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ARTICLE

A Genealogy of Homo-Economicus: Neoliberalism and the Production of Subjectivity

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ABSTRACT: This article examines Michel Foucault's critical investigation of neoliberalism in the course published as Naissance de la biopolitique: Cours au Collège de France, 1978-1979. Foucault's lectures are interrogated along two axes. First, examining the way in which neoliberalism can be viewed as a particular production of subjectivity, as a way in which individuals are constituted as subjects of "human capital." Secondly, Foucault's analyses is augmented and critically examined in light of other critical work on neoliberalism by Wendy Brown, David Harvey, Christian Laval, Maurizo Lazzarato, and Antonio Negri. Of these various debates and discussions, the paper argues that the discussion of real subsumption in Marx and Negri is most important for understanding the specific politics of neoliberalism. Finally, the paper argues that neoliberalism entails a fundamental reexamination of the tools of critical thought, an examination of how freedom can constitute a form of subjection.

Keywords: Foucault, Neoliberalism, Governmentality, real subsumption, subjectivity.

In the opening pages of David Harvey's *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* we find the following statement "Neoliberalism... has pervasive effects on ways of thought to the point where it has become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world."[1] While Harvey's book presents a great deal of research on neoliberalism, presenting its origins in such academic institutions as the "Chicago School," its spread in the initial experiments in Chile, and its return to the countries of its origin through the regimes of Reagan and Thatcher, as well as its effects on China and the rest of the world, the actual process by which it became hegemonic, to the point of becoming common sense, is not examined. While it might be wrong to look for philosophy in a work which is primarily a work of history, a "brief" history at that, aimed at shedding light on the current conjuncture, it is worth

[1] David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism (*Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 3.

pointing out this lacuna since it intersects with a commonly accepted idea about "neoliberalism," that it is as much a transformation *in* ideology as it is a transformation *of* ideology. Neoliberalism, in the texts that have critically confronted it, is generally understood as not just a new ideology, but a transformation of ideology in terms of its conditions and effects. In terms of its conditions, it is an ideology that is generated not from the state, or from a dominant class, but from the quotidian experience of buying and selling commodities from the market, which is then extended across other social spaces, "the marketplace of ideas," to become an image of society. Secondly, it is an ideology that refers not only to the political realm, to an ideal of the state, but to the entirety of human existence. It claims to present not an ideal, but a reality; human nature. As Fredric Jameson writes, summing up this connection and the challenge it poses: "The market is in human nature' is the proposition that cannot be allowed to stand unchallenged; in my opinion, it is the most crucial terrain of ideological struggle in our time."[2]

A critical examination of neoliberalism must address this transformation of its discursive deployment, as a new understanding of human nature and social existence rather than a political program. Thus it is not enough to contrast neoliberalism as a political program, analyzing its policies in terms of success or failure. An examination of neoliberalism entails a reexamination of the fundamental problematic of ideology, the intersection of power, concepts, modes of existence and subjectivity. It is in confronting neoliberalism that the seemingly abstract debates of the last thirty years, debates between poststructuralists such as Michel Foucault and neo-Marxists such as Antonio Negri about the nature of power and the relation between "ideologies" or "discourses" and material existence, cease to be abstract doctrines and become concrete ways of comprehending and transforming the present. Foucault's lectures on neoliberalism do not only extend his own critical project into new areas, they also serve to demonstrate the importance of grasping the present by examining the way in which the truth and subjectivity are produced.

Homo Economicus: The Subject of Neoliberalism

The nexus between the production of a particular conception of human nature, a particular formation of subjectivity, and a particular political ideology, a particular way of thinking about politics is at the center of Michel Foucault's research. As much as Foucault characterized his own project as studying "…the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects," this process has always intersected with regimes of power/knowledge.[3] Thus, it would appear that Foucault's

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2 Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism; Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 263.

3 Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," Afterward to *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structu-*

work takes up exactly what writers on neoliberalism find to be so vexing: the manner in which neoliberalism is not just a manner of governing states or economies, but is intimately tied to the government of the individual, to a particular manner of living. However, it is well known that Foucault's research primarily views this relation from ancient Greece through the nineteenth century, leaving modern developments such as neoliberalism unaddressed. While this is the general pattern of Foucault's work, in the late seventies he devoted a year of his lectures at the *Collège de France* to the topic of neoliberalism. These lectures, published as *The Birth of Biopolitics,* are something of an anomaly in part because of this shift into the late-twentieth century and also because unlike other lecture courses, at least those that have been published in recent years, on "abnormals," "psychiatric power" and "the hermeneutics of the subject," the material from these lectures never made it into Foucault's published works.

In order to frame Foucault's analysis it is useful to begin with how he sees the distinction between liberalism and neoliberalism. For Foucault, this difference has to do with the different ways in which they each focus on economic activity. Classical liberalism focused on exchange, on what Adam Smith called mankind's tendency to "barter, truck, and exchange." It naturalized the market as a system with its own rationality, its own interest, and its own specific efficiency, arguing ultimately for its superior efficiency as a distributor of goods and services. The market became a space of autonomy that had to be carved out of the state through the unconditional right of private property. What Foucault stresses in his understanding, is the way in which the market becomes more than just a specific institution or practice to the point where it has become the basis for a reinterpretation and thus a critique of state power. Classical liberalism makes exchange the general matrix of society. It establishes a homology: just as relations in the marketplace can be understood as an exchange of certain freedoms for a set of rights and liberties.[4] Neoliberalism, according to Foucault, extends the process of making economic activity a general matrix of social and political relations, but it takes as its focus not exchange but competition.[5] What the two forms of liberalism, the "classical" and "neo" share, according to Foucault, is a

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ralism and Hermeneutics, ed. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 208.

4 As Foucault writes on this point: "The combination of the savage and exchange is, I think, basic to juridical thought, and not only to eighteenth century theories of right—we constantly find the savage exchange couple from the eighteenth century theory of right to the anthropology of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In both the juridical thought of the eighteenth century and the anthropology of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the savage is essentially a man who exchanges."(Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*: *Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976,* trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), 194)

5 Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 12.

general idea of "homo economicus," that is, the way in which they place a particular "anthropology" of man as an economic subject at the basis of politics. What changes is the emphasis from an anthropology of exchange to one of competition. The shift from exchange to competition has profound effects: while exchange was considered to be natural, competition is understood by the neo-liberals of the twentieth century to be an artificial relation that must be protected against the tendency for markets to form monopolies and interventions by the state. Competition necessitates a constant intervention on the part of the state, not on the market, but on the conditions of the market.[6]

What is more important for us is the way in which this shift in "anthropology" from "homo economicus" as an exchanging creature to a competitive creature, or rather as a creature whose tendency to compete must be fostered, entails a general shift in the way in which human beings make themselves and are made subjects. First, neoliberalism entails a massive expansion of the field and scope of economics. Foucault cites Gary Becker on this point: "Economics is the science which studies human behavior as relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternate uses."[7] Everything for which human beings attempt to realize their ends, from marriage, to crime, to expenditures on children, can be understood "economically" according to a particular calculation of cost for benefit. Secondly, this entails a massive redefinition of "labor" and the "worker." The worker has become "human capital". Salary or wages become the revenue that is earned on an initial investment, an investment in one's skills or abilities. Any activity that increases the capacity to earn income, to achieve satisfaction, even migration, the crossing of borders from one country to another, is an investment in human capital. Of course a large portion of "human capital," one's body, brains, and genetic material, not to mention race or class, is simply given and cannot be improved. Foucault argues that this natural limit is something that exists to be overcome through technologies; from plastic surgery to possible genetic engineering that make it possible to transform one's initial investment. As Foucault writes summarizing this point of view: "Homo economicus is an entrepreneur, an entrepreneur of himself."[8]

Foucault's object in his analysis is not to bemoan this as a victory for capitalist ideology, the point at which the "ruling ideas" have truly become the ideas of the "ruling class," so much so that everyone from a minimum wage employee to a C.E.O. considers themselves to be entrepreneurs. Nor is his task to critique the fundamental increase of the scope of economic rationality in neo-liberal economics: the assertion that economics is coextensive with all of society, all of rationality, and that it is economics "all the way down." Rather, Foucault takes the neo-liberal ideal to be a new regime of truth, and a new way in which people are made subjects: *homo eco-*

6 Ibid, 139.

7 Ibid, 235.

8 Ibid., 226.

nomicus is fundamentally different subject, structured by different motivations and governed by different principles, than *homo juridicus,* or the legal subject of the state. Neoliberalism constitutes a new mode of "governmentality," a manner, or a mentality, in which people are governed and govern themselves. The operative terms of this governmentality are no longer rights and laws but interest, investment and competition. Whereas rights exist to be exchanged, and are some sense constituted through the original exchange of the social contract, interest is irreducible and inalienable, it cannot be exchanged. The state channels flows of interest and desire by making desirable activities inexpensive and undesirable activities costly, counting on the fact that subjects calculate their interests. As a form of governmentality, neoliberalism would seem paradoxically to govern without governing; that is, in order to function its subjects must have a great deal of freedom to act—to choose between competing strategies.

> The new governmental reason needs freedom; therefore, the new art of government consumes freedom. It must produce it, it must organize it. The new art of government therefore appears as the management of freedom, not in the sense of the imperative: "be free," with the immediate contradiction that this imperative may contain…[T]he liberalism we can describe as the art of government formed in the eighteenth century entails at its heart a productive/destructive relationship with freedom. Liberalism must produce freedom, but this very act entails the establishment of limitations, controls, forms of coercion, and obligations relying on threats, etcetera.[9]

These freedoms, the freedoms of the market, are not the outside of politics, of governmentality, as its limit, but rather are an integral element of its strategy. As a mode of governmentality, neoliberalism operates on interests, desires, and aspirations rather than through rights and obligations; it does not directly mark the body, as sovereign power, or even curtail actions, as disciplinary power; rather, it acts on the conditions of actions. Thus, neoliberal governmentality follows a general trajectory of intensification. This trajectory follows a fundamental paradox; as power becomes less restrictive, less corporeal, it also becomes more intense, saturating the field of actions, and possible actions.[10]

Foucault limits his discussion of neoliberalism to its major theoretical texts and paradigms, following its initial formulation in post-war Germany through to its most comprehensive version in the Chicago School. Whereas Foucault's early ana-

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9 Ibid., 63.

10 Jeffrey Nealon has developed the logic of intensification in Foucault, arguing that this can be seen in the transition from disciplinary power to biopower; the former operates through specific sites and identities, while the latter operates on sexuality, which is diffuse throughout society, coextensive with subjectivity (Jeffrey T. Nealon, *Foucault Beyond Foucault: Power and its Intensification Since 1984 (*Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press), 2008, 46). A similar point could be raised with respect to neoliberalism.

lyses are often remembered for their analysis of practical documents, the description of the *panopticon* or the practice of the confessional, the lectures on "neoliberalism" predominantly follow the major theoretical discussions. This is in some sense a limitation of the lecture course format, or at least a reflection that this material was never developed into a full study. Any analysis that is faithful to the spirit and not just the letter of Foucault's text would focus on its existence as a practice and not just a theory diffused throughout the economy, state, and society. As Thomas Lemke argues, neoliberalism is a political project that attempts to create a social reality that it suggests already exists, stating that competition is the basis of social relations while fostering those same relations.[11] The contemporary trend away from long term labor contracts, towards temporary and part-time labor, is not only an effective economic strategy, freeing corporations from contracts and the expensive commitments of health care and other benefits, it is an effective strategy of subjectification as well. It encourages workers to see themselves not as "workers" in a political sense, who have something to gain through solidarity and collective organization, but as "companies of one." They become individuals for whom every action, from taking courses on a new computer software application to having their teeth whitened, can be considered an investment in human capital. As Eric Alliez and Michel Feher write: "Corporations' massive recourse to subcontracting plays a fundamental role in this to the extent that it turns the workers' desire for independence…into a 'business spirit' that meets capital's growing need for satellites."[12] Neoliberalism is not simply an ideology in the pejorative sense of the term, or a belief that one could elect to have or not have, but is itself produced by strategies, tactics, and policies that create subjects of interest, locked in competition.

Because Foucault brackets what could be considered the "ideological" dimension of neoliberalism, its connection with the global hegemony of not only capitalism, but specifically a new regime of capitalist accumulation, his lectures have little to say about its historical conditions. Foucault links the original articulation of neoliberalism to a particular reaction to Nazi Germany. As Foucault argues, the original neo-liberals, the "Ordo-liberals," considered Nazi Germany not to be an effect of capitalism. But the most extreme version of what is opposed to capitalism and the market—planning. While Foucault's analysis captures the particular "fear of the state" that underlies neoliberalism, its belief that any planning, any intervention against competition, is tantamount to totalitarianism. It however does not account for the dominance of neoliberalism in the present, specifically its dominance as a particular "technology of the self," a particular mode of subjection. At the same time, Foucault offers the possibility of a different understanding of the history of neolibe-

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11 Thomas Lemke, "Foucault, Governmentality, and Critique." *Rethinking Marxis,* 14, 3 (2002), 60.

12 Eric Alliez and Michel Feher, *The Luster of Capital*, trans. Alyson Waters, *Zone,* 1, *2,* (1987), 349.

ralism when he argues that neoliberalism, or the neo-liberal subject as *homo economicus,* or *homo entrepreneur,* emerges to address a particular lacunae in liberal economic thought, and that is labor. In this sense neoliberalism rushes to fill the same void, the same gap, that Marx attempted to fill, without reference to Marx, and with very different results.[13] Marx and neo-liberals agree that although classical economic theory examined the sphere of exchange, the market, it failed to enter the "hidden abode of production" examining how capital is produced. Of course the agreement ends there, because what Marx and neo-liberals find in labor is fundamentally different: for Marx labor is the sphere of exploitation while for the neo-liberals, as we have seen, labor is no sooner introduced as a problem than the difference between labor and capital is effaced through the theory of "human capital."[14] Neoliberalism scrambles and exchanges the terms of opposition between "worker" and "capitalist." To quote Etienne Balibar, "The capitalist is defined as worker, as an 'entrepreneur'; the worker, as the bearer of a capacity, of a human capital."[15] Labor is no longer limited to the specific sites of the factory or the workplace, but is any activity that works towards desired ends. The terms "labor" and "human capital" intersect, overcoming in terminology their longstanding opposition; the former becomes the activity and the latter becomes the effects of the activity, its history. From this intersection the discourse of the economy becomes an entire way of life, a common sense in which every action--crime, marriage, higher education and so on--can be charted according to a calculus of maximum output for minimum expenditure; it can be seen as an investment. Thus situating Marx and neoliberalism with respect to a similar problem makes it possible to grasp something of the politics of neoliberalism, which through

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13 Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 221.

14 In *The Birth of Biopolitics* Foucault argues that Marx filled this void with an "anthropology" of labor. This is similar to the critique that Foucault develops in "Truth and Juridical Forms," in which he argues that Marx posited labor as the "concrete essence of man." As Foucault writes: "So I don't think we can simply accept the traditional Marxist analysis, which assumes that, labor being man's concrete essence, the capitalist system is what transforms labor into profit, into hyperprofit or surplus value. The fact is capitalism penetrates much more deeply into our existence. That system, as it was established in the nineteenth century, was obliged to elaborate a set of political techniques, techniques of power, by which man was tied to something like labor—a set of techniques by which people's bodies and time would become labor power and labor time so as to be effectively used and thereby transformed into hyper profit" (Michel Foucault, "Truth and Juridical Forms," in *Power: Essential Works of Michel Foucault, 1954-1984: Volume Three,* trans. Robert Hurley et al. Ed. James D. Faubion (New York: New Press, 2000), 86). This idea, of "capillary power relations" that turn man into a subject of labor, is an idea which Foucault sometimes develops as a critique and at other times attributes to Marx, see for example "Les Mailles du pouvoir", in *Dits et Écrits Tome IV: 1980-198,* ed. D. Defert and F. Ewald (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1994) and less explicitly *Discipline and Punish.*

15 Etienne Balibar, *Masses, Classes, Ideas: Studies on Politics and Philosophy Before and After Marx,* trans. James Swenson (New York: Routledge, 1994), 53.

a generalization of the idea of the "entrepreneur," "investment" and "risk" beyond the realm of finance capital to every quotidian relation, effaces the very fact of exploitation. Neoliberalism can be considered a particular version of "capitalism without capitalism," a way of maintaining not only private property but the existing distribution of wealth in capitalism while simultaneously doing away with the antagonism and social insecurity of capitalism, in this case paradoxically by extending capitalism, at least its symbols, terms, and logic, to all of society. The opposition between capitalist and worker has been effaced not by a transformation of *the mode of production*, a new organization of the production and distribution of wealth, but by the mode of subjection, a *new production of subjectivity*. Thus, neoliberalism entails a very specific extension of the economy across all of society; it is not, as Marx argued, because everything rests on an economic base (at least in the last instance) that the effects of the economy are extended across of all of society, rather it is an economic perspective, that of the market, that becomes coextensive with all of society. As Christian Laval argues, all actions are seen to conform to the fundamental economic ideas of self-interest, of greatest benefit for least possible cost. It is not the structure of the economy that is extended across society but the subject of economic thinking, its implicit anthropology.[16]

Resisting the Present: Towards a Criticism of Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is thus a "restoration" not only of class power, of capitalism as the only possible economic system, it is a restoration of capitalism as synonymous with rationality. Thus, the question remains, why now, or at least why over the last thirty years has capitalism taken this neo-liberal turn? If Foucault's invocation of the specter of Nazi Germany is insufficient to account for the specific historical formation of capitalism, the opposition to Marx does little to help clarify the dominance of neoliberalism now. Somewhat paradoxically this question can be at least partially answered by looking at one of the few points of intersection between Marx and neoliberalism.

In the *Grundrisse,* Marx does not use the term "human capital," but fixed capital, a term generally used to refer to machinery, factories, and other investments in the means of production to refer to the subjectivity, the subjective powers of the worker. In general Marx understood the progression of capital to be a process by which the skills, knowledge, and know-how of workers were gradually incorporated into machinery, into fixed capital, reducing the laborer to an unskilled and ultimately replaceable cog in a machine. This is "proletarianization" the process by which capitalism produces its gravediggers in a class of impoverished workers who have nothing to lose but their chains. In the *Grundrisse,* however, Marx addresses a fun-

[16] Christian Laval, *L'homme économique: Essai sur les racines du néolibéralisme (*Paris: Gallimard, 2007), 17.

damentally different possibility, capital's exploitation of not just the physical powers of the body, but the general social knowledge spread throughout society and embodied in each individual. This is what Marx refers to as the "general intellect"—the diffused social knowledge of society. This knowledge, the capacity to use various languages, protocols, and symbolic systems, is largely produced outside of work. As Marx writes: "The saving of labor time is equal to an increase of free time, i.e. time for the full development of the individual, which in turn reacts back upon the productive power of labor as itself the greatest productive power. From the standpoint of the direct production process it can be regarded as the production of *fixed capital*, this fixed capital being man himself."[17] Marx's deviation from the standard terminology of his own corpus, terminology that designates the worker as labor power (or living labor), the machine or factory as fixed capital, and money as circulating capital, is ultimately revealing. It reveals something of a future that Marx could barely envision, a future that has become our present: the real subsumption of society by capital. This subsumption involves not only the formation of what Marx referred to as a specifically capitalist mode of production, but also the incorporation of all subjective potential, the capacity to communicate, to feel, to create, to think, into productive powers for capital. Capital no longer simply exploits labor, understood as the physical capacity to transform objects, but puts to work the capacities to create and communicate that traverse social relations. It is possible to say that with real subsumption capital has no outside, there is no relationship that cannot be transformed into a commodity, but at the same time capital is nothing but outside, production takes place outside of the factory and the firm, in various social relationships. Because of this fundamental displacement subjectivity becomes paramount, subjectivity itself becomes productive and it is this same subjectivity that must be controlled.

For Antonio Negri there is a direct relationship between real subsumption as a transformation of the capitalist mode of production and neoliberalism as a transformation of the presentation of capitalism. It is not simply that neoliberalism works to efface the fundamental division between worker and capitalist, between wages and capital, through the production of neo-liberal subjectivity. After all this opposition, this antagonism has preexisted neoliberalism by centuries. Neoliberalism is a discourse and practice that is aimed to curtail the powers of labor that are distributed across all of society—at the exact moment in which all of social existence becomes labor, or potential labor, neoliberalism constructs the image of a society of capitalists, of entrepreneurs. As production moves from the closed space of the factory to become distributed across all of social space, encompassing all spheres of cultural and social existence, neoliberalism presents an image of society as a market, effacing

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[17] Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (New York: Penguin, 1973), 712.

production altogether.[18] This underscores the difference between neoliberalism as a form of power and the disciplinary power at work in the closed spaces of the factory. If disciplinary power worked by confining and fixing bodies to the production apparatuses, neoliberal power works by dispersing bodies and individuals through privatization and isolation. Deregulation, the central term and political strategy of neoliberalism, is not the absence of governing, or regulating, but a form of governing through isolation and dispersion.[19] As more and more wealth is produced by the collective social powers of society, neoliberalism presents us with an image of society made up of self-interested individuals. For Negri, neoliberalism and the idea of human capital is a misrepresentation of the productive powers of society. "The only problem is that extreme liberalization of the economy reveals its opposite, namely that the social and productive environment is not made up of atomized individuals…the real environment is made up of collective individuals."[20] In Negri's analysis, the relation between neoliberalism and real subsumption takes on the characteristics of a Manichean opposition. We are all workers or we are all capitalists: either view society as an extension of labor across all social spheres, from the factory to the school to the home, and across all aspects of human existence, from the work of the hands to the mind, or view society as a logic of competition and investment that encompasses all human relationships. While Negri's presentation has an advantage over Foucault's lectures in that it grasps the historical formation of neoliberalism against the backdrop of a specific transformation of capital, in some sense following Foucault's tendency to present disciplinary power and biopower against the backdrop of specific changes in the economic organization of society, it does so by almost casting neoliberalism as an ideology in the pejorative sense of the term. It would appear that for Negri real subsumption is the truth of society, and neoliberalism is only a misrepresentation of that truth. As Thomas Lemke has argued, Foucault's idea of governmentality, is argued against such a division that posits actual material reality on one side and its ideological misrepresentation on the other. A governmentality is a particular mentality, a particular manner of governing, that is actualized in habits, perceptions, and subjectivity. Governmentality situates actions and conceptions on the same plane of immanence.[21] Which is to say, that any criticism of neoliberalism as governmentality must not focus on its errors, on its myopic conception of social existence, but on its particular production of truth. For Foucault, we have to take seriously the manner in which the fundamental understanding of individuals as governed by interest and competition is not just an ideology that can be refused and

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18 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *The Labor of Dionysus: A Critique of the State Form (*Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 1994), 226.

19 Antonio Negri, *The Politics of Subversion: A Manifesto for the Twenty-First Century*, trans. James Newell (Oxford: Polity Press, 1989), 99.

20 Ibid., 206.

21 Lemke, 54.

debunked, but is an intimate part of how our lives and subjectivity are structured.

Despite Negri's tendency to lapse back into an opposition between labor and ideology, his object raises important questions echoed by other critics of neoliberalism. What is lost in neoliberalism is the critical distance opened up between different spheres and representations of subjectivity, not only the difference between work and the market, as in Marxism, but also the difference between the citizen and the economic subject, as in classical liberalism. All of these differences are effaced as one relation; that of economic self-interest, or competition, replaces the multiple spaces and relations of worker, citizen, and economic subject of consumption. To put the problem in Foucault's terms, what has disappeared in neoliberalism is the tactical polyvalence of discourse; everything is framed in terms of interests, freedoms and risks.[22] As Wendy Brown argues, one can survey the quotidian effects or practices of governmentality in the manner in which individualized/market based solutions appear in lieu of collective political solutions: gated communities for concerns about security and safety; bottled water for concerns about water purity; and private schools (or vouchers) for failing public schools, all of which offer the opportunity for individuals to opt out rather than address political problems.[23] Privatization is not just neoliberalism's strategy for dealing with the public sector, what David Harvey calls accumulation by dispossession, but a consistent element of its particular form of governmentality, its ethos, everything becomes privatized, institutions, structures, issues, and problems that used to constitute the public.[24] It is privatization all the way down. For Brown, neoliberalism entails a massive de-democratization, as terms such as the public good, rights and debate, no longer have any meaning. "The model neoliberal citizen is one who strategizes for her or himself among various social, political, and economic options, not one who strives with others to alter or organize these options."[25] Thus, while it is possible to argue that neoliberalism is a more flexible, an open form of power as opposed to the closed spaces of disciplines, a form of power that operates on freedoms, on a constitutive multiplicity, it is in some sense all the more closed in that as a form of governmentality, as a political rationality, it is without an outside. It does not encounter any tension with a competing logic of worker or citizen, with a different articulation of subjectivity. States, corporations, individuals are all governed by the same logic, that of interest and competition.

Foucault's development, albeit partial, of account of neoliberalism as governmentality has as its major advantage a clarification of the terrain on which neo-

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22 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1: An Introduction,* trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1978), 101.

23 Wendy Brown, "American Nightmare: Neoliberalism, Neoconservatism, and Democratization," Political Theory, 34, 6 (2006), 704.

24 David Harvey, 154.

25 Wendy Brown, "Neoliberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy," in *Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 2005), 43.

liberalism can be countered. It is not enough to simply oppose neoliberalism as ideology, revealing the truth of social existence that it misses, or to enumerate its various failings as policy. Rather any opposition to neoliberalism must take seriously its effectiveness, the manner in which it has transformed work subjectivity and social relationships. As Foucault argues, neoliberalism operates less on actions, directly curtailing them, then on the condition and effects of actions, on the sense of possibility. The reigning ideal of interest and the calculations of cost and benefit do not so much limit what one can do, neoliberal thinkers are famously indifferent to prescriptive ideals, examining the illegal drug trade as a more or less rational investment, but limit the sense of what is possible. Specifically the ideal of the fundamentally self-interested individual curtails any collective transformation of the conditions of existence. It is not that such actions are not prohibited, restricted by the dictates of a sovereign or the structures of disciplinary power, they are not seen as possible, closed off by a society made up of self-interested individuals. It is perhaps no accident that one of the most famous political implementers of neoliberal reforms, Margaret Thatcher, used the slogan, "there is no alternative," legitimating neoliberalism based on the stark absence of possibilities. Similarly, and as part of a belated response to the former Prime Minister, it also perhaps no accident that the slogan of the famous Seattle protests against the IMF and World Bank was, "another world is possible," and it is very often the sense of a possibility of not only another world, but of another way of organizing politics that is remembered, the image of turtles and teamsters marching hand and hand, when those protests are referred to.[26] It is also this sense of possibility that the present seems to be lacking; it is difficult to imagine let alone enact a future other than a future dominated by interest and the destructive vicissitudes of competition. A political response to neoliberalism must meet it on its terrain, that of the production of subjectivity, freedom and possibility.

[26] Maurizio Lazzarato, *Les révolutions du capitalisme (*Paris: Le Seuil, 2004), 19.