch up growth” that outpaced the performance of the developed core of the global order.

Nevertheless, the slump triggered by the USA diminished demand globally, and growth for next 10 years will be half of that during the upsurge. While still expanding at a combined 5%, the rate of growth will retard development around the world. This also means that decreased demand from these emerging economies will no longer prop up weaknesses in the economies of rich countries. A second component of the recent great recession also points to the fragility of economic development. As commodity prices went up due to burgeoning demand in the years leading up to the crisis, costs of production spiraled upward and helped trigger the global crises. A third factor was that within the liberalized global economy, the vastly increased labor pool in emerging economies contributed to wage stagnation if not diminishment. The result has been a now glaring inequality between the rich and the poor that is felt all the way through first-world economies. Of course, cheap labor increased global trade. Exports grew from 16% of global gross domestic product (GDP) in the mid-1990s to 27% in 2008. For China alone, 50% of GDP consisted of exports. This cheap labor in one part of the world produced a demand for a broad range of raw materials, which pushed up prices and created windfalls for a narrow stratum of global elites who controlled such basic commodities. The resulting resource exploitation did little to help the poor in the smaller economies throughout the world. On the contrary, this model of economic globalization has typically been associated with increased violence against the populations of Africa and South America.

The limitations of neoliberal development are also illustrated by India, one of the BRICS countries. Global attention was caught for a moment in the summer of 2013 when a massive blackout revealed that 400 million people have no electricity. Sanitation and hygiene are dismal: Half of the population still defecate in the open, resulting in many deaths from diarrhea and encephalitis. Immunization for most diseases is below sub-Saharan Africa. Twice as many children (43%) in India go hungry than that in all of Africa. Many adults, especially women, are undernourished, although the traditional elite and the newly rich are suffering from obesity and diabetes. What has been suggested as a remedy is a policy of liberalization of labor laws superficially complemented with public policies and investments in health, education, and other support for children—factors resulting from fast economic growth and social gains in the other BRICS countries. But all these policy alternatives, all the ups and downs in incomes, national productivity, and international shifts in poverty, remain premised on economism, which means that the most basic issues are not addressed and cannot even be conceptualized.

The manner in which educational policy is debated, within India as well as in the developed countries, illustrates this point. As mentioned, the driving engine of the market is technology, but the innovation of new technologies requires education. As a consequence, within market-based societies, educational policy increasingly

focuses on efforts to produce a cadre of innovators able to ensure continued technological progress and a complementary cadre of entrepreneurs able to “develop” such innovations and bring them to market as quickly as possible. In the neoliberal era, both these functions have been fused within the research universities. Moreover, the emphasis in all educational institutions is on technical programs and preparation for jobs. Within such societies, higher technical expertise is directly tied to higher income, and those who fail to master the latest technologies do not fare too well. Moreover, those who achieve success in technical and financial fields are also in a position to guarantee that their children will attend more expensive schools and join among the elite, while others are pushed toward the poverty line. Of course, the promise of technological innovation is an empty one. Claims that new technologies will provide more jobs are invalidated by the trend, obvious to all and global in scale, of the elimination of jobs by sophisticated machinery, such that where 10 or 100 people were needed to perform a task in the past, one technical expert now suffices to control largely automated processes. Promises of greater well-being are constantly contrasted by increasing inequalities. Thus, the income gap and poverty levels are tied to a neoliberal model of education, increasingly privatized and shaped by market imperatives. What passes for education in this economistic worldview obviously excludes training a population for civic participation, even as the political field itself becomes an object of manipulation by technical experts.

The economistic model of development also leads to expectations of ever-improving living standards that demand short-term fulfillment. As indicated, while promising eventual fulfillment in the form of commodities, in actuality the dynamics of the global economy cannot satisfy these demands. Thus, expressions of “streetocracy” arise in diverse regions of the world and among people at all levels of economic well-being. For instance, in Sweden, young people took to the streets and burned cars and smashed windows, despite the fact that they have the most secure economic life on the planet. Yet they feel pressed by widening income inequality and increasing expectations. In Brazil, more than 40 million joined the middle class in a country that has in fact reduced income inequality, and yet it was and continues to be rocked by demonstrations and riots. One triggering event was a 9-cent increase in bus fares, which blossomed into demonstrations against public corruption and government’s inefficiency. In Chile, a violent student protest took place against raising the cost of education, while in Turkey a mass demonstration targeted the government’s effort to raze a park in Istanbul. Curiously, the places in which these demonstrations occurred have one thing in common: They are examples of the relative success of economistic development.

The question thus arises: Why people take to the streets precisely when things are improving? The most plausible answer is that the experience of rapid change in prosperity and literacy and the rise of new expectations lead people to want to shape their own destiny. This means that the political policies lag behind the economic field. The result is a form of uneven development in which the market overwhelms the nascent structures of civil society even as the educational institutions that would nurture such populations are undermined.

This analysis of the interaction between neoliberal globalization and the scientific-technological worldview indicates the complex ways in which cultural values and modern technologies are being dispersed to diverse regions of the world. The dominant economic model driving these dynamics is clearly inadequate for resolving the problem of poverty and, indeed, inevitably guarantees that poverty will increase as a narrow stratum of elites further extends its control over the capitalist world economy. Yet it is possible that an alternative composition of global civilization, which not only absorbs but also recalibrates its Western elements, might be favorable to addressing the dramatically widening gap between the rich and the poor.

Globalization and Neoliberalism: The Perspective of Civilizations

Having noted that the West contains two civilizations, it will be beneficial to understand their compositions. The first task will be to delimit Europe and its extended version, the West, what constitutes the modern West with its two enlightenments—scientific and political—and the ways modernity has become “globalized” on the basis of its own understanding of reality. It will also be necessary to delimit another type of civilization—the Middle Eastern—and contemporary variants gaining recognition under the designation of “fundamentalism.” The latter include Hindu fundamentalism, at times covering the actions of Buddhists (in Myanmar against Muslims), and even autocratic tendencies in post-Soviet Eastern Europe. All such movements try to suppress development as an incursion of Western invasion, yet they cannot thrive without Western technology in areas such as communications and armaments.

Some historians identify the origins of the West with a time when a people first declared that the essence of the human being is to be fallible yet capable of living in accordance with their own established laws. This definition of humanity validated the refusal to kneel before a king of kings, lord of lords, and god of gods. Greek writers, such as Aeschylus, rejected the power of divinities over human affairs and, by extension, absolutist claims because such claims, backed by divinities, make humans into playthings of alien forces. The wisest woman in human history, Athena, demanded that while humans are fallible and temporally limited, they must decide how to live together in accordance with their own rules. If they make mistakes, they will be responsible for them and will have to correct them. Let there be divinities, but do not let them determine human affairs. Thus, in principle, Europe and the West at the outset are secular. The Greeks demanded universal understanding not based on divine dogma, but on *Paidea*, universal education. As so well articulated by Plato, faith is shifted from conflicting divinities to logical reason that can guide decisions about what can be valued as the good.

The ideal of *Paidea* suggests a revolutionary transformation: Humans themselves must run the affairs of society on the basis of an understanding that can only be enhanced and corrected in open debate. This ideal appears in the myth of

Prometheus, who rebels against Zeus's edict that forbids fire to humans. In this myth, divine intervention is the source of, not the answer to, human suffering. Prometheus, moved by this unnecessary suffering, steals fire from the gods and gives it to humanity. Prometheus does not ask anything for his deed: He does not wish to rule or to have others follow his way of life. There is no revenge motive or obedience to some divine command. He simply regards Zeus's law as unjust. What is interesting is that the Greeks accepted this rebellion against a God as a noble violation of an unjust law. Although formally Prometheus's action was "bad," his personal nobility and e redeems the action. Prometheus should be regarded as a practically rational and worldly "materialist." His aim was to help others, and this action changes the notion of justice.

Prometheus's tale is a founding myth of a civilization that validates the possibility of challenging any authority or law, to interrogate them sensibly, and to change them in light of an ideal of reason. In other words, there emerges a dialogical relationship between some presumed ultimate truth and the practical possibility of challenging and changing it. Given this assumption, the classical Greek gods could not escape democracy and philosophy. Every position, tradition, or even the thinking of the highest figures can be interrogated openly and reasonably, that is, they can be investigated, analyzed, and requested to justify themselves in full light of public and political debate or in a public court. If a given position or even a tradition cannot be justified by reason and as contributing to the well-being of humans, then they can be openly rejected. Thus, classical Greece comprised an arena of intellectual tension among multiple positions, all calling for an open public in whose context such a tension could be maintained, debated, and resolved. This open public space comprises a cultural symbol that tolerated and enhanced all creative flux: *permanence as maintenance and enhancement of flux*. This composition of awareness comprises the ground of every person's rationality and responsibility. It also establishes modern Western democratic understanding, although articulated by a different symbolic language. Modern revolutions have been premised on the notion that autocracies, monarchies and theocracies, the divine rights of kings, and all supposedly infallible rulers, in fact, rule arbitrarily. Their permanence had to be challenged—as did Prometheus—and replaced by institutions that allowed and promoted openness and change. These revolutions returned the West to its essence: Fallible beings cannot make universal pronouncements, and thus need a domain in which their pronouncements can be openly contested and adjudicated. This contestation is the essence of philosophy.

Following Athens and its subsequent result, the Enlightenment, more recent and contemporary Western intellectuals, condemned all dogmatic ideologies, all autocratic civilizations, including fascism and communism, as unfit for the Western mode of life and, indeed, unfit for any human life. Thus, communism and fascism must be seen as some sort of virus to be expunged as alien to Western spirit. From the very inception, the Occident is rational, even scientific, and, thus, reason is the base of Western civilization and historical life. Such an understanding is not restricted to the West because global society has extended the reach of philosophy as a universal project. In brief, *Europe, West, Abendland, or Occident* is a site where

universal requirements of the human are first articulated and maintained. From this point of view, the West is synonymous with philosophy and all of its requirements: universality, reason, direct and accessible experience, world, autonomy, rights, and duties and responsibility. Obviously, these concepts have become global in that they formed a challenge to the self-understanding of others, who have then either repudiated or incorporated this ideal into their own worldviews. Philosophy is no longer a local, but a universal idea.

Western universalism, not as an all-encompassing theory, but as an open site for political debate, adjudication, and transformation, comprises various dimensions without any having supremacy. In accordance with classical Western thinking, universality is premised on open public domain, requiring every citizen to participate in public affairs without introducing private wants, desires, and prejudices, for only such participation guarantees free discussion. In this sense, public decisions are autonomous, and autonomy means that every citizen is equal, regardless of social position: Equality results from autonomy. All rules are derived from rational dialogue among autonomous, responsible, and equal persons. It is also important to note that such rules might be partially mistaken, but they can only be corrected through the actions of citizens engaged as equals in dialogue. This state of affairs can be stated as an *unconditional human responsibility for decisions, their enactment, and a duty to correct mistakes*. These assumptions found a political society based on the participation of citizens without restriction in all public affairs.

The West also includes another civilizational component stemming from the Middle East, which is the heritage of Hebraic, Christian, and Muslim autocratic cultures. This civilization inspires other movements around the world that attempt to become confrontational to the West and each other. It is to be understood that we neither object nor approve of this composition; it is simply a symbolic design by which vast numbers of people live. This composition similarly can be understood from mythological depictions of rebellion against authority. In these cultures, the rebel is, initially, Lucifer. His rebellion is presented in various guises. First, being the first born, he cannot accept the thought that his father-creator has turned his love toward a younger sibling. Second, he cannot accept that he was created by another, and hence does not possess his own personality. He wants to be the author of his own being. Third, Lucifer's revolution is absolute: He wants to negate the order of his father and replace it by his own empire over which he would have sole rule. Yet this does not mean that he can take over his father's empire. In this tradition, such a replacement is impossible. Lucifer can only have a temporary empire to mock and at times disrupt his father's order. The image of the rebel, in short, is an expression of envy, hate, and destruction. Because the rule of the father is absolute and changeless, it is regarded as absolutely good, while the change and disruption introduced by the rebel Lucifer is evil. Symbolically speaking, he is a negative being, not interested in helping anyone, or alleviating the suffering of others. If he offers to fulfill some wishes, he does so to corrupt and thus to disrupt his father's order.

This type of civilization confronts those who want to replace authority with an absolute source of authority, which leads to a constant power struggle without concern for the population or its participation in public affairs. Indeed, oppression

without need for justification is a mode of existence in this civilization: Victory justifies the winner. Though there may be attenuations of this power struggle, they do not abolish the principle of arbitrariness inherent in all power-based civilizations. Above all, what enhances such an accumulation of power is the expansion of increasingly powerful technologies to all areas of social and political life.

Although the market is often seen as the antithesis of autocratic power-civilizations, this is not true within the contemporary world. The fall of the Soviet Union illustrates this point. With the fall of the Soviet Union and its autocracy, it appeared that the Western democracy won the day, and journalists roamed the former Soviet lands joyfully enquiring how citizens were receiving their newfound freedom in the form of capitalism, without questioning whether capitalism can be equated with either freedom or democracy. The assumption was clear: Capitalism is democracy. Meanwhile, academicians from preeminent institutions, such as Harvard, were extolling the need for a “shock treatment,” arguing that the collapsing Soviet Union could become a market society in one sweeping reform: Privatize and let the market set the tone and pace of change. Here, too, was the assumption that the market is identical with democracy. Concretely speaking, the proposed movement was from state capitalism to private capitalism, without challenging the basic premise that all social and political life is based on the market and its engine of technological progress. Yet did “shock treatment” introduce Western democracy or something more akin to autocracy? If we take for granted the rhetoric equating democracy with the market, then we must understand what the market is in principle.

The proposed shock treatment, which is essentially a policy being pursued globally, is an autocratic principle that takes the form of the “free market.” This principle is being globalized as the source of well-being for all who submit to its “invisible hand,” yet this hand is simply another variant of Mid-Eastern theology. The free market has the wisdom to know what we need, the ability to produce all that can satisfy our needs, the power to recreate the environment into material resources, and the power to punish those who transgress and to reward those who become obedient to its edicts. Today, this market theology is clothed in rhetoric about the rules of fair trade, market regulations, contracts, agreements, and enforcement of laws, but this rhetoric has little to do with the market or the form of capitalism, currently propagated as “neoliberalism.” Neoliberalism functions by one rule: Profit is everything and breaking any rule is “the rule,” as long as it leads to profit. Hence, there is no such thing as theft, as right to ownership of one’s own products, as destroying the competition, or even murder. All these are the ways that a pure capitalist society must operate. If one can take over a competitor’s production, or raw materials, by killing the competitor, then one is the winner in the market place. There is no need to refer to romantic notions such as “murder” because such concepts have no bearing within conditions of pure struggle for profit. Plato carefully articulated what a pure plutocracy would be in its essence, being careful not to mix in elements from another form of society. In the modern West, Hobbes likewise described the brutal reality of the state of nature where everyone is an enemy in the game for survival. Such a state of affairs is today extolled by pure market ideology. By contrast, if one refers to rights, responsibilities, and fair trade agreements, one leaves the realm of

pure competition and is no longer in genuine capitalism but in a political society that sets barriers to the invisible hand—a society that can require the capitalist to become rational.

Even the myth of “rational self interest” is a facade because one can easily calculate how to eliminate the competition and win “rationally.” Pure capitalism, then, is a form of autocracy because its basic proposition is a society ruled by a “presently” greater power. Of course, this power can be destroyed, but another, sanctified by the market, will take its place. The globalized world, to the extent that it is capitalistic, is autocratic and, thus, offers no solution to poverty or avoidance of rule by power. This is where the anti-authoritarian component of Western civilization must be cited in terms of its recognition of “universal” requirements, even if the character of such requirements is continually questioned.

Globalization, Democracy, and Technical Expertise

From what has been said so far, it is possible to raise a question concerning the viability of democracy in the context of economic globalization. Public discourse on this topic is often distorted through the framework of economic ideology. For example, many voices suggest that the “democratic model” is less efficient than, for example, the Chinese model. After all, within a couple of decades China has pulled itself out of poverty and will outproduce all other world economies. Once again, the starting point of discussion is the economy, and the pinnacle of development is the country that excels in productivity and technical “progress.” The question is whether democracy is at all necessary and what are the factors that “passively” make it irrelevant in practice, even if in theory it is still extolled.

The dangers facing democracy are of two kinds. The first type was already noted by Plato where democracy might yield tyranny; the second type, bureaucratic centralization, is more difficult to decipher simply because it does not seem to be a threat and appears to function within democratically guaranteed rights. At first, it spreads without concerning the citizen. There are two forms of centralization. The first type is concerned with national questions, such as national laws and international relationships. The second type deals with localized concerns of counties, regions, and provinces. In the first case, one can speak of a centralized government; if the concerns of the second type are also centralized, then one can speak of central administration. Obviously, in the modern age, no nation can survive without a central government. It is an entirely different matter with administrative centralism and its most dangerous form, the unification of centralized government with a centralized administration. In this case, the government obtains a direct means to exercise power without any diffusion through any public mediation. Not only does it concentrate power, but, because of its “remoteness” from local concerns, it also incessantly weakens the political sense of the citizen toward the dissolution of political will. This does not occur through exercise of a direct power; rather, the increasing

centralized administration removes the citizen from public participation and leads to an abdication of political will through habit of nonparticipation.

There appears a specific “logic” in this process. The citizen is isolated, individuated, in fact made to conceive of himself as completely independent, and in turn “summed” into a mass, a nondescript quantity to be accessed by generalized slogans, including “labor power,” or “the middle class.” Such a “powerless” administrative despotism is called bureaucracy, and, more appropriately, technocracy. Obviously, since the appearance of modern complexities, the state cannot function without a staff of officeholders. Such a staff is a precursor of bureaucracy. But they are not identical; bureaucracy is a form of independent rulership with its own devised norms and procedures. In its purest form, bureaucracy appeared in colonial rule toward the end of the nineteenth century, for example, the French *regime des descretés* in Algiers or the British *governorships* in India. In this form, administration replaces government, orders and rules replace laws, and an anonymous mechanism of an administrative office replaces open public decisions. In this sense, bureaucratic administration is a form of rule with a complete lack of freedom and justice. Obviously, this bureaucratic domination can be restricted by a judicial process that provides “formal” rules or “general” frameworks, while the concrete content is dealt with by a bureaucracy that implements and hence directly supervises the official policies. Here, the public process, dealing openly with laws and rules, is translated into a bureaucratic power with its own anonymity of procedures and interpretations of the legal framework. Hence, irrespective of the modern form of government, there appear various degrees of administrative despotism. This becomes more so in a technological age as bureaucracy is transformed into technocracy. This form of administration not only manages concrete situations, but due to constant technical innovations also dictates what is good for the public—after all, what does the public know about new chemical, biological, genetic, cyber, and other technologies? Only experts are capable of judging such questions and “improving” our lives.

Within the technological context, specifically with its accumulating speed of transformations, there appear two other dangers to democratic society: first, the ability, even of well-placed individuals to work anytime and anywhere through the use of technology, leading to a lessening of time for other concerns or, in many cases, moving to other places in the world for a better career, and, second, a danger that coincides with the very basis of democracy: abstract individualism. While of quite recent coinage, the term “individualism” is ambiguous. Positively, it designates the independence, the originality, and energy of the singular, while negatively, and in modern age more prevalently, it signifies selfishness, greed, and carelessness toward others and surroundings. Obviously, selfishness as a human phenomenon need not be negative; it becomes negative when it is associated with modern individualism. Selfishness means that the person relates everything to himself or herself and seeks to maintain advantages over others. Left purely to itself, selfishness does not recognize any other rationality. The selfish person regards their advantages as obvious and natural. Individualism is a reflective concern with oneself, leading toward isolation and distance from society and limited relationships with those having similar concerns in daily life: family, friends, business, and career.

Selfishness might in some sense be regarded as a phenomenon of ethics, while individualism relates to the issues of democracy and its public affairs, and thus is of greater concern than the more easily controllable selfishness. Individualism might leave intact the social virtues, the concerns for one's circle and its interests, but it slowly begins to neglect the political virtues, stemming from the participation in the public arena. This leads toward the neglect of common interests: each individual, irrespective of social descent, "makes their own way," shapes their own destiny, owing nothing to anyone, having no masters, and placing themselves in position of being their own master and of their survey. Some individuals become popular and noteworthy examples of having made their own way irrespective of odds and oppositions. In other words, they have shown that human beings can make and live life independent of others, can withdraw into "their own business," and leave others to their own devices. This withdrawal into economic individualism leaves the public arena unattended. The disciplined individuals become unconcerned citizens and are ruled by political events against which they have become helpless. The public interests are left to the all-pervasive state and its technocrats.

At the same time, the unbridled striving for success in the material sphere elicits fears of external threats as the war of all against all quickens, which further tends to reduce the political sphere to providing public "peace and security." There appears a willingness to give the public powers new rights, as long as the powers claim to be able to promote security and order. It is well known that despotism has always remained true to one law. It isolated citizens from one another by reducing them to their social private sphere, and claimed that there is no need for citizen participation in the public affairs. The public sphere is to be run by "leaders" and "experts." Those citizens who would want to organize and claim a right for public participation and public accountability are accused of being "disturbers of peace," and "disruptors of law and order." The peaceful and good citizens, those who "mind their own business" and stay out of the public domain, are warned against such disruptors and even organized to aid the "authorities" silencing them. Despotism guarantees security and protection to all citizens of "goodwill" and "law and order."

In the age of economically attenuated democracy, despotism assumes an extended form: the public arena, which is centralized not only governmentally but also administratively, tends to expand its power by guaranteeing the citizen's efforts to achieve success and happiness, thus soliciting the citizen to support administrative rule without participation. This dynamic gives rise to a stratum of technical elites that limit government to a formality. The *de facto* administration of all social affairs falls into the hands of the bureaucratic technocracy. The real government, which is not elected or appointed by the public and which is anonymous, makes concrete decisions for the public but without public participation. This administrative elite, furthermore, sets the agenda in all spheres of public life and shapes discourse in favor of private interests. A clear example of this process is education.

Increasingly, discourse about universal education focuses on the conditions for success in the private domain. The competitiveness of nations considered as economic actors is perpetually monitored in terms of student performance on tests—mainly in mathematics and sciences—the two technical fields that dominate the production of

“talents” for global progress. As such performances are significant, they neglect the public domain insofar as the latter has to deal with justice, legal rulings, ideological critique and critical evaluation of cultural values, questions of equality, freedom and responsibility of representatives to the public and not to private interests, and allocation of public funds for public and not private needs. Without this latter domain, which encompasses the qualitative and human understanding of the world, technical achievements and expertise have no context in the human world. Technical elites have no loyalty to any community. As experts in their specific technical fields, they can function anywhere and anytime, without commitment to any social system—after all, they work for money and their expertise is bought by the highest bidder. British academicians in technical fields are more than pleased to work in China for lucrative fees. What this means is that pure technical (scientific/mathematical) training is not equipped to produce citizens of a given country, committed to public debate and oriented by critical challenges to authority. Indeed, their ontology of atomistic materialism and metaphysics of quantification do not include any critical understanding of their inventions as value orientations. Valuations are oriented by the “needs of the market” or the reigning government ideology. Such experts assume not only a technical model of the world, but have the ability to change material processes (including humans) within the domains of their expertise in accordance with causal principles. Setting up conditions to obtain projected results is an expression of instrumental rationality. Experts manipulate social conditions to obtain desired results. This form of intervention treats the social world as a field of abstract variables that can be freely manipulated through the application of technical expertise.

Because of dependence on technique, neoliberal globalization requires the production of experts and demands the reduction of education to technical training “for jobs” and the competition for rewards in the global market. Institutions of higher learning in technically advanced regions thus enter into competition for clients, that is, “students” from around the world who in exchange for lucrative fees are tooled and certified to enter the technical elite. Meanwhile, the parents of local children and the young students themselves limit their interests to job training rather than such irrelevant pursuits as discussions of justice, freedom, equality, understanding other cultures, and challenging their limitations and prejudices. In brief, they are systematically turned away from public affairs except in cases where their private interests are concerned.

The adjoining rhetoric in favor of private interests and technical training is becoming louder and more attractive in the form of calls to privatize public education and let markets decide—the invisible autocratic hand—what is relevant for securing a job. It is no accident that the technocrats of Silicon Valley and other high-tech centers are spending large sums promoting the privatization of education or, at least, calling for public education to adapt teachers and students to their version of the “inevitable” future. This sort of education simply means that while democracy is constantly mentioned, there is no public either interested in or capable of maintaining democratic institutions.

The experts produced by this type of neoliberal education shape the character of globalization not just through the application of their skills. As experts lose their

sense of belonging to a society, community, culture, and a lifeworld, they become nomadic. Members of specific technical fields seek better conditions to apply their skills, enter the global market for skilled labor, and find positions away from their native areas. They move from place to place momentarily settle in one or another nation among one or another ethnic groups, while close ties like them only to their community of technical peers. In this sense, they live without national, cultural, or even political allegiances. Members of these global nomadic communities comprise a contemporary elite, living among yet apart from general populations. Being part of the global elite, they tend to promote technical programs at pedagogical institutions, thus creating an increasing gap between the elites and the populations. The migration of technical elites to “better” institutions or research facilities, to better paying positions, depletes nations of the best means of expanding local economies. For example, among the former Soviet Union members, the liberated Baltic States have joined the European Union (EU). The EU’s open door policy immediately began to deplete such states of the best talents. In Lithuania alone, out of a 3.7 million population, 7 lakhs lost to immigration. Not all these people are technical experts, but the best have become global nomads with high positions in every part of the world. They have no attachment to any place because their training did not require an understanding of the public domain, the value issues involved in preserving autonomy, equality, and responsibility to local populations or to their native lands. Indeed, their technical a priori must treat populations everywhere as quantitative sources of labor power, as a homogenous material layer to be used as a variable in the application of technique.

Critique of Globalization and the “Founding” of Social Order

In contrast to anemic conceptions of order and autonomy imposed by global economic rationality, the principles of human rights, wherein free and equal persons are involved in the final arbitration, rest on specific rationale. The rationale demands careful scrutiny of the founding of a political community wherein human rights are located. The term “founding” does not necessarily imply some historical set of conditions, some specific interests, or some ultimate reality. Rather, this idea refers to a necessary institution on which other political institutions can be built. Thus, this is a founding and not a historical relationship. Most human relationships rest on a variety of similar and conflicting interests, whose resolution too often depends on power. Although such interests may become a part of such an institution, there is a difference between interests and the creation of an institution that has been called since the birth of Western civilization, the “public domain.” In other words, the founding and the existence of such a domain are tied inextricably together. While there are diverse purposes that depend on interests and require appropriate means, the public domain is its own means and purpose, and requires each citizen for its maintenance. The rationale for human relationships in a public domain is this very relationship, which is identical to its own purpose.

The activity of founding a public domain as its own purpose is not an activity of the past, completed once and for all by the so-called founders. This activity must be responsibly and constantly maintained by every citizen. One cannot speak of the public domain as if it were some “system” that perpetuates itself without individual participation or the periodic participation of voters. The public domain, as the first institution of a democratic community, is a perpetual process of self-founding, and not a structure either imposed on a community or derived from some abstract needs and interests. In a public domain, the equality and autonomy of humans are maintained for their own sake. This means that the source of human equality and autonomy is coextensive with and sustained only in a public domain. In principle, any other form of community may be based on heterogeneous interests and purposes, resulting in the domination of one social group by another, but such a situation would disallow the equality and autonomy of every individual.

The very notion that humans act socially on the basis of their own interests leads to a structure of society whereby either individual or group interests are pitted against the interests of others, thus leading to the exercise of power, inequality, and the abolition of autonomy. Yet what is meant by autonomy and equality needs to be delimited. The delimitation must exclude the old and still-continuous philosophical naturalistic debate over whether humans are free or determined by causes. Till date, no resolution has been offered. Thus, from what has been said above, it is possible to suggest that the debate is misplaced, since a more primordial rationale is assumed that already resolved the naturalistic issue by articulating the principles of freedom and equality. Such principles imply the absence of “causes” in human affairs, and above all the presence of a public domain where every person is equal in the discussion of all questions, theories, and concerns that affect the common issues—in brief, the presence of a domain called philosophy.

This means that every proposed theory has to be contested, analyzed, accepted, or rejected on the grounds that humans are fallible. Indeed, the philosophical public domain is a requirement for correcting our mistakes and maintaining our responsibility for what we say and do. But what does this mean with respect to equality and autonomy? The very fallibility of persons prevents a claim that we know for certain who we are, and hence requires our being open. This line of thought leads to the modern philosophical Western thinking that there is no specific human nature to serve as a source of human equality. Thus, equality results from a specific concept of freedom, such as autonomy, which is not an inherent human nature but is constituted in the establishment and maintenance of the public-philosophical domain of political encounters. The freedom of autonomy is analogous to logic wherein the rules that are established logically and rationally do not result from imperatives but from respect for rational and free debate. Accordingly, equality of all persons stems from autonomy in the public arena.

In this sense, equality is also publically established and maintained. If rules, logics, and rational discourses are not derivable from natural states of affairs, then there are no inherent criteria for elevating one possible proposal for rules over another. In this sense, all proposals are equal. Autonomous freedom, as rational in the above sense, leads to the equality of persons who are in a position to posit rules by which

they will govern their lives and deal with the environment. Each individual is an equal “law giver.” If there are to be common rules, they will not be discovered but posited and decided on in a public, that is, philosophical debate. The establishment of rules based on autonomy also means that such rules are free and individuals are duty bound and responsible for living under such rules. Only autonomously established rules demand a person to be responsible for his adherence to them. If rules were derived from any other source, such as nature of whatever description, then one would be compelled by natural forces and could not be held responsible. This is counter to a traditional conception of freedom: not the freedom of autonomy but a freedom of choice. While at one level this freedom presupposes autonomy as a foundation for constituting rules, at another level the choice of rules is determined by interests and power. This means that one may have a choice to steal money or food in face of hunger, but one’s choice is subtended by a natural compulsion, and in this sense such a person could not be held responsible. This is the “freedom” of “free enterprise” where one can invest “freely” in order to satisfy one’s “natural greed.” Yet at this moment, all responsibility vanishes. The latter requires an autonomous freedom wherein the very rules, stemming from such autonomy, are our duty to maintain. But such an autonomy and its resultant equality of persons is founded by, and is coextensive with, the public domain where everyone is equal and free to establish rules of common action.

Of course, it is implied that political community members are equally duty bound to participate in all public affairs even at the expense of their private or social agendas. The latter do not require a continuous founding, while the public domain that comprises the openness where autonomy is maintained must be constantly affirmed and maintained. It does not exist naturalistically but is a phenomenon that is given only to the extent that the citizens constantly maintain it. In this sense, there cannot be “unpolitical” citizens who leave care of the public to officials, thinking that democracy was established by the founding fathers and it is running without participating citizens. Just as the founders, every citizen is also a founder, and if he leaves the public affairs to others, he, in principle, gives up on democracy and reduces himself to a monad within the domain of power, living in the struggle for position and survival.

In contrast, universal human rights are coextensive with autonomy, responsibility, equality, and an open public-philosophical domain open and accessible to all. These elements of the public are also coextensive with knowledge. Ignorant persons cannot make judgments in public dialogue without the risk of being misled by rhetorical ploys and interest manipulations. Education is a process that leads from authority to autonomy; the rational and free adjudication of issues is based on knowledge. One must move through the authority of those who know a subject matter and are capable of articulating its intricacies, whether in sciences, literatures, social affairs, value articulations, and even public institutions, but citizens must master issues and complexities of different fields of knowledge at least to the extent of becoming able to make rational and thus autonomous decisions. Without such a process, the person cannot be responsible for their decisions. Accordingly, education is another institution that is coextensive with the public domain of dialogue

and autonomy, equality, and responsibility. This is specifically important in an age where the public domain and universal rights to autonomy and equality are being assaulted by technocracy and the reduction of all life functions to cause and effect (to irresponsibility).

This means that the narrowing of education to technical training in specific disciplines is not adequate for political society. Disciplines in humanities, disclosing the principles of cultural backgrounds, of the meaning and value of sciences, human relationships, and responsibilities in the public domain, the understanding of the ideas that allow citizens to be parts of a civil community, to be creative and critical challengers to unquestioned dogmas, and even to be able to interrogate their own unwarranted prejudices is equivalent to the continuous founding of the public and philosophical domain and correlatively, of autonomy, responsibility, and equality. Indeed, without education the individual could not discover his/her abilities and capacity to contribute to the community. This type of education is what scares all autocracies, including those who seek to secure the “invisible hand” of the market from critique.

What is missed in the constant chase for technical novelty are not only valuations but also the fact that the empirically visible implements are embodiments of humanly constituted meaning systems. After all, when one deals with a tractor or a computer, one finds a system of perceptual (and not technical) meanings, whether a meaning of a “wheel” or “lever,” or a “program,” “message,” “invitation,” etc. We must, therefore, learn not to look at the constantly proliferating technologies, but their values, purposes, and what they “carry” in meaning. These domains require education at a qualitative level, judgments about the meaning implications of every technical novelty. In brief, every technical implement, no matter how sophisticated, belongs to a lifeworld of meaningful interconnections and their horizons of possible variations and their selectivity—equally based on valuation. Education takes place in a lifeworld composed of meaningful interconnections. This suggests that every form of technical training must be extended into lifeworld education. This renovation of education on a truly liberal ideal is the basis for sustaining the public domain where all technological innovations, all autocratic tendencies, and elites who claim superior expertise must be reasonably adjudicated by educated public.

Postscript

The world is being reconstructed on an autocratic model of economic development. Regardless of its limitations, this economic form of globalization is planting extensive roots throughout human societies, sometimes because of their own autocratic traditions. Consequently, many people say “so what” as technical and economic autocrats reign from elite positions. As long as such elites promise good jobs in exchange for being responsible citizens who tool themselves to compete on the market, keep their nose out of public affairs, and allow elites to decide all important issues, an autocratic form of social order extends itself across the planet.

After all, with hundreds of television stations for entertainment, plenty of food and cheap trinkets, and kids in school—what does it matter if many fail to make it on their own?

Yet due to the dynamics described above, the day will come when these distant elites will deem that one is also irrelevant and the option to oppose the masters will be foreclosed. The principle is simple: When citizens fail to appear in public domain and raise questions concerning decisions made by technocrats or governments with only nominal consent of the governed, there remains no right or ability to complain. After all, having allowed others to be violated, elites in principle are invited to impose their autocratic decisions on all. Despite criticism of the West from within and without, in the face of economism it offers a tradition of critique in which failures and their correction are carried out by a founding edict of responsibility and anti-authoritarianism.

The market-based notion that everyone is responsible only for himself is one such grand mistake that closes off the possibility of understanding and responsive social change. No one, then, could borrow scientific, philosophical, and legal ideas from others. This process of borrowing implies that we recognize commonalities of situation and need, accept ideas from others, and regard those who thought of them as contributing to our own efforts toward responsibility. The neoliberal ideal of “responsibility only for myself” is precisely the form of abstract individualism that destroys freedom because that type of individual refuses to participate with others in the public domain where autonomy and equality are maintained. To be clear, if, as humans, we are free, equal, and responsible, then we give up our humanity when we reduce ourselves to individuals prowling the globalized world to ensure the “survival of the fittest.”

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Chapter 9

Economics, the Network Society, and the Ontology of Violence

Steven L. Arxer

The notion of a network society was popularized in the 1980s with the rise of novel information and computer technologies (Castells 2004). According to Castells (2004, p. 3), a network society is one “whose social structure is made of networks powered by microelectronics-based information and communication technologies.” The explosive growth of the Internet, mobile devices, and microprocessors over the past several decades has helped to make the term “network” commonplace. In addition to media systems, workplaces and even familial relations are now commonly described as having the character of networks. This imagery is propelled further by economic, political, and migratory flows within a more globalized world. This network imagery suggests that institutions, practices, and relationships are structured on a new social model (Barney 2004, p. 27), and various monikers, such as lattice, matrix, system, and web, have been used to describe this emerging social formation. All of these metaphors intend to highlight new social conditions of decentralization, flexibility, and interconnectivity that characterize twenty-first-century society. Networks, in particular, are thought to offer an alternative to traditional, “centered” models of social order. Yet, in ways that are increasingly evident, this network imagery actually justifies the violence of global market relations. Despite its popularity and conceptual development, less attention has been paid to unraveling the ontology of the network society. In particular, basic assumptions about the nature of individuals, social organization, economies, and ethics are not necessarily forthcoming in conceptual descriptions of the network society. Investigating the ontological assumptions implied by network imagery is important because such analyses alert us to remaining challenges on the path to an open society.

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The Network Society and Global Capitalism

As Barney (2004, p. 26) points out, networks are typically described as being composed up of nodes, ties, and flows. A node represents a specific point linked to at least one other node through a tie. Nodes, in this framework, are individuals, organizations, and computers that make ties through regular contacts, such as through speech, contracts, and other activities. In the contemporary world, the ties that connect nodes are heavily mediated by technologies that facilitate interaction. What passes through ties—support, information, emotions, money—are “flows” of the network.

A prevailing formulation of the network society includes the reconfiguration of the domains of “production, power and experience, which construct a culture of virtuality in the global flows that transcend time and space” (Castells 1998, p. 370). The idea here is that a network society transcends traditional boundaries and requirements that have defined past human relations and experience. Castells (1998) elaborates several ways in which a network society is a distinctive form of social organization. One is that the economic basis of society is informational as opposed to simply industrial. Economies now reflect the importance of information and knowledge in managing and controlling not only the production process but also the operation of global markets. Accordingly, information technology takes on particular significance within network arrangements, since new technologies impact the capacity and speed of storage, processing, and communication of information. In this regard, a network society has also been described as heralding in the “Information Age” (Porat 1977).

A second attribute of network society is its global character. Today’s economic, political, and social spheres transcend traditional national boundaries. Flows of capital and people, for example, extend beyond the static territories of nation-states. The conventional boundaries between “nodes” (e.g., individuals, corporations, global regions) are assumed to be opened, as they are linked through information and telecommunication technologies. Economies, therefore, are no longer primarily organized along national lines. Workers, corporations, and capital have production and consumer processes that crisscross geographical and political boundaries. In this key sense, elements of a network can be considered to be “decentered.”

In addition to the specific “deterritorialization” of economic processes brought on by innovative technologies, in a network society, human experience is displaced. As Castells (1998, p. 1) notes, the experience of time and space are reconfigured to where people’s everyday lives occur in “timeless time” and the “space of flows.” Technology artificially alters persons’ understanding and relation to time and space. The global standardization of time measurement, innovations in transcontinental transportation systems, and communication technologies have allowed individuals to scale up their sense of place and time. Rather than being regulated by the local constraints of nature and community (neighborhood, city, and nation), persons can locate themselves globally in an instant. Computerized networks allow for the coordination of communication across vast distances and at various points in time.

The territorial space someone physically inhabits is less important than the space of flows (e.g., e-mail communication, financial transfers, cloud computing) where their economic and social activities exist. The speed and automation of communication minimizes the relevance of localizing activities. Yet, Castells (1998) highlights a fundamental tension in a network society resulting from this deterritorialization: While a network society dislodges when and where economic, political, and social behavior happens, persons still organize human experience through a perceived sense of boundedness and local context for meaning-making. This is the difference Castells (1996) describes between “the net and the self.”

Power in a network society is a function of access to networks and control of flows (Barney 2004, p. 30). To the extent that critical economic, political, and social activities occur as decentered flows, as opposed to being centered on the traditional territories or citizens of nation states, access to these interactions is the basis for influencing the distribution of power, either by including or excluding elements within a network’s field of elements or by modifying the conditions of their interactions. According to Castells (1996, p. 171), “networks also act as gatekeepers. Inside the networks, new possibilities are relentlessly created—outside the networks, survival is increasingly difficult.” Accessing the network—in effect decentering oneself—is the way in which individuals, communities, cities, and nations are either empowered or disenfranchised. Because the network’s flows are global in scale and facilitated by technology, the phrase “knowledge is power” holds true: Only with access to and mastery of computer technologies are people able to gain some control over their fate.

An additional aspect of the network society is its “flexibility.” Social order based on a network, according to Castells (2004, p. 5), has “adaptability and self-reconfiguring capacity.” While power relations are still present, as long as access to network is provided, persons and societies will succeed because of the pliancy and receptivity of the social configuration. In short, participation and equity emerges naturally as networks expand to include more elements. As opposed to bureaucratically and vertically structured organizations, networks are founded on distributed configurations that allow multidirectional flows of communication and “relative independence of the power centers” (Castells 2004, p. 5).

Together, these themes comprise the “worldview” of late capitalist society. As Max Weber (1958) explained, a worldview is the ethos or spirit of an age that unites human experience into a conceptual whole and gives human action meaning and direction. Contemporary network imagery has gained the status of a worldview by suggesting that social order is growing increasingly decentered and that this process is closely, even inevitably, associated with increased freedom. Similar to Hayek’s (1944, p. 160) notion of a “spontaneous order,” the network metaphor suggests that people gain freedom to succeed when they are disentangled from traditional inflexible social structures and integrated into the flows of global capitalism. As a narrative, this rendition of the networked life can be quite persuasive as it reconciles the opposing desires for autonomy and the loss of self through the agency of global capitalism. The network society thus has the status of a myth that justifies human existence and provides human beings a path to personal and social fulfillment. Yet

in spite of this compelling narrative of human liberation, the network society does not offer a qualitatively new basis for conceptualizing social order. Instead, this imagery continues to rely on conventional assumptions that pose well-known impediments to an open society.

The Centered Ontology of the Network Society

Throughout the Western tradition, social order has been described in either realistic or nominalist terms. Realists define social order as emerging from a source that is separate from individuals. Nominalists, on the other hand, argue that only individuals are real and order originates as persons interact on the basis of their own motives. This second view of social life can be seen in the social philosophy of Herbert Spencer and his “tooth and claw” morality. Here, persons are portrayed as atoms whose behavior is grounded by personal interest without responsibilities toward each other. This imagery is also consistent with Adam Smith’s proposal that an “invisible hand” guarantees that order will emerge from individual greed. Although different in some respects, both perspectives are based on what Niklas Luhmann (1982) identifies as a “centered” image of social order.

According to Murphy (1989), a centered society is tied to a dualistic understanding of knowledge and its application to social life. As was characteristic in the early Greek philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, truth is differentiated from human exigencies and error. For Plato, this divide was the difference between the realm of forms and *doxa* (opinion). Aristotle, of course, separated appearances from essence. To the extent that truth is divorced from human exigencies, it is perceived to be eternal and universal. As Adorno (1983) notes, this view of knowledge is ahistorical and disconnected from human activity. By gaining access to some transcendent level of reality, reason is able to curb the misdirection of bias and opinion.

Applying this view of knowledge to the conceptualization of social order has specific consequences, as a reliable foundation for social life is severed from the capriciousness of human action. Within sociology, Emile Durkheim expresses this viewpoint when he argued that each society is based on a collective consciousness that is distinct from the profane conceptions of individual human beings. Indeed, as Durkheim proclaimed, only a reality *sui generis* is capable of integrating human beings and preventing disorder. Society is regulated by a source apart from human idiosyncrasies. In a manner that parallels dualistic renditions of truth, social order is safeguarded when seen as emanating from an ahistorical source. This centered image of social order proposes that order emanates from some otherworldly, untainted core of social reality, as opposed to emerging directly from human creativity. Despite their differences, nominalism and realism adopt this basic approach to conceptualizing social order.

The discourse of a network society resembles this traditional ontological gambit by using dualism as a basis for social integration. Similar to the tradition of modern sociologist Talcott Parsons, network imagery describes society as a system with

parts (i.e., nodes, ties, and flow) that are structurally connected. Nodal status represents the basic structure of society. Barney (2004, p. 30) confirms that “access to significant networks (i.e., status as a node) is a minimum condition of social, economic, and political membership in the network society.” To borrow from Parsons (1951, pp. 35–45), nodal units are then connected according to “reciprocal expectations.” This means that the attributes of one node are understood to correlate with the attributes of other nodes. For example, the roles of management and staff are both interdependent and independent of concrete inhabitants. Operating within the parameters dictated by a nodal role allows individuals to be attuned to each other’s expectations. In this way, ties between nodes take on traditional structural properties, in that nodes are inherently complementary. Continuing this line of thought, flows emerge as properties of structurally linked nodes. Management, for instance, is thought to possess the attribute of being able to conceptualize larger organizational needs, while staff pursue more specialized tasks. Their interdependence produces communication and directives that flow from management down to the staff.

A dualistic rendition of order follows from the network metaphor because the structure of nodes, ties, and flows has the status of analytical a priori. Consistent with Parsonian systems theory, the social bond is engendered from a so-called “ultimate reality” that exists beyond the particularities of human action. In this case, universally recognized attributes represent the locus of nodal identity, allowing interlocking and communication in between. It is important to note how a subtle asymmetry emerges between human agents and a set of naturalized behavioral roles. To the extent that persons are confronted by structural imperatives, this network ontology carries the patina of universality. This description of social order mirrors Aristotle’s organismic analogy, in that society is composed of interrelated parts that function as elements of the larger whole. Society thereby gains its own *telos*, beyond human volition.

Network Ontology and Market Logic

Another relevant issue is how the structure of nodes and their interrelationships become defined within the network perspective. During the 1960s, Parsons began to elaborate on his system theory and adopted a more cybernetic approach. This was to account for the import of information technology. Consistent with the ideas of Norbert Wiener, Parsons contended that both social and natural systems are based on information and energy. According to Parsons, systems supply information, while individuals give energy necessary to operate the system. The key point here is that persons have no direction until on is given by their social roles. In the context of a network society, global capitalism defines the character of nodes in terms of attributes that have marketplace relevance. Specifically, “the market” is thought to provide the type of information that determines which nodal points are needed and how they will behave in the network. Indeed, as Barney (2004, p. 31) notes, “people deemed non-valuable and irrelevant (i.e., unfit for labour, consumption or

legitimation) from the perspective of global capital” are denied nodal status and access to critical networks. When framed in terms of an autonomous market logic, the network’s celebrated openness disappears. Network language and imagery, therefore, merely serves as a stand-in that justifies the operations of neoliberal global capitalism.

It is important at this juncture to discuss how the market is thought to provide such an unimpeachable source of information that it can function as the basis of social order. In line with the philosophy of Adam Smith, reason in the marketplace is framed as those ideas that lead traders and consumers to optimize profits. For instance, traders stay alert to market signals and respond as quickly as possible through buying or selling tactics. This is where the network society and market are united. Computer technology is a hallmark feature of a network society, and market signals are presumed to be more clearly communicated with scientific-technocratic methods. With the help of computerized analytics and modeling, decision-making is made more concrete, accurate, and reliable (Arxer et al. 2011, p. 53). As Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986, pp. 101–121) point out, formalizing and quantifying information through computer technology clarifies behavioral trajectories. Individuals or organizations, for instance, can chart their actions in the form of “if/then” statements that use input data to generate probability outcomes. In this broad sense, access to information is thought to make markets more efficient, as an unequivocal basis for optimal decision-making becomes (technically) available to all social actors.

As Parsons intended, network imagery differentiates objective from subjective rationality. While Parsons saw social roles as containing legitimate reason in the form of behavioral expectations, the marketplace plays the same role in contemporary network imagery by instilling directives for network nodes in the form of computerized information. To function efficiently, nodal points must competently process information. Thus, mastery of computer technologies and their powerful analytic software is touted as the basis for securing control over most areas of social life. Learning to use digital technologies is assumed to improve one’s abilities and guarantee successful communication in the marketplace. Guided by market imperatives, nodes must continually upgrade their skills and technologies to succeed within their networks (family, school, and work). In this way, the marketplace prescribes the ideal attributes of nodes in the form of technical competencies that optimizes the efficiency of nodes in their ambient networks. Within a universalized market context, this efficiency results in profitability, which in turn is the only basis for the continued existence of the node within the network.

As a result of these assumptions, network society becomes reified and gains the status of absolute reality (Schackle 1972, pp. 106–107). This ontological transformation takes place on two levels. First, market rationality is presumed to be a priori valid. The logic of profitability and self-interest are considered natural states of human and environmental nature. Thus, reason is reduced to responses made by nodal points to market stimuli. Second, the inter-activity of nodes (e.g., individual workers or corporate entities) is viewed as objective and structurally sound so long as it is guided by computer technologies that formalize and mechanize the processing of information. With the exponential growth of the Internet and the interconnectivity

of data sites in the form of cloud computing, nodes can input larger amounts of data to increase the reliability and efficiency of decision-making. Consistent with traditional social ontologies, society is again considered to be ahistorical, as the norms of market rationality and technology coalesce to produce a new but equally reified conception of order.

The Dissolution of the Social Bond

Market imagery also has significant implications for how the social bond and community solidarity are envisioned. This point may at first appear counterintuitive, given the regular emphasis on interconnectivity of a network society. However, interconnection does not require the type of social responsibility expected of community members. In particular, social relationships take on dehumanizing, superficial, and exploitive characteristics within network discourse.

According to Habermans (1975, p. 121), one problem of a centered ontology is that social integration occurs *indirectly*. In other words, an abstract source is used to regulate social life because human subjectivity is considered unreliable for this task. Persons cannot directly encounter each other to establish order; rather, some unbiased principle must mediate interaction to foster stability and continuity. Within neoliberal discourse, market rationality serves as the mechanism that links individual behavior within a collective whole. As the human element is marginalized as the basis of order, self-denial becomes a precondition to social organization. Reminiscent of Durkheim (1974, p. 37), a society conceived unilaterally as a market maintains the “condition that society be always considered as being qualitatively different from the individuals that compose it.” Once human agency is marginalized in this manner, a privileged ontological status is granted to the network.

Consequently, a characteristic feature of the network society is that social relationships are superficial. A central feature that unifies both network and market symbolism is an extreme form of atomism. According to Ramsay (1997, pp. 6–10), market liberalism maintains that individuals are fundamentally discrete units that are brought together as they become aware of overlapping interests in the marketplace. Social life is primarily an individualistic undertaking wherein persons pursue their own aim in the marketplace. Barney (2004) similarly highlights that a key definition of a network society is that nodes are discrete points that are connected through imposed ties (e.g., exchanges of information such as electronic communications or contracts). No more fundamental dimension links persons (nodes) together because relationships between nodes are primarily structural. The attributes of nodes signal their relevance and relational efficacy within a network society.

Because nodal points exist only as structurally linked atoms that operate appropriately within a market environment, the possibility of the common good is obscured and social relationships easily become exploitive. The only possible conception of the common good is established not through a concerted effort toward social security but by extending the market to include others, that is, through as-

simulation. For example, people increase their value as human capital by “retooling” to improve their technical competencies and gain entry to or remain competitive in the marketplace, while new communication technologies (e.g., online training, job websites, and software packages) are adopted as the basis to acquire and deploy these critical skills. As is characteristic in so many contemporary information technology products, consumers are sold on the idea that they will receive “personalized” attention with these services in order to promote their success, but in fact the ethic of care that defines real community is completely jettisoned by the prevailing market rationality.

On the contrary, universal distrust is the norm established by the market order. As Castells (1996, p. 171) notes, “networks also act as gatekeepers. Inside networks, new possibilities are relentlessly created—outside the networks, survival is increasingly difficult.” To the extent that a network society has limited nodal positions and that such positions exist in a state of continuous competition, persons must view others as threats to their personal gain and even their survival. Continued success in a competitive environment implies that people must continuously pursue their advantage over others. Simply put, in a profit-oriented system, personal gains are balanced by others’ losses, and network members must view deep social bonds as liabilities. Being significantly tied to a community of others, for example, reduces competitiveness, because the range of legitimate market moves is limited. Community bonds are based on concern and care for members, thus making it difficult to adhere to market principles that demand organizational downsizing, relocation, or other changes needed to secure capital and improve efficiency. Yet, the “flexibility” touted by network discourse encourages people to conform social relations to market imperatives. The common good is marginalized as individuals quickly find themselves in a zero-sum game of competition.

No doubt this is a key reason why social security infrastructure is not part of a market-driven society. Because market signals are essential for determining when and how to behave in a competitive system, it is assumed that government intervention in the marketplace is counterproductive. The idea is that state policies impact key features of the economy (e.g., prices, wages, etc.) and their effects may be difficult to chart because political climates change. In short, economic behavior will be more volatile as government policies are shaped by elections, rather than the discipline imposed by the market’s cost–benefit logic. State regulation of the economy creates economic risk by not following the objective principles that guide markets, such as “calculation, preferences, costs, profits, prices, and utility” (Hernstein Smith 1988, p. 127). As a whole, these assumptions tend to normalize and naturalize the violence associated with the operation of capitalist markets.

Current discussions about how to manage the growing aging population and the financial viability of social security provide a key example of the operation of market-based discourse. Taylor and Bengtson (2001, p. 120) argue that scientists have employed ideas of productive aging and successful aging as the most desirable outcomes of the aging process. Moody (2001, p. 181) points out that “productive aging anchors generativity as the supreme value throughout all of life. The locus of discourse for productive aging is always on the economy—both the monetized

exchange of goods and services and the non-monetized realm of interpersonal dependency.” In this case, the emphasis is always on producing and achieving, as a well-adjusted older person is one that takes on a larger number of productive roles and age-appropriate replacement activities. The more active the older person, the greater will be his or her level of life satisfaction, positive self-concept, and adjustment. Persons are encouraged to extend the market notion of productivity deep into older age in the absence of a social security while ethical questions relating to building a good society are marginalized by the social imagery of a network society. Social bonds are conceptualized as occurring after persons acquire relevant skill that integrate them into the capitalist order and open access to resources, while responsibility and obligation for the commonweal disappear. Because the maintenance of order is not described in terms of social responsibility, the common good is put in jeopardy. Consequently, the network society fails to provide a basis for protecting individuals from violence.

The Symbolic Violence of the Network

One source of global violence is the dehumanization and inferiorization produced by sign systems. This mode of inferiorization is accomplished through symbolic, instead of physical, control. In short, violence is achieved and propelled through language. Language, in this case, should be understood broadly to include speech, images, and logic. However, repression advanced through symbolic means is often not considered to be violent. Indeed, individuals may volunteer to make self-adjustments that are suggested by the unquestioned language of economic and social networks. People reinterpret their experiences and reframe their social commitments in light of the discourses of markets and networks. People, for instance, used to socialize; now they “network” as a way to increase their personal capital or tend their “brand.”

This form of repression is not considered to be violent because physical coercion is not involved. Instead of being physically forced to behave in one way or another, persons become enamored by particular symbols, which can take the form of norms, roles, personal and social traits, and other prescriptions that have the stamp of normalcy and rationality (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p. 168). These traits become intensely pursued because they are thought to reflect standards that any reasonable person should follow. Given their exalted status, these characteristics are considered worthy of respect and admiration. According to Bourdieu (1990, pp. 84–85), “symbolic violence ... is violence exercised ... in formal terms.” In this context, “formal” means that the “force of the universal” and is intimately tied to the “force of the official.” The consequence of this linkage is that through the invocation of universals, an allegedly neutral method exists to both *justify* these esteemed characteristics (“the force of the universal”) and *enforce* them (“the force of the official”). Violence is apparently neutralized because “dominant signifiers,” to use Guattari’s (1984, p. 168) words, are employed to subvert critique and alternative

ways of thinking, speaking, and acting. The end result of this process is that experiences that do not coincide with these ideals are discredited.

Symbolic violence can be achieved easily through the deployment of social imagery. Take again the example of the aging population. Proponents of productive and successful aging extend the roles of middle age, such as work and leisure, to old age, while new resources available as computer technologies are proffered in an effort to facilitate older persons' ability to access health and other information that promote activity. The traditional notion of roles is kept intact. The only difference is the type of roles that are recognized as appropriate for differing age groups. In terms of productive and successful aging, earlier roles are pushed further down the timeline to encompass older persons. The elderly, in this case, attain meaning from roles that mirror those of middle-age. In this regard, productive and successful aging is thought to be more holistic, because old age is not linked automatically to frailty and social passivity. Intricately tied to this view of time is hegemonic imagery pertaining to the body, development, and success. For example, older persons may begin to engage in self-denial as they aspire to standards that are considered normal for their age cohort. Rather than pursuing a variety of paths toward social integration, discussions of aging come to revolve mostly around self adjustments in line with roles that provide individuals access to network structures (Foucault 1973). According to Bourdieu (1990, p. 20), this role-based imagery is reductionistic because it transforms "the agent (i.e., the individual) into a mere 'bearer' of the structure."

What is most problematic about this rendition of symbolic violence is that behavioral requisites are conceptualized as universal because they are anchored by an autonomous market logic. In other words, persons do not control behavioral norms. Individuals attain meaning and orientation in the network society as they become informed by computerized information that reveals the formalized language of the market. Engaging the market is not simply one among many possible organizational styles, but rather the most universally appropriate option. When framed within a dualistic social ontology, the ideal of increased participation in society is transmuted into a discourse that enforces assimilation and homogeneity. For instance, when oriented by a market logic and a focus on increased connectivity within a network system, only certain renditions of old age retain legitimacy.

One way of avoiding the reification of social arrangements is to reconceptualize the nature of roles. Roles must be conceptualized as representations of a particular set of priorities rather than transcendently anchored imperatives. Thus, the adoption of certain economic and social roles in the context of the network society means that persons have simply decided to recognize as legitimate certain ways of imagining knowledge and social relationships. For example, the claim that meaningful old age is best achieved by remaining economically "productive" as in previous years is not necessarily universal, but a prerequisite for aging in a capitalist society. Indeed, as Moody (2001, p. 176) argues, "[p]roductive aging, like its close cousin *successful aging*, embodies quintessential American values of success and productivity. With the triumph of global capitalism in the 1990s, these values are likely to prove dominant in shaping a positive image of aging." Outside of this economized image

of aging, productivity is often insignificant for not everyone sees aging as an opportunity to commodify themselves.

Before it can serve as a tool of critical social analysis, a new dimension must be added to current network imagery. This new component is a reconceptualization of diversity. Due to the emphasis placed on interconnectivity and neutral technical knowledge, networks have been thought to promote higher levels of integration and freedom than traditional social arrangements. However, the type of holism proffered by the economic network imagery associated with globalization is not very sophisticated because only those specific characteristics that align with the marketplace comprise the social field, while many other dimensions of social life are denied as irrelevant to economic and social order.

The source of knowledge and meaning must be rethought to avoid this outcome. Persons must be recognized as actively creating meaning in their lives. As Frankl (1969) says, persons must develop a “will to meaning,” meaning that the attainment of meaning and knowledge is not a passive process, but a willed activity through which persons satisfactorily orient their lives. As an example, alternative discourses can be proposed through which persons might begin to surpass the traditional definitions of productivity prescribed by the normative time line of aging. As Fromm (2000) argues, productivity has nothing to do with being busy or producing things, but rather refers to conditions in which individuals experience themselves as acting agents in their world. When meaning is derived from a prescribed role, life is experienced as separate and foreign from the individual. Persons are therefore precluded from creating a meaningful existence; instead, they simply take on a predetermined line of action. Moreover, because of the asymmetry present between roles and their inhabitants, people’s actions are limited by a host of unquestionable structural imperatives. Although network imagery suggests higher levels of participation and access to information, empowerment remains defined in a traditional manner as conformity to norms. Persons are expected to adopt roles that they do not control and may not consider relevant, all in the name of being well adjusted or successful. Unfortunately, the implications of this broadly accepted network ontology, especially as reflected through the contemporary market-based discourses that legitimize globalization, have not received much attention. The analysis of these basic but often unrecognized assumptions embedded in this model of social order is imperative for conceptualizing a truly open society.

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Chapter 10

A New Economic Order Without Violence

Richard A. Cohen

What is Greatness?

In his “Lectures on the Philosophy of History,” Hegel mocks the “schoolmaster” who would criticize the great men of history. “What schoolmaster has not demonstrated,” he writes, “that Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar were driven by such passions and were, consequently, immoral? From which it immediately follows that he, the schoolmaster, is a better man than they because he has no such passions, and proves it by the fact that he has not conquered Asia not vanquished Darius and Porus, but enjoys life and allows others to enjoy it too” (Hegel, 1953, p. 42).

We note the opposition Hegel sets up between the great men of history, the “world historical” figures such as Alexander, Caesar, and Napoleon, and the little people, the ordinary men and women who are unknown to such history, indeed, who are forgotten in its annals of war, machination, and construction, those who merely get through life in the background without pomp or circumstance. It is the contrast between *grand* political history, the history of kingdoms, monarchies, aristocracies, of states, the history of their wars, invasions, massacres, armies, battles, their buildings, marriages, assassinations, plots, their heroes, leaders, and generals, “history,” Hegel writes, “as the slaughter-bench at which the happiness of peoples, the wisdom of states, and the virtue of individuals have been sacrificed” (Hegel 1953, p. 27). And, on the other side, an entirely different history, social history, the lives and actions of the vast majority of people, peasants, serfs, slaves, common folk, foot soldiers, the uneducated, the illiterate, working men and women, ordinary families, husbands, wives, children, small farmers, tailors, butchers, smithies, apothecaries, and all those who and all those actions which “are of no account” in the chronicles of that other political history of grandeur and greatness. The great versus the small, the grandiose versus the inconsequential.

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Hegel is able to make these judgments because he sees in history a purpose, a goal, an end. Like Providence in religion, history has an aim, an End. And it is against this end that values, judgments are made. What is that end? Hegel's answer is at first glance quite attractive, indeed compelling, recalling the exodus story of the Bible: the aim and end of history is *freedom*. History—what counts as history, the history worthy of historiography—is the long bloody march from slavery to freedom. Before being swept away, however, we must first ask: What does Hegel mean by freedom? Here lies the rub. His notion of freedom—in contrast, say, to the biblical notion—is determined as and by the mind: It is *freedom of thought*. But let us be more specific. Thought can only be free when it is rational through and through, that is to say, when thought thinks and encounters only thought, when reason lives entirely in a world of reason, when the irrational and the unreasonable have been vanquished, then and only then can one say there is freedom. The aim and end of history, in other words, is philosophical transparency, complete and determinate rationality, absolute intelligibility.

There is something in addition that must be said about this freedom, this absolute freedom via complete determinate intelligibility. It is something that seems strange to anyone but the philosopher; indeed it is something that seems not only strange but false to the vast majority of humanity. It is this: Freedom turns out to be no different than necessity. It is the combined necessity of logic, that is, deduction, and of causal being, that is, the laws of nature. The vast majority of humanity, then, who find such an equation of freedom and necessity through rationality to be not only strange but false, are themselves ignoramuses! Despite the gasps or groans, celebrations or protests of individual actors, regardless of current beliefs, however widespread, true history - “world historical” history, as Hegel calls it - the grand history indicated above, is constituted precisely and only by those developments which actually increase rational freedom, creating a world of greater necessity, more rational truth, and therefore with less contingent, arbitrary, unjustifiable opinions, emotions and beliefs. Accordingly, the philosopher may judge history retrospectively from within. It is because the ancient Greeks, for instance, had a more advanced notion of reason than the “barbarians,” that Alexander's conquest of the Mediterranean and western Asia counts as a conquest of “world historical” significance: It spread a greater freedom, satisfied rationality more. Alexander's conquests were uplifting, improvements, an advance of Reason. Thus Alexander was, as Hegel teaches, a tool of history and the true aim of history, namely, freedom. The philosopher, the one who stands at the pinnacle of reason, can so judge. Indeed, regardless of what Alexander thought he was doing, regardless of whatever Caesar or Napoleon thought they were doing according to their own self-interested and passionate lights, *in truth* they were all advancing history toward freedom, something, by the way, which Hegel saw in person in the figure of Napoleon who as commander of the Grand Army of France spread the Enlightenment values which were the inner necessity of the French Revolution. Such, and known to the philosopher alone, and known to the philosopher only retroactively (“the owl of Minerva flies at dusk”), is the “cunning of history”: to advance freedom, which is to say, to increase rational necessity, regardless of what historical actors think they are accomplishing.

Small people, ordinary people, those who enjoy life and allow others to enjoy it, produce no such significant changes, do not move history toward freedom, that is, toward necessity, and hence are of no value, of no account in the great drama of human history which is the ongoing revelation and institution of truth in the world. In contrast to the great, small people are content with the status quo. Great persons are great because they change the world. Small price then that those great persons, the world historical figures, inflict inestimable suffering to innumerable small persons; small price that these mighty ones are themselves immoral, indifferent to justice, forging ahead come what may, unbound by the petty status quo conventions of the ordinary no-account herd. Mere collateral damage, which history will forget in any event. "But so mighty a figure," Hegel writes, "must trample down many an innocent flower, crush to pieces many things in its path" (Hegel 1953, p. 43). Robespierre, a few years earlier, and Lenin, many years later, are reputed to have used a similar if less flowery circumlocution: "One can't expect to make an omelet without breaking eggs." Of such high-handed rationalizations, let us immediately comment, we can say in behalf of the crushed and broken and murdered that despite their ostensive littleness and insignificance, there is acknowledgement—however offhand—of sufficient discomfort and perhaps even shame that their untold suffering is still masked in the language of metaphors, of innocent flowers or eggs. To be sure, such obliqueness more likely represents but a further dehumanization and degradation.

Let us grant that freedom is a very great thing. Let us even declare that it is a true end of history. This does not, however, commit us to Hegel's philosophical history or to any history that would equate freedom with necessity, and thus dismiss the mass of humanity as ignoramuses. Freedom is not achieved by reducing the world to thought, to necessary relations. It is not achieved by rejecting truth, by rejecting science, by rejecting knowledge. But rather freedom is achieved by recognizing a deeper freedom than the freedom of thought, a freedom which makes the freedom of thought possible. And this is the freedom not of thought but of moral responsibility, the free will. Here is freedom in a broader or more profound sense than knowledge alone can acknowledge. It is the freedom inextricably bound to moral obligation, and hence to social life, which Emmanuel Levinas names "difficult freedom." We no less than Hegel can and do therefore think of freedom as the goal of history, not in terms of necessity but in terms of moral responsibility, a caring of one for another, putting the other person first, *morality*, but a morality secured by *justice*, by legal recourse which reflects and maintains morality in the larger world of many people, of families, of communities, of peoples and of states. The freedom of morality is difficult as is the freedom of justice for they are concrete; they take each human being seriously, each and every person in their "inalienable" dignity, as they take each bit of legislation, each policy, each law seriously, asking whether progress or regression has occurred. So, let us ask, in the face of such difficulty and concreteness, in the face of social life not dismissed but taken as the very locus of the meaningful, our question in what follows is whether such a movement toward freedom—morality and justice, unachieved but humanity's proper ends, together—can this development be accomplished, instituted, made real, *without violence*? Shall we not recall also how closely this question resembles the same question

with which Rosa Luxemburg famously challenged Eduard Bernstein in 1900 in her famous essay “Reform or Revolution” (Luxemburg 1978) in which she sided so persuasively and resolutely with revolution? We shall see.

Capitalism Without End

For a naïve sensibility in America, Canada, Australia or Western Europe, let us say for a trusting soul more generally, the above question is perhaps not especially vexing. To aim for moral goodness, to aim for social justice, why should not such aims be achievable by peaceful means? How else get to what is good and just otherwise than by means which are also good and just? Is this not simply obvious? No flowers trampled, no eggs broken. But there is a rub, a considerable rub too. The answer is not as simple or straightforward as we might like. The rub is capitalism. While social and political (and religious) endeavors might, under optimal conditions, such as one finds in an fair and informed democracy, be guided toward freedom defined by goodness and justice as means and ends, there is no such assurance when it comes to economic endeavors. And more specifically, and despite certain appearances and much rhetoric to the contrary, the economy system of capitalism does not value *such* freedom highly, and certainly it does not value it supremely. What it values supremely is private profit, acquiring and accumulating money, material and financial wealth—and the so-called “free market” which it believes promotes profit-making maximally. Not valuing the moral and just freedoms which are the core values of morality and justice, capitalism has no special attachment to morality and justice. Money rules, not morality or justice. Hence, the problem: the money business, the so-called “free market,” trumps the freedoms rooted in morality and justice. Money trumps morality. Money trumps justice. Money comes first. In the face of this priority, morality and justice, for their part, become but the “ideologies” of small people, those who are small not only because they do not move history toward freedom, but because they do not move anything insofar as they have no significant magnitudes of money, wealth. They are small players, indeed, insignificant players, in the capitalist market economy. Really, they are of “no account,” except statistically as “consumers.” Other than as consumers, or as workers, say, as human beings with social needs, they are liabilities, expenses, losses rather than gains on the “bottom line” which counts first of all.

Putting aside the illusions propagated by the many self-serving capitalist ideologies of success, of the little man making it big,¹ the world of capitalism is dyadic and oppositional, a “class war,” as Marx identified it, between rich and poor, haves and have-nots, owners and consumers. The interests of the rich and the interests of the poor, in other words, are not only different but in opposition—and *only the*

¹ Vilfredo Pareto (1848–1923) long ago understood that there is a “circulation of elites,” a circulation which in no way challenges or undermines the basic opposition of rich and poor—indeed, quite the reverse, for the well-publicized stories of the little man who makes it big keep up the hopes of all the dispossessed.

rich are fully aware of this. No doubt the rich, the haves, the owners also consume. Indeed, they consume in obscene ways, while Rome burns, as it were, they buy personal jets, build gigantic houses in gated communities or estates, buy real estate worldwide, host million-dollar parties, own sports teams, and the like. But besides the fact that the rich are so rich—and they have probably never been richer with possibilities than in our time—and no matter that they cannot possibly spend more than a fraction of their great wealth in personal or familial consumption, the rich are in fact far more than consumers: they are powerful.

One does not need to be a rocket scientist to know that with great wealth—“surplus capital”—comes also great power, great power of all kinds, that is, not only economic, but also social and political. This is the reason why Aristotle and all political philosophers have understood that the danger of democracy is not only the possibility of “mob rule,” but far and away more likely and more undemocratic: *plutocracy*, rule by the rich, the wealthy class which buys and, through money, controls the allegedly democratic institutions, manipulating them to its own advantage rather than to the advantage of the “demos,” the commonwealth. As is becoming increasingly obvious in our day, especially after the publicity following the “Occupy” movement (despite that movement’s swift disappearance from the media industry), with the huge increases in “income inequality,” or, more to the point, with huge accumulations of wealth, the wealthy not only have gigantic bank accounts (usually hidden in offshore banks), vast investments (sheltered through various front companies), big houses (owned by various family members), and the like, they have politicians supplicating and dependent, and ready to do their will. Just as billionaires do not wait in lines and do not fly economy class or even first class but have their private jets, and do not go to concerts but pay for private performances by the stars, billionaires have direct access to politicians. Just as they buy and sell commodities, they buy and sell politicians. I am underlining this point that the rich live and operate in another world, because while they are perfectly aware of the difference, and indeed revel in it, those who are not rich have little idea. “Let me tell you about the rich.” wrote F. Scott Fitzgerald, “They are different from you and me.” To which Hemingway is reported to have replied, and I think quite correctly and tellingly: “Yes, they have more money.”²

² Fitzgerald’s lines are from his story “The Rich Boy,” published in 1926 in “Red Book” magazine. Hemingway’s telling retort appears in an article entitled “The Crack-Up,” by Lionel Trilling, published in “The Nation.” What Hemingway is suggesting, if I understand it rightly, is that it is not a matter of the rich being different people, being better or worse morally, say, or intellectually, but rather that they are the same sort of people as everyone else, but their money—not their individual character, their abilities—is what makes them powerful. Of course, Marx made the same observation in his 1844 manuscripts when he wrote: “The extent of the power of money is the extent of my power. Money’s properties are my properties and essential powers—the properties and powers of its possessor. Thus, what I am and am capable of is by no means determined by my individuality. . . . I am stupid, but money is the real mind of all things and how then should its possessor be stupid? Besides, he can buy talented people for himself, and is he who has power over the talented not more talented than the talented?” Karl Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, trans. Martin Milligan, ed. Dirk J. Struik (New York: International Publishers, 1984), 167.

So capitalism by its very indifference to real freedom, which is to say its indifference to the grounds of morality and justice, stands as a power opposed to them. But it is not enough to say that capitalism is indifferent to moral freedom. It proactively places the freedom of the “free market,” the freedom to buy and sell, above all others freedoms, which other freedoms—of morality and justice—consequently are reduced to the status of commodities to be bought and sold. The so-called free market of capitalism, we can say, operates by an unremitting violence against the freedoms of morality and justice. Profit trumps right. And because the corporate world in its actions and arguments, which are defended when necessary in courts by its high-priced corporate lawyers, reduces right to lawfulness, to obeying the law, a pure formality, capitalism thereby tramples on moral goodness and social justice with a “good conscience.” It obeys the laws, but it also creates them.

The violence, however, in our time of finance capitalism, is rarely frontal, vulgar and brutal, at least in the centers of capital. No longer are private armies of Pinkerton “detectives” hired by industrialists to shoot down striking workers. We—the mass of us—are meant instead to imagine capitalism not politically, not militarily, but rather more harmlessly as an economic system, the free play of the free market, free agents voluntarily negotiating and entering into mutually beneficial contracts all motivated by profit. As such, capitalism, the buying and selling of goods by free agents, is meant to be beyond morality, neither moral nor immoral, neither just nor unjust—just business. Economy restricts itself to the production and exchange of goods, services, and business, as they say in the Mafia movies. credit. The modern world, in contrast, say, to the feudal world, has shifted into a capitalist mode of economy. Yet, despite this transparently fallacious modesty, this blatantly false interpretation which conveniently overlooks economies of scale and vast income inequality, everyone knows that the reach of economics is far, far greater. Money, as we say, makes the world go round. Actually, big money makes the world go round. Or as Bob Dylan said, “Money doesn’t talk, it screams.”

The philosopher Immanuel Kant in his writings on ethics made an important distinction between what can have a *price*, that is, that which can be made equivalent to other things through an exchange value, and what has *dignity*, that is, that which has irreducible intrinsic worth. It is an all-important distinction, and quite real, and precisely one that capitalism would efface. For Kant, human beings in virtue of their freedom, which is to say in virtue of their moral agency and their striving for justice, have dignity. They are “ends in themselves,” as he wrote, meaning that each person is a finality, worthy as such, “created,” to use the biblical language, “in the image and likeness of God.” Everything else has a price, meaning that its worth is external, decided according to supply and demand. A pencil, say, while it must be an implement able to write or draw, has value only to the extent that someone wants it. One can buy or sell a writing implement. It’s worth or value can be calculated: what someone is willing to pay for it. Even more so, a dollar or any monetary instrument has no intrinsic worth. The value of money is its purchasing power. Its value, as we say, is pure liquidity. As for dignity, no doubt Kant was thinking only of rational beings, humans, each of whom is intrinsically valuable, or, one can say, each of whom has a value which cannot be calculated. What has dignity is priceless. Today,

many would broaden the range of what has dignity to include, in some sense, pets, animals, birds, fish, plants, all the way to include all sentient life and the larger environment which makes life possible. Even if there is no universal agreement about the range of what has dignity, and hence about what has or has not a price, the distinction between dignity and price is *important*, a distinction which itself has value. I think we can with little controversy join Kant in agreeing that the minimum range of the notion of dignity (whatever be its maximal range) must include all human beings.³ If and when capitalism is taken to be all-inclusive, a totality, the ultimate model of all and everything, in a word, an “ideology,” precisely then it does and must destroy the distinction between dignity and price. Reducing everything and all relations to financial calculations, to financial transactions, to commodities, to what has a price, destroys something very important about human beings—their dignity.

But the totalization of capitalism is precisely the problem with capitalism. Not capitalism as an economic system, per se, though capitalism as an economic system has inherent problems and is not accidentally prone to totalize itself. But capitalism taken as the be-all and end-all of all things, capitalism totalized—this is indeed the problem, indeed the crisis of our time, at the root of the violence of our world.

We are increasingly seeing proponents of capitalism taking its notion of free economic agents exchanging commodities freely and entering freely into contracts not simply as the core of an economic system, and as such but one dimension of more variegated human social existence, but as the grand model, the paradigm of all human social behavior and the exclusive meaning of human freedom. In America, this conflation of everything into free market ideology goes under the name of “libertarianism,” “tea party,” or “neoliberalism.” What popularity such ideology has is doubtlessly directly proportionate to its intellectual simplicity. It is so simple, so reductive, that is to say, that any Tom, Dick, or Harry, anyone without any effort at self-education, people lacking true appreciation for the complexity and sophistication of social life, especially in a post-industrial world of media industry, enjoy the cheap satisfaction of being able to explain everything. Like a religion, they know what is good and what is evil. Free market is good, indeed the only good. Ultimately, it is the only form of human interaction. Thus, government, regulation, social welfare, indeed all noneconomic social planning, as such, is bad. Cost-benefit analysis is the measure of all things.

Marx, so often vilified for being a Communist, was actually, like Adam Smith and David Ricardo before him, and as indicated by the title of his magnum opus, an analyst of capitalism. He saw, as his predecessors did not, that the free market, despite its ideological espousal of “competition,” tends actually and by its own inner logic to eliminate it and to coagulate into a small coterie of large monopolies. What I am pointing to, however, is the ideological counterpart to these latter developments in capitalism. As it actually eliminates competition in the real market, it heightens its ideological propagation of the idea of capitalism by means of the

³ The anti-choice anti-abortionists certainly agree on this point, which is why they insist on defining a human zygote as a full human being, and hence a being with intrinsic worth, dignity. Obviously the topic becomes genuinely difficult—rather than arbitrarily stipulative—when, for instance, the life of a mother is endangered by the birth of her child.

media industry, which now includes public education. Marx correctly predicted monopoly capitalism, in which the free market is eliminated; he did not anticipate the concomitant capitalist ideological monopolization: not the reality, but the greater and greater indoctrination to the idea—dear to libertarians—that market freedom is the only freedom, the exclusive ideology of all things, psychological, social, political, aesthetic as well as economic. As freedom of choice disappears, because all things have become commodities, bought and sold, measured by cost-benefit analysis, at this very moment, as never before, the *ideology* of freedom of choice asserts itself monolithically.

So we are now bombarded as never before with efforts to conceive of and mold universities, publishing and opera houses, for example, as businesses, where the “bottom line” is no longer higher education, quality books, or aesthetic appreciation but the balance sheet of monetary income and outcome. To take another instance, perhaps of greatest consequence in destroying American government by and for the people, there is the 2010 Supreme Court decision “Citizens United versus the Federal Elections Commission.” No one doubts that it is wise legally that economic entities such as corporations, for the purposes of economic contracts, be treated as “persons,” which is to say as entities which can enter into agreements, be bound by those agreements, and be sued if such agreements are broken or if their economic behavior is otherwise harmful to others (e.g., pollution, misrepresentation, theft, etc.). What makes no legal sense, however, but represents capitalism asserting its sheer economic power, is to treat such economic entities, in this instance corporations, as persons in the political sense, that is, as citizens with all the rights and privileges of citizens, for instance, the “freedom of speech” (already interpreted as the right to contribute financially without limit to political campaigns, itself a suspect right in the first place, or, to express this more accurately, already another manifestation of the sheer power of money in capitalist economy). These are some of the instances which evidence the fact that capitalism—the market economy of buying, selling, pricing, profit—or more precisely the ideology of early or liberal capitalism is increasingly becoming the model of all human endeavors. It is precisely this capitalist monopoly—ideological product of monopoly capitalism—which is violating and destroying all other nonmonetary registers of significance.

It would be laughable if it were not lamentable that billionaires, who of course are so few in number that they could never win a democratic election,⁴ enlist the ideological support of religion and patriotism—about which they could otherwise care less—to gain electoral majorities. Surely we can hardly imagine the daughters of billionaires shunning abortions due to religious conviction, though of course there will be some exceptions. Surely we cannot imagine billionaires restricting America’s present excessive military spending or global sales of weapons due to patriotic fervor. Rather, in timeworn fashion, the cynicism of money interests, the plutocracy, is instead masked with the popular values of democracy, that is, God and Flag. Such values, to be sure, can be genuine, but they are genuine only when they

⁴ Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont has recently pointed out that the 14 wealthiest individuals in America own more wealth than the 40% least wealthy Americans.

are sincere and functionally tied to reality, that is, not when they are the dog and pony show of moneyed interests, cynically used to dupe the vast majority. Americans are told again and again of the “welfare Mom” who takes advantage of social welfare programs, but never of the huge subsidies that go to huge corporations through huge business tax incentives, excessive defense spending, regressive taxes (sales tax), foreign aid (which must be spent on American products), farm subsidies, and the like.

So, back to the rub: the problem with “doing the right thing,” that is, using moral and just means to create a moral and just society. Capitalism—the billionaire winners—could care less about morality and justice. Capitalism, the quest for profit, built on material self-interest, has no incentive to support the moral over the immoral, the just over the unjust, unless money can be made by doing so. And no one has yet successfully argued that morality and justice are money-makers, or, slightly less extreme, that they always promote making money, always promote business, and are always profitable. Indeed, it is quite obvious that such is not the case. The easiest way to make money is to steal it. Or, to fix the system so that stealing becomes legal. Corporate bankruptcy laws do precisely that. Government contracting allows precisely that. The ways are many. And if somehow the legality of stealing is challenged, be assured that corporations have highly paid in-house lawyers and staff on call and capable to deal with all such contingencies, many of whom have “served” on the very government regulatory agencies which occasionally (actually rarely) challenge them.

Morality, in contrast, demands care for the dignity of others as others, and for no other “reason.” Each human being—according to all the ethical theories which do not turn ethics upside down⁵—has intrinsic worth, dignity, for no other reason than that they are a human being. The human as such bears dignity. But for capitalist interests, this is not and cannot be the case. Even beyond the purchase of labor power through wages or salary, there is no possible moral justification that can hold up to defend, say, the purchase of persons, as in slavery. Yet capitalism by itself, by its own lights, would have no problem with slavery. Yes, we have heard many times that slavery is not economical, that the American South, for instance, would have had to give up the slave system even without the Civil War, give it up for economic reasons. But what if this was not the case, as in the years before the Civil War? It is easy enough to imagine. What if enslaving human beings, not to pick cotton, but for some other economic reason, did make economic sense? Well, by the lights of capitalism, it would be fine. No doubt, capitalists would rattle on about the “freedom” of individuals to sell themselves into slavery, just as they speak today of the “right to work” but really only in order to eliminate unions.⁶ Here, in addition to seeing the ethical limitation of capitalism as a theory and praxis, we come to realize the importance of recognizing the pluralism of a pluralist world, a world made up of several more or less different and loosely fitting or more or less overlapping

⁵ E.g., the new ethics proposed by Spinoza, or the Marquis de Sade, or Nietzsche.

⁶ “Combination among the capitalists is customary and effective; workers’ combination is prohibited and painful in its consequences for them.” Karl Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, 65.

realms of significance: morality and justice will declare that slavery is not all right; capitalism looks to its profitability—the two are not the same. Even if something is profitable, it may not be right. Just as even if something is lawful, it may not be right. That one could make money buying and selling human beings, does not make it right—not right ethically. Humans are not commodities, or, more exactly, it is wrong to treat humans as commodities.

So, to the rub again: Yes, no doubt, violence could be eliminated from society if moral and just means were used to create a moral and just world. No eggs broken. No flowers trampled. But capitalism, capitalism taken as a worldview, as *the* worldview, *opposes* such an approach. Capitalism breaks these moral and just means by buying and selling them, and hence converting what should have dignity into something with merely a price. The vote, for instance, the informed choice of a citizen to elect a representative to a legislative body—this should be something based in knowledge, understanding, vision, values, and more deeply, in the very quest for freedom that is, even if not in the form Hegel thought, the real aim of history. Both conservatives and progressives agree on this, on the quest for justice, even if they differ as to what policies are appropriate to accomplishing such an aim. Yes, democracy, the vote, should be so based, but capitalism will not have it that way. And this is because not dignity, not the genuinely free human being, but money buys persuasion: television time, radio time, billboards, newspaper space (and decisions as to what counts as news), websites, postal mailings, Madison Avenue advertisers, Ivy League political consultants, sophisticated pollsters, and all the many more or less expensive ways that have the power to influence the ordinary voter, to set agendas, to decide what is newsworthy. Money buys influence, influence directly upon politicians, no doubt, because politicians need money to finance their elections, but also influence directly upon the mass of voters, setting the terms of discourse. Back to Bob Dylan ... money does not talk, it screams.

So even if modern mass democracy is *de jure* a moral and just means to move toward justice, ideally enabling “government of the people, by the people, and for the people,” it also, by the very nature of its reliance on an abstract conception of “free speech,” a free speech which as such enables money to distort information necessary for fair elections and electioneering, is more deeply *de facto* a government of money, by money, and for money. Or to put this more directly: the rich set the ideological agenda, delimit its parameters, and thereby distort the freedom of “free speech”—because ownership and access to mass media is expensive. Media is itself an industry. Like any other, it has become big business, tending toward monopoly, run by billionaires in the interest of billionaires. Let us not be naïve: billionaires not only buy politicians, they determine the news. It is no accident, after all, that despite the fact that the selection of American presidential candidates is in large measure determined by the choices of billionaire donors made months before the first primaries, the American public sees the chosen candidates on television news mixing with grocers, florists, waitresses, truck drivers, plumbers, and the like, but never—never—with millionaires and billionaires. Americans hear and care far more about movie stars and sports figures—celebrities—than the millionaires and billionaires who actually run this alleged democratic republic.

Consumptive Consumption

Perhaps there is another way, less negative, to think about these issues. Let us recall that no less a critic of capitalism than Herbert Marcuse, in his 1955 book *Eros and Civilization*, argued that the proven ability of the market economy is to “deliver the goods,” as he put it, that is, to produce the wherewithal for a society of material prosperity, a society of plenty rather than of scarcity, that such a society backed by such an economy would be—or at least should be—liberating in a full human sense. It would be liberating in the sense that alienated labor—the bane which, according to Marcuse’s analysis, following the early Marx, produced the “discontent” which Freud had associated with the libidinal repressions which he believed were the necessary sentimental costs of civilization—that these repressions would no longer be required inasmuch as labor could be turned over to machines and ultimately to robotics. Because machines could perform repetitive activities far better, far faster, more effectively and efficiently, labor would no longer divide humans from themselves, from their fellows, and from the world as Marx had shown it would in his *1844 Manuscripts*. Thus, so Marcuse analyzed, in advanced capitalist economies, fully mechanized, work would no longer conflict with libidinal satisfaction. Though Marcuse did not push this coordination of Marx and Freud as radically as had Wilhelm Reich earlier in the twentieth century, the result for both was the same: the capitalist or market economy, because of its massive productive capacities and because of its advanced mechanization (today supported by biochemical computer algorithms), would enable an social liberation, freeing humans to be fully human, disburdening workers of alienated labor, and freeing civilization in consequence of the discontents inherent in the libidinal repressions previously required by alienated labor. It is an ingenious and tempting speculation, which anticipated the historical experiments in “free love,” “consciousness-expansion,” and utopian communalism—as well as the celebratory anti-war protests (e.g., levitation of the Pentagon, flowers in soldier’s rifle barrels)—of the post-WWII “60s generation” in America, Europe, and elsewhere around the world.

Unfortunately, as Marcuse came to see by 1964 in *One-Dimensional Man*, capitalism, while indeed transformative, turned out not to be liberating. The material plenty it produces for the sake of private profit requires a consumer society to pay for it. It requires not that workers become liberated from alienating work in order to actualize their humanity, about which capitalism is indifferent, but that the mass of people continue to consume. For this they must be unendingly induced, seduced into new needs. Instead of liberation from work and need, liberated for leisure, the mass of people must always be made to need more. Consumption and ever more consumption. Thus, to sell its goods, capitalist’s advertisers must convince consumers that the new products are desirable, that one must have them. Thus, while Marcuse is right that capitalism produces the goods, far from producing liberation capitalism must produce people who are increasingly consumed with consuming goods.

It is no accident, then, that as goods are multiplied, not satisfaction, not enjoyment, not leisure, but more and more needs are created, multiplied, drowning

people in needs, like the flooding created by the broom figures compulsively retrieving, carrying, and dumping buckets and more buckets of water in Disney's enormously popular 1940 animation "Sorcerer's Apprentice."⁷ Not freedom, then, but new needs must be cultivated. Notice that this multiplication of needs has nothing to do with high or low culture, with better or more worthy needs. The point is that precisely because it delivers the goods, capitalism must also increase the need for those goods. Thus, instead of satisfaction, it produces dissatisfaction, an unquenchable need for more things. In contrast to the liberation Marcuse optimistically envisioned in *Eros and Civilization*, in *One-Dimensional Man* he acknowledges discouragingly the unending belittlement of humanity for the sake of ever new and ever unmet material needs. Commodification thus creates consumerism. We return again to the conundrum of our first citation above: "It is easier to imagine the end of the universe than the end of Capitalism." The new "violence" of capitalism, its seductive appealing "soma," is the degradation and trivialization of humans by reducing them to the animal-like state of constant consumption. In the words of advice given by President George W. Bush to the American people after the 9/11 terrorist mass murders of 3000 persons at the World Trade Center in New York City: "Do your business around the country. Fly and enjoy America's great destination spots. Get down to Disney World in Florida. Take your families and enjoy life, the way we want it to be enjoyed." In other words, do not be terrorized, remain faithful to who you are, and show our enemies that you persist in who you are, namely, *consumers*.

One suspects, of course, that our terrorist enemies already know quite well precisely this about America, and that it is this too that they greatly despise about America's actual influence around the world: the spread of the capitalist economy as the regime of billionaires and the conversion of the mass of humanity into consumers. Patriotic Americans make so much of the difference between this country of freedom and democracy and the tyranny and kleptomania of the Putin regime in Russia. They bemoan the disappointment Putin has been for the democratic hopes of the Russian people after the collapse of the USSR. But is the Russia of Putin and his oligarchs really so different than corporate America with its billionaires? Is it not more truthful to say that one, Russia, in fact, is precisely the more honest and blatant version of the other? Russia's elections are rigged, there is no doubt. Are not our elections rigged, too, when Democrats and Republicans must both beg at the feet of the same billionaire election financiers? Do we really think the "third world" is so stupid as to not see our much vaunted "open market" treaties, or the open markets demanded by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund as a condition for loans, do we really think these nations to be so stupid as to not realize that opening their markets means letting in the American—really the transnational—corporate vultures? Globalization means precisely this: corporate exploitation. Is Exxon-Mobil an American company? Is British Petroleum British, or Shell Oil

⁷ It is almost too good to be true that the name of the sorcerer in Disney's animation is "Yen Sid," which is "Disney" spelled backwards and divided in half. The original of the Sorcerer's Apprentice story is Goethe's poem *Der Zauberlehrling* (1797), for Goethe, at the very start of the era of the two revolutions, already foresaw some of its spiritual dangers.

Dutch? No doubt, in certain countries, business and government have become one, as in Russia and China, so that Alibaba Group, for instance, is at the same time a global economic player and a Chinese nationalist tool. Boeing is certainly still more American than anything else, while Airbus is a European consortium. But such statist or state-confederate attachments are ultimately only provisional and opportunist, maintained *only* insofar as the institutions and powers of state sovereignty (taxpayer financial support, police and military protection, legal protection, supportive monetary services, etc.) benefit the corporations and not the other way around. Again, in line with capitalism's war against competition, its tendency toward monopoly, corporations are increasingly global and not state institutions, beholden to profit above polity.

All of this seems so obvious, and it is obvious to the billionaires, and yet it is not obvious—not to the masses. That it is true, that is, that capitalism is rapacious, driven solely by profit, and that the radical extent of this rapaciousness and its reductive dehumanizing consequences are at the same time hidden behind the benign “ideology” of the alleged freedom of the free market, in these two dimensions we find the whole contemporary problem. Evil always masks itself in the veil of good. The devil does wear Prada. But raising consciousness, increasing understanding, important as it is, and nearly impossible at the same time, is yet not enough: the real problem, capitalism, must also be overcome. Nevertheless, these two—raising consciousness and overcoming capitalism—go together, which helps explain why the ideology of capitalism is no accident and is indeed quite dear to capitalism. What the billionaires know, they want no one else to know. The biggest secret of capitalism is capitalism itself, more private than sex, for instance, one's income, one's savings, one's investments, and the like. And often—the psychologists can explain it—the billionaires delude themselves, too, thinking of themselves as the world's great benefactors. No matter that, it is not unusual or surprising, egoism and self-congratulations have few limits. “Everyone,” as Socrates said millennia ago, “does the good.” Let us proceed.

How Did Things Come to This?

To see how we've gotten to such a state, let us step back a few centuries. To be sure, antecedents can always be traced back and further back, into a mythic prehistory. What I want to highlight, however, is the fundamental difference, what amounts to a paradigm shift, between our modern world of capitalist domination and all previous worlds. Let us begin with a simple but quite illuminating fact. Until the rise of the railroad in the mid-nineteenth century, transportation—getting from point A to point B—had been pretty much the same from the very dawn of humanity. Pharaohs, Confucius, Socrates, and Alexander the Great travelled pretty much the same way as did Voltaire, Louis XIV, and George Washington millennia later. The modern world we live in today, made possible by technologies of speed, is the immediate result of what historians call the “dual revolution”: the Industrial Revolution and the

French Revolution, broadly the rise of modern science and technology, the invention of the steam engine, the discovery and utilization of electricity and electronics, and the rise of democracy and Enlightenment ideas. These two names, Industrial Revolution and French Revolution, are convenient labels for diverse and vast changes, great ideas like participatory government and modern science, to technical inventions and new organizations (factories, assembly lines), and enormous social shifts, such as the vast movement from agricultural to urban life, which all more or less cohere even if they were not the result of a planned systemization. Very simply, the world changed, first in Europe and America, and then, as we see today, globally.

We will not get lost in details, fascinating though they are. For our purposes, what is of particular interest is a basic change in social-political outlook. I am referring to a basic change from a familial and local communally rooted perspective to an individualistic-atomistic one, a change in human definition from social being to individual being—a change in outlook and orientation that continues to this day. Families and tribes are obviously socially oriented groupings. One is a member of a family, a member of a tribe. Everyone knows everyone else. Everyone has a name, but everyone stands in various determinate relations to everyone else. There is nothing romantic about this characterization; it was a way of life. Monarchies and aristocracies, too, are held together by bonds of inherited allegiances. The aristocrat, the feudal lord, is first of all attached to land. The serf is attached to the lord, serves the lord, and through this bond and service is also attached to the lord's land. The lord has obligations to his serfs, just as they have obligations to the lord. It is similar with a monarch, who is bound by title to land, just as the monarch's subjects, and most especially the aristocracy, are all attached by blood and allegiance to the monarch. To be sure, outright slavery is also bondage, one person being the property of another, though here, at the lower end, as it were, of traditional societies, the individual exists at the limit of individuality, living at the disposal and whim of another. I am not defending slavery, or tribal or feudal society, but rather noting, on the basis of many sociological studies, their difference from today's increasingly atomistic and contractual society. The point, then, is that the pre-modern serf, slave, aristocrat, lord, and monarch are all tied to one another, not by unfettered free choice but by bonds tied by inherited tradition, by heritage, blood, soil, allegiance, fealty, and the like.

In contrast, in the new *republican* governments which began to replace monarchy and aristocracy in the late eighteenth century, sovereignty was meant to lie with the individual citizen as a free individual. To be sure, Rousseau spoke of an enigmatic "general will," which was meant to represent the Geist, as it were, of all the citizenry, the spirit of the people beyond this or that changing majority. But no one has ever been able to specify precisely what this means, or to set a procedure to make this will functionally manifest at the practical political level. By default, then, republican government is essentially democratic in the sense of expressing the will of a majority of individual citizens. Historically, of course, many pre-republican privileges lingered, for example, privileges attendant to property, gender, race, religion, and the like, but over time these have been stripped away, at least in terms of who is permitted to vote in general elections. In today's democracies, then, for the most part, one is a citizen by virtue of being born of citizens, or born within the

borders of a state; and one obtains the right to vote in elections upon maturity, that is, at a certain minimum age, regardless of gender, race, religion, property, intelligence, education, title, and the like. Upon reaching maturity, all citizens as citizens are alike, equal, one no different, no more or less powerful than another *qua citizen*. Such, in theory at least, or shall we say, more precisely, de jure, is the atomization of the human political animal in the age of republicanism. “One man one vote”; or, better, “One voter one vote.”

I say nothing of fact, the de facto, because, as we have seen above, more money means more power, and precisely in the new republican form of government—where each individual is meant to have only the political power of one individual, that is, one vote; where each voice is meant to be heard according to its logic and good reason, as if the polity were an academy—unequal distribution of wealth, whether obtained by hard work, inheritance or by hook and crook, produces unequal political influence, an influence that cannot, in view of the political atomization of power, be restrained by the state. Or, as Orwell put it so succinctly in his allegory *Animal Farm*: “All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.” To be sure, certain democracies, following the lead of Montesquieu, have attempted to provide “checks and balances” in government and to insure respect for minority views; but ultimately, since these checks and balances and guarantees are themselves part of a political system subject to the unequal influence of unequal wealth, these protections, too, are sooner or later but all eventually all of no avail against the power of money.

In sum, when political actors are de jure reduced to individual citizens with individual rights, then the power of money easily overwhelms such agents. For this reason, though nowhere mentioned de jure, de facto political parties emerged with the emergence of democracy. Political parties are meant to protect the interests not of individuals, but of groups. The problem, however, is that unless checked by a political party which precisely opposes the power of money, that is, a Labor Party of one sort or another, money—millionaires and now billionaires—eventually also gains control of political parties, as is increasingly evident in America today, a country which never had a major Labor party, especially in view of the Citizens United Supreme Court decision, in contrast to the many countries that have had and continue to have strong Labor Parties. Only in America, the epicenter of capitalism, bereft of a Labor Party, do citizens not have universal health care; only in America do citizens not have free higher education; only in America do billionaires buy state legislators, governors, congresspersons, senators, and presidents. A specter is haunting America—the specter of Plutocracy.

The Convergence of Liberalism and Socialism

At this point, I want to ask why today commentators speak of “neoliberalism” rather than “liberalism” simpliciter. After all, liberalism is the political theory of republicanism, of democratic government constituted by private self-interested individuals with no ties or allegiance to one another other than being citizens of the same state

rather than another. John Stuart Mill, in *On Liberty and Utilitarianism*, articulated perfectly well the theory of the liberal state made up of such atomic self-interested individuals.

As Mill made so clear, at the root of liberal theory is the notion of “negative freedom.” Liberalism does not tell a person what they should or should not do. It does not advocate what is desirable or right. Of these it has nothing to say. Rather, like most of the Ten Commandments, it tells the individual citizen what he or she cannot do. The only limit on the individual’s freedom it recognizes is that in pursuit of whatever ends one wants, that is, in pursuit of one’s own good as one sees fit, one may not abridge or harm the freedom of another individual. “The only freedom which deserves the name,” Mill declares, “is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to obtain it.”⁸ This may well seem self-evident, but really there is more to it than meets the eye. This is because Mill leaves out entirely Rousseau’s notion of a “general will,” the idea that the community has claims on its members, on all its members, for instance, that our fellow citizens are able to obtain health care or education as social goods for each and for all.

The way Marx would put this proviso, this revelation of what is hidden in the apparent self-evidence of Mill’s notion of freedom, is that Mill has interpreted political freedoms from the point of view of “bourgeois individualism,” that is to say, in terms of a “free market” economy. Mill, too, then, is borrowing the “freedom” appropriate to the “free market” and importing it into the political domain as the very definition of political freedom. So freedom of speech, say, is interpreted as if speech were a commodity, completely oblivious, that is to say, to the conditions—such as housing, food, education, and health—which make speech concretely possible and free. To be sure, in a capitalist economy no one tells the entrepreneur what to manufacture, what to buy, what to sell, or what price to set, or even how hard to work or when to work or whether to work at all. The “free market” alone determines economic success or failure in whatever ventures the individual person pursues. But Mill now speaks of free speech exclusively in terms of a free market of ideas. Yet, someone without an education does not have the same ideas as someone who has an education. Someone without food is not as interested in the exchange of ideas when what they need is to eat. All this is left out. Little did Mill seem to realize, despite his genuine brilliance, that the exchange of ideas, that legislative deliberation, that judicial decision making, and the like, are merely commodities in a “free market.” In other words, there are social conditions surrounding all such elements of the democratic process. And because Mill completely leaves out this social dimension of freedom, he is able to define it negatively in terms of doing whatever one wants without depriving others of their no less negative freedoms.

This limitation of Mill’s notion of liberalism, its reduction of the political freedom to market freedom, its atomization of the citizen, the pure formality, that is, the emptiness of its notion of self-interest, in sum, its complete lack of positive political

⁸ John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, ed. Edward Alexander (Peterborough, Canada: Broadview Press, 1999), 55.

aims, these and other faults were recognized by political theorists not very long after Mill. Sure one can do what one wants, but nothing whatsoever is said about what is actually desirable. Such is the freedom of such freedom: No one tells another what to do. And this is true also of the freedom of the “free market,” because even here what one wants is profit, that is, surplus capital, money, and nothing determines or indicates what one does or should do with profit when it is obtained. Again, this is meant to be the very freedom of such freedom. The problem, however, is that just as capitalist freedom is empty, purely formal, so, too, the political freedom that is derived from free market freedom is also empty: No one has any idea what is good, and least of all what is the social good, the good of the commonwealth.

One can distinguish two broad directions in the critique of negative freedom. One comes from the outside, as it were, from socialism. The other comes from the inside, from a development within liberalism. Both of these critiques converge upon a center, what we can call the social welfare state or the good of the commonwealth. Let us turn briefly to these two developments and their convergence, because it is their result, the result of their critiques of liberalism, and the establishment of the welfare state after WWII in America and Europe, which has led to today’s neoliberal critique. Let me say right away where I am heading: Today’s neoliberal critique of the welfare state parallels the original liberal critique of feudal privileges. In both cases, the aim is to institute the free market and capitalist commodification as the one and only mode of human ideation and interaction. Precisely such freedom was once revolutionary when liberalism was the battle cry to overthrow the arbitrary privileges of feudalism. But to overthrow the achievements of today’s limited social welfare institutions in the name of the same liberalism, which is the aim of neoliberalism, this is another matter.

Though he is relatively little known today, Thomas Hill Green (1836–1882) was one of the earliest and most important philosophers in England to criticize the limitations of Mill’s classic statement of liberalism. Green’s basic critique is based in the claim, absent in Mill, that some form of “social union” is the condition of personal good. Mill’s freedom, therefore, is purchased at the hidden price of a reductive abstraction from its concrete conditions. Thus, in critical contrast to Mill, Green introduces the notion of “positive freedom.” There are positive social goods which give flesh to freedom, the “better” which concretely conditions and orients the political will of citizens as fellow-citizens, enabling them to share in common goals. Unless the state is to disintegrate into agents without anything to bind them to one another or to anything else for that matter, the state must nurture the social union.

For Green, then, the state has a purpose beyond ensuring the negative freedom of each. Its purpose goes beyond policing negative freedom, though it includes such policing as well. Rather, and here the influence of Hegel on Green is evident, the state should also encourage and institutionalize positive goals, long-term goals, ultimately aiming at justice for all its citizens, and in doing so it must encourage and support citizen’s moral character, or more narrowly their civic character. The state is not, therefore, an indifferent umpire; it positively encourages and works toward institutionalizing justice, and not merely justice as lawfulness, but justice as law guided by moral values. Green’s thought represents a needed corrective to

the mere formality of Mill's notion of freedom. As such, too, it was influential in Great Britain and in the USA, as evidenced in the thought of America's most popular philosopher, John Dewey, who in arguing that the political must be guided by a "moral ideal" explicitly acknowledged the influence of Green's revision of Mill's classical liberalism.⁹ The central point of the "social liberal" critique of "classical liberalism"—and Green is not alone in making this critique—is, as I have indicated, to reintroduce the social or communal dimension of political citizenship which Mill, in rightfully combating the arbitrary and unfair privileges of pre-republican government, had erased by overemphasizing the role of negative freedom and the self-interested atomistic individual, notions borrowed from the relatively still relatively young free market economic theory.

The second direction from which classical liberalism was initially and to the present day criticized is from socialist and communist critics. These critics not only attack the reductive formality or abstraction of Mill's account, its conflation of market freedom with political freedom, but they challenge the viability of capitalism itself as an economic theory. They anticipate its internal collapse, and thus at the same time challenge the ahistoricity which is another failing of Mill's abstractness. Marx and Engels, for instance, characterized Mill's negative freedoms not merely as capitalist but as partisan bourgeois freedoms, which is to say freedoms bound to one class within the capitalist class division between owners and workers. Marx and Engels thus historicize what for Mill—in line with the American and French revolutions—are universal human rights. For Marx, Mill's freedoms are neither universal nor human rights, but the self-sustaining powers of the bourgeois, right needed by economic agents in a free market economy. In truth, they are the rights of the owners, the rights of economic winners, of those who can privately afford to supply themselves the concrete conditions (health, housing, food, education, etc.) which make the alleged freedom of the free market worthwhile and advantageous. So long as humanity remained divided between owners of production and the dispossessed, those who have only their labor to sell, that is to say, between bourgeois and proletariat, so long as humanity remains divided by the social divisions necessary to capitalist economics, all humans—bourgeois and proletariat—become distorted versions of humans, alienated, divided, torn within themselves, and between one another. Because capitalism is itself not eternal, not universal, not human, and, owing to its internal contradictions also not the final stage of history, it's so-called "universal rights of man" are in fact historical developments, class expressions, however much they parade as absolute. Such, in any event, is Marx's view.

The solution of Marx and Engels, not surprisingly, is to acknowledge the eventual and necessary end of capitalism, and thus the end of its merely bourgeois political ideology of negative freedom. Only when capitalism collapses through its own internal contradictions, aided by the theories of Marx and Engels which provide a post-capitalist orientation to the proletariat, that is, through the education of the pro-

⁹ Green is acknowledged by Dewey in his article "Self-Realization as the Moral Ideal," in *Philosophical Review* 2, (1893), 652–664.

letariat by a revolutionary party, can humans in their economic, social, and political relations become fully human, human with the positive freedoms which are real rather than ideological. The end of private property, which is at the root of capitalism, is thus the first condition of a genuinely human freedom, and without such an overthrow, all alleged freedoms are in fact unfreedoms, mere ideology, “false-consciousness,” masks for capitalist class domination. Thus, only a total revolution can save us from the fake freedoms, the fake democracy, the fake human rights, which are the masks of capitalist domination and unfreedoms, the masks of plutocracy.

Just as Mill was revised by Green to include social and not only individual choices, so too, from the opposite direction, as it were, Marx was revised by Eduard Bernstein (1850–1932) to include commitment to the legislative–democratic process in the overturning of capitalist exploitation. Capitalism would be ended by democratic means, by reform, rather than violent or revolutionary overthrow. Obviously, then, Bernstein did not share the normative Marxist view that the legislative–democratic process in the time of capitalism was itself but an organ of capitalism, and as such would never permit a genuine or radical overthrow of capitalism itself. Given his rejection of the normative Marxist interpretation of political institutions under capitalism, that is, plutocracy, namely, that they do the bidding of the rich, the owners, the millionaires, and billionaires, at the expense of the proletariat, Bernstein called for working with and within bourgeois democratic institutions to overthrow capitalist domination. Of course, this reformist project was also intended to be peaceful, avoiding the violence of a revolution.

Bernstein’s reasoning was based on two elements. First, the “pauperization” Marx predicted for the proletariat under capitalism—where he expected workers to be paid less and less—did not occur, or if it occurred, it was only in relative (having less) and not in absolute (starvation, destitution) terms. The capitalist system, as Marcuse later saw, delivers the goods, provides sufficient economic rewards to workers (house, TV, car, etc.) to dissipate the discontent and to defuse the fervor and passion of possible revolutionary agitation. Second, insofar as democracies have replaced monarchies and aristocracies, and democracies work by majority vote (in general elections and within legislative bodies), Bernstein saw the obvious, namely, that there are far more workers than bourgeois, far more workers than owners, and that this majority even increases as capitalism become monopoly capitalism. Given their majority, Bernstein reasoned that it would be best to simply vote the capitalists and capitalism out of office. Thus, Bernstein championed “evolutionary socialism” instead of revolutionary socialism. No eggs would have to be broken, no flowers trampled; there would be a peaceful democratic transition to a workers state. Furthermore, Bernstein’s model became the successful program of the Labor Parties of Western Europe, Canada, Australia, and all the other so-called “advanced” capitalist countries (Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, etc.) which are presently all more or less social democracies.

So, whether one comes from the direction of Green’s social–liberal revision of liberalism, or of Bernstein’s democratic–socialist revision of socialism, in either case, a center is reached—and by legal, peaceful, democratic means—in the so-called welfare state or democratic socialism. Here the excesses of capitalism, the

huge disparities of wealth and power, are mitigated through the democratic electoral process, where workers are in fact in the majority, to produce a restricted capitalism in which the still enormous economic and financial resources of a market economy are channeled peacefully to create a social union of justice for all. In this way, politics is not conflated with capitalism and plutocracy is avoided. In this way, a genuine justice, reached without violence, would then support positive freedoms—for the betterment of fellow countrypersons, and ultimately humankind—and not just regulate negative freedoms detached from moral values.

Obviously the USA, of all the capitalist economies, has least followed this path of social amelioration. One hardly ever even hears the words “socialism” or “Marxism” within its borders. Yet, one hears the seeds of such a development in Franklin Roosevelt’s famous “Four Freedoms” speech of 1941. After ten years of the Great Depression, in a Congress dominated by the Democratic Party in both Senate and House of Representatives, with Europe already at war, and clearly provisioning (without directly committing) America’s entry into the same, Roosevelt in his “State of the Union Message” before the American Congress and over the radio, declares not only for “freedom of speech” and “freedom of every person to worship God in his own way,” that is, two “negative freedoms,” but also, and for the first time from the podium of any president of the United States, “freedom from want” and “freedom from fear.” To be sure, Roosevelt takes the last, “freedom from fear,” to mean peace, freedom from fear of foreign aggression (obviously Axis aggression), as anyone would ordinarily expect from a sovereign state, though he does add that it means “a worldwide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor,” which is quite an extension of the normal meaning of peace. It suggests the need for some sort of supranational regulating and sanctioning body.

But it is the third freedom, “freedom from want,” proclaimed after ten years of the Great Depression, to be sure, that is the most startling and innovative. No wonder Roosevelt immediately attempted to limit or mask its true implications, by “translating” it into “world terms” to mean “economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants.” But even with this backtracking qualification, the idea that a nation should secure “a healthy peacetime life” for its inhabitants—this is an advance into the territory of positive freedom that classical liberalism had never before taken in America, or at least that no American president had ever endorsed. But in fact it was the same President Roosevelt who by executive signature in 1935 had put into effect the Social Security Act voted for by Congress, which created for the first time a social welfare program that had been repeatedly stymied by previous American presidents, Congresses and the Supreme Court. So Roosevelt was not merely mouthing the notion of positive freedom in 1941, he was describing what had already been instituted in 1935. This same Social Security Act was amended in 1965 under the presidency of Lyndon Johnson to create Medicare and Medicaid, the first federal public health insurance plan in American history to provide support for medical care for the elderly and the poor. And then, to bring this story up to date, more recently in 2010, under the presidency of Barak Obama, the Affordable Health Care for America Act

provided federally mandated regulation and availability of health insurance plans for all Americans.

The period of American history from Roosevelt's "New Deal" to Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" also happened to coincide with its greatest period of economic growth, the post-World War II boom. America could very well afford to be magnanimous. It could afford that convergence of liberalism and socialism, of negative and positive freedom, which I have pointed to above in invoking Green and Bernstein. Of course, America's magnanimity was far less than that of the Western European nations in the same postwar period. I point to this brief period in American history, and the important if quite limited social legislation (Social Security, Medicaid, Medicare, and then later Affordable Health Care) which came within it, to return to the issue of the difference between classical liberalism and today's neoliberalism or libertarianism. The theory of today's American neoliberalism is in fact the same theory of classical liberalism, namely, the defense of individualistic negative freedoms as absolute rights trumping all other considerations. What has changed is not the liberalism but that against which such liberalism is opposed. In the classical period, of course, liberalism railed against what remained of feudal or arbitrary privileges, hence against monarchy, aristocracy, racism, sexism, etc. Today, however, liberalism rants against New Deal/Great Society legislation, which is to say, it is against the relatively small correctives toward social responsibility which occurred in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries to obviate the excesses of liberal theory in its earlier opposition to feudalism.

No longer, then, is the "enemy" (of the absolutization of the freedoms of the free market) the now obviously arbitrary and unjustifiable social privileges of blood and soil, gender and age, race and religion, and the like, which classical liberalism combated (and the combat was fierce, and the fight was good). That war thankfully liberalism has won. Putting aside the histrionics of certain fringe groups, the rejection and outlawing of such privileges is no longer a matter of controversy. What *neoliberalism* is all about, that in whose cause all the fierce vocabulary of a fighting classical liberalism is being re-invoked, is now the later ameliorating social dimensions—the positive freedoms—which in the mid to late twentieth century, during a time of great prosperity, came with much effort (and with many concessions too) to mitigate the vacuity, the sheer formality, the abstractness, and hence the injustices of the regime of negative freedom which liberalism had initially inaugurated. And this helps explain the excesses of rhetoric of today's neoliberals, libertarians, tea-partyers: They think they are fighting the old fight, as if the government social programs legislated to correct the excesses of liberalism were old feudal privileges themselves. For the neoliberal of today, then, Big Government is the Monarch of old. It is perhaps too obvious to say, but I will say it: Hence the name "Tea Party," which harks back to the Boston "Tea Party" of December 16th, 1773, against the British crown tax on tea. Hence also the so-called "strict construction" interpretations of the US Constitution which base themselves, or rather claim to base themselves exclusively on what is, in truth, a highly selective interpretation of what is claimed to be the "original intent" of those American liberal political theorists of the late eighteenth century who debated and wrote the US Constitution.

Thus the hard-won convergence which moved classical liberalism to social liberalism and revolutionary communism to evolutionary communism is for today's neoliberal essentially no different than what feudal privilege was for the classical liberal. Social democracy is the new dragon to be slain: the horror of unjustifiable and therefore arbitrary social interference with the inviolable individual human rights—the negative freedoms—liberalism and now neoliberalism defend to the exclusion of all else (in theory at least). Neoliberals thus appropriate the language of traditional conservatism, invoking “family values” and “patriotism” in their rhetorical battle against the welfare state. But, in fact, neoliberalism, as we have seen, has no positive values at all, since it defends only the isolated or socially unattached individual bearer of rights. The only “value” in the neoliberal arsenal is a wholly *negative* freedom: the right to choose, the freedom of choice, based on oneself alone. Hence also the split, politically, between genuine conservatives, who do believe in the values of family, religion, tradition, social compassion, and the like, and libertarians, who believe in no such things, or at least who believe that such beliefs have no role to play in social legislation. Just as in the free market, where making or losing money determines everything, and where all other values can in principle only interfere negatively with such freedom, so too, but now in the political arena, the citizen, according to the libertarian, is meant to have unrestrained individual freedom but with no social direction, no orientation, no values, or hierarchy of values which could ever be imposed duties or upon all citizens as a community to express their social needs and will.

All common concern, all sense of participation in a commonwealth, all forms of joining together for the social good, sacrificing for the good of all, the greater good, all such social bonding is left to the free market of citizens each seeking his or her self-interest alone. No wonder that under such a regime, all social bonds dissipate. No wonder, ironically, the neoliberal bemoans the loss of “family values” and “patriotism”—not because the social democrat undermines them, but rather—and precisely this contradiction must be masked, and exactly the rhetoric of family values and the flag does mask them—because neoliberalism destroys them! Citizenship for the neoliberal requires and means no more than making sure that negative freedom is the only freedom. No duties, no obligations. As the new dragon, the contemporary version of feudalism, the welfare state is castigated as “big government,” “Obamacare,” “mollycoddling,” “government interference,” “big brother,” “intrusion,” “conspiracy,” the “new world order,” as if it is not the neoliberal who, by destroying the value of all social bonds, is not the one intruding into and destroying the real basis of a fully human life. For the latter is always life lived with others, social life, from family to neighbors, to coreligionist to social club, to alumni association, sports teams, local school, corner café, and the like. The neoliberal would make monads or zombies of us all, numb to one another, and worse, the neoliberal would have each of us a Dracula—a self-interested consumer, seeking only the blood of others, caring not for their life or welfare—each aiming for nothing higher than to suck the most money out of everything and everyone.

Neoliberalism and Collective Human Rights

Let us assume the above diagnosis is essentially correct: negative freedom, despite isolation, but counting on an “invisible hand” to somehow right all wrongs, versus positive freedom, an activist social responsibility legislating for the good of each and all. And the critique: In a free market political arena, where each person is free but only as an isolated individual with equal rights, free to pursue his or her self-interest, the playing field is not level: big money rules and it rules by making the rules and by picking the referees. So *what is to be done?* Little man versus big man, how does the little man win or even have a hearing?

In his 1996 book entitled *Taking Suffering Seriously*, William Felice criticizes the liberal defense of individual rights as itself a hindrance to genuine human liberation. If rights are always only individual there can be no social conscience, no social cohesion. If rights are always only individual then whatever binds humans to one another will appear, as the neoliberal critique has it, as a return to feudalism, to paternalistic government, to arbitrary privileges, guilds, and the like. In the name of precisely this argument, in defense of “human rights,” labor unions have effectively been destroyed in America by means of the infamous “right to work” laws. Since each individual has the “right to work,” no individual can be forced to join a union or pay union dues. The logic is impeccable by liberal standards of negative freedom. Such is a perfect example of how the defense of individual rights is used to destroy individuals, how the *de jure* destroys the *de facto*, the abstract the real. For it is more than obvious—in the real world—that the only serious check to corporate power over workers is through worker unionization, through collective bargaining. To defend the individual’s right to contract individually with huge corporations may sound good in theory but is pernicious in practice. Wipe out unions, destroy collective bargaining, *all in the name of individuals retaining their individual rights*, and the result is the effective crushing of individual workers. To pretend that an individual on his or her own, taken separately, free in their individual rights, can negotiate fairly as anything like an equal to huge corporations such as Walmart, Royal Dutch Shell, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, Sinopec, China National Petroleum Corporation, ExxonMobil, HSBC, Toyota, etc., which have budgets dwarfing those of many countries, is simply nonsense.¹⁰ To defend individual rights against collective bargaining in such circumstances, which reflect our world as it is today, is in no way neutral, universal, or objective. It is to take the side of the corporation, the capitalist, the billionaires.

In the face of such nonsense, the nonsense of libertarianism, Felice defends “collective human rights.” He presents an ingenious argument. Because negative freedom by itself is bound to no particular values, it thereby cannot in principle defend the special value of negative freedom. Here, the defender of negative values can only resort to violence, or God, or some authority he or she does not actually recognize as of universal or socially binding value. For Felice, however, negative freedoms do have value, and in recognizing their *social value* he has already and neces-

¹⁰ The top twenty biggest corporations grossed more than five trillion dollars in 2013 alone.

sarily critiqued the libertarian exclusive defense of negative freedom, which can only contradict itself. To support negative freedom one must already be supporting positive freedom, freedoms of social valuation. More broadly, socialism is the unacknowledged condition for capitalism. “Socialism can be seen as a precondition for the realization of the ideas of collective human rights because capitalism is based on the counter-values of competition and supreme individualism. Unfortunately, under capitalism, persons and things are treated similarly, as commodities with exchange values and capital accumulation as the principle business of society.” (Felice 1996, p. 143) Capitalism has no real “counter-values” because it has no values at all. To the extent that neoliberals do defend individual rights exclusively, they must—contradicting themselves—rely on collective human rights.

It is ingenious and true but nevertheless the rub remains. Let us admit that Felice’s argument is a good one, valid, and further that it is a telling argument, one with serious political implications. Who is listening? And what difference does it make? That is to say, what difference do good arguments make for a neoliberal worldview for which there are no values, and where each man and woman is out for himself or herself? The self-contradictoriness of the libertarian serves as a blinder to ignore the logic of the socialist. This is a classic case of “ideology.” The response to Felice will be the same as the neoliberal response to the anticipated catastrophe of climate change. That is, no response at all, indifference, or denial based in fantasy, selective “science,” in a word, ideology. Because the only “value” neoliberals recognize is private self-interest, private self-interest measurable as economic success (commodities owned, money in the bank), then what value can any other sort of value, such as truth, not to mention social responsibility, have?

Nero fiddles as Rome burns—and he lit the fire! If coastal lowlands flood owing to carbon monoxide induced polar ice melting, no problem, the oversized homes of the millionaires and billionaires, and their corporate headquarters, will be rebuilt and relocated farther inland. Do we not already see that the millionaires and billionaires do not live adjacent to their oil refineries, waste dumps, low-income housing projects, fast food eateries, nuclear enrichment facilities, and so on? If self-interest rules, then so too does disinterest regarding the distress of others, except to profit by it. Marx said—and it was a hopeful remark—that the capitalist would sell the rope with which he would be hung. But the truth is actually worse: The capitalist will create, exploit, pollute, and destroy the one world in which we all live, and create (however temporarily) his or her own haven within that same world. The capitalist *has already* created, exploited, polluted, and destroyed the world in which we all live. “It is easier to imagine the end of the universe than the end of capitalism.” We are falling into this trap. We have already fallen into it. Is the result despair? Certainly no god will save us.

Occupy and Consciousness Raising

In the face of the Borglike ability of capitalism to absorb and reduce all values to exchange values, to commodify everything and put a price on it, *including protest itself*, or as Marcuse put it in *One Dimensional Man*, in the face of capitalism’s ability

to *co-opt* everything, what is to be done? In the same book, Marcuse's answer or non-answer was "the great refusal." To opt out, or as was said in the long 60s, to "turn on, tune in, and drop out." "Turn on" referred to smoking marijuana, taking drugs such as LSD, psilocybin mushrooms, mescaline, getting high, engaging in the moment, enjoying the nonutilitarian, indulging the pleasure principle. "Tune in" referred to the same, to becoming sensitive to the moment, "be here now," a noncommercial non-commodity world, the natural environment, communal living, and alternative spiritual traditions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Shamanism, Native Americanism, and the like. "Drop out" meant exiting the "rat race" of material success, quitting college, disengaging from the world of competition and power, the business world, the news, the artificial world of media-created events, stepping out of the control matrix. The basic idea remains true today as well. Because traditional political revolts against the system simply become part of the system, managed, controlled, bought and sold, no frontal assault, no radical opposition is practical or even conceivable that could dent or delay or, even less likely, overturn or ameliorate the capitalist Borg. From a traditional point of view, all that is left outside of capitulation is failure, despair, pessimism, defeatism, in a word, capitulation.

Thus, Marcuse suggests that the way out is not a new form of politics but rather the rejection of politics altogether. The way out is not revolution, but escape, exit—the great refusal. It is still raised consciousness, awareness of the problem, a distance taking from the leveling stupefaction of commodification, but without illusion. Indeed, instead of a stoic retreat into self, it is a social awareness, a social consciousness, a social movement, and not a political organization or party. And this strategy, it seems to me, is precisely what the Occupy movement recognized and held to when it made its protests very public (tents and placards in the public square!) but at the same time refused to write the usual manifestos, refused to propose the usual demands, refused to take a positive position, and refused to be co-opted into media sound-bites. The Occupy movement was and remains, for it is as strong if not stronger now than ever, even and perhaps especially because it is no longer publicized by the media industry, a form of Marcuse's great refusal, refusing even to stay in the news, refusing to cast up leaders, spokespersons. In this sense, it has kept true to another slogan from the long 60s: "The revolution will not be televised." Yet it is a consciousness which has already transformed American public political life, where *for the first time in American history, class-consciousness is now known by the dispossessed as well as the rich*. Now for the first time, everyone in America—regardless of where they stand—is *aware of the 1%* (and Bernie Sanders is currently making Americans aware that it is really the 1/10th of the 1% who are the genuinely wealthy, the true plutocrats). Such is a revolution, even if it is not a revolution of barricades. The best-kept secret of the democratic age is out. The wizard is not Oz but O's, the 0's of billions and billions of dollars.

It is interesting that the two statements of Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms" speech of 1941, which were most applauded by the attending senators and representatives, had to do precisely with the rich.¹¹ The applause bursts out as an embarrassed reac-

¹¹ A film recording of the speech can be found on YouTube. Let me also state that in the past, unlike today, Congress rarely interrupted the President's speech with applause.

tion, a reflex defense mechanism, like a blush, to truths too painful or dangerous to be spoken of. The first occurs before any mention of the four freedoms. The main topic of Roosevelt's State of the Union address, let us recall, was the need to rearm America, first for the Allies and second for America were we to enter the war. So, the first: "We must especially beware of that small group of selfish men who would clip the wings of the American eagle in order to feather their own nests." Uh oh, not war profiteers! No, it cannot be! We will not permit it! (They who are millionaires or lackeys of millionaires, no, no, not them, perish the thought.) The second most applauded statement comes at the conclusion of Roosevelt's speech. After he has invoked the "four freedoms" as the ideals which Americans should be willing to fight for, and certainly for which they should make the required sacrifices to rebuild American military capacity, Roosevelt continues: "A part of the sacrifice means the payment of more money in taxes. In my budget message I shall recommend that a greater portion of this great defense program be paid for from taxation than we are paying today. No person should try, or be allowed, to get rich out of this program;"—and at this phrase the applause breaks out—"and the principle of tax payments in accordance with ability to pay should be constantly before our eyes to guide our legislation. If the Congress maintains these principles, the voters, putting patriotism ahead of pocketbooks, will give you their applause." Yes, yes, we millionaires and the millionaires we represent will certainly and gladly bear our burden of higher taxes, of course, who could doubt it! Congress, club of millionaires.

In both instances, what receives the greatest applause are Roosevelt's assurances that the rich—that "small group of selfish men," as he calls them—will not take private advantage, or ought not to take private advantage, that they should not increase their private fortunes, from the huge procurement expenditures that will be required to build up the American military for the sake of our Allies' survival and for America's own survival. The applause, of course, is meant to mask the truth that it is precisely the rich who will benefit from increased military expenditures. And it is precisely the rich who will not bear the brunt of the increased tax burden. Eisenhower, after WWII, will later name the private beneficiaries of public military spending the "military-industrial complex." Today we would add "military-industrial-educational-meda complex." Already, as the group dynamics revealed, Roosevelt said too much, indeed, he said the truth.

The unspeakable in a capitalist world is not sex or crime, to the contrary. The unspeakable is wealth and the power of wealth. Bank accounts and boardrooms are more private than bedrooms. That 1/10th of 1%, that "small group of selfish men," the power elite, the true rulers of America and the world, of this we must not speak. But it must be said, indeed shouted, indeed proclaimed: The rich rule the world. The rich rule the world. Money rules everything. Every school child in the world should be writing such truths on the blackboard one hundred times five days a week.

In case some readers think I am exaggerating, let it be noted that in January of 2010, as if following a script by George Orwell, the Board of Education of the State of Texas—the largest purchaser of public school textbooks in America—voted to eliminate the word "capitalism" from any approved texts and replace it with "free-enterprise system"; to replace the word "imperialism" with "expansionism";

to drop the expression “justice and responsibility for the common good” from one text’s list of the characteristics of good citizenship; required students be taught the “unintended bad consequences” of President Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society; substituted “constitutional republic” for “democracy” and “democratic” government when referring to America’s form of government; and so on and so forth. The fear of truth and the mask of propaganda are here palpable. It should come as no surprise that no teachers or educators were permitted to be part of the Texas Board of Education’s discussions or deliberations.

All this is of course not simply a problem of today. An aberration, say, in the usual fair distribution of wealth based on ability, work, and some luck. What is a problem of today is indeed the power of private wealth, but also because money does not care about the day after tomorrow, our entire sense of time is becoming distorted; indeed, it is becoming dangerous and life-threatening. The free market is concerned with the short-term “bottom line,” the quarterly dividend, profit now—the long term will take care of itself. Traditionally, of course, one of the functions of government is precisely the long term, planning and making provisions for it. Business cares for the short term, profit now. Government cares for the long term, the good of the commonwealth including its future citizens, the need for teachers and schools to educate the next generation, the need for retirement funds and medical care for the elderly who are today young, state and national parks for children not yet born, and the like. Capitalism, or more specifically a capitalism that has reduced politics to capitalism, has no such cares.

I think about the title of this chapter, a new economic order without violence. Certainly the present economic order is violent, a violation of everything dear to human beings as human beings and not as billionaires and consumers. A new order without violence would mean an order of moral responsibility and concerted and serious labor for justice, a care for the earth, but always a care for people first, a care for human dignity, for each person and all persons, apart and together. No broken eggs. No trampled flowers. During the Vietnam War, John Lennon taught: give peace a chance. We are at war today: billionaires against everyone else. It is up to us, to defend social democracy against the growing wasteland of neoliberalism, libertarianism, and the plutocracy these ideologies hide. We must become and remain conscious of the danger, its reality, and conscientiously combat it. Real positive freedom is at stake, our humanity—love of neighbor—is at stake, hence an unflinching vigilance and activism are demanded for our future if we are to have one.

As a cautionary note against false optimism, and against complacency as well, indeed, against any hint that the path forward, the progressive path, will be an easy one, I will conclude with two citations. First from Theodor Adorno, who understood our quandary, but also the temptations: “At the present moment, no higher form of society is concretely visible: for that reason, anything that seems in easy reach is regressive.”¹² And the second from Rosa Luxemburg, whose labors for human freedom were untiring and whose spirit was to the end undaunted, something she said just weeks before her martyrdom: “Unrelenting revolutionary activity coupled with

¹² Theodor Adorno, *The Culture Industry*, ed. J. M. Bernstein (New York: Routledge, 1991), 201.

boundless humanity—that alone is the real life-giving force of socialism. A world must be overturned, but every tear that has flowed and might have been wiped away is an indictment; and a man hurrying to perform a great deed who steps on even a worm out of unfeeling carelessness commits a crime.”¹³

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¹³ From Rosa Luxemburg, *Rote Fahne*, December 1918, cited in Paul Frolich, *Rosa Luxemburg*, transl. Johanna Hoornweg (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), 189.

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