



NEOLIBERALISM, OR GOVERNING FOR THE MARKETS

Posted on June 1, 2023 by Diego Fusaro



The foundation of turbo-capitalism is consistent with the neo-liberal vision that Foucault condensed in the formula of government not "of the markets" but "for the markets". In von Hayek's language, the government and the state have properly only one task, which is not to "produce certain services or goods for the consumption of citizens, but rather to control that the mechanism regulating the production of goods and services is kept in operation."

Right and left, subsumed under capital, now share the same neoliberal economic vision, following the banner of free market fundamentalism, consisting in the simultaneous reduction of the state and government to the status of mere servants of the market. Adherence to the dogma of free cannibalism, as the free market might best be defined, is the claim of the economic right that has become so widespread that it has been transfigured into *Weltbild*, the ubiquitously shared "image of the world." Essentially it coincides with the "freedom to send each other to ruin"—according to Fichte's definition in [The Closed Commercial State](#)—and with the suppression of any external limitation to the power of the strongest (*ius sive potentia*).

If Keynesianism can be understood *lato sensu* as the attempt to place capitalism at the service of the social ends established by politics, it can be rightly affirmed that, on the contrary, neoliberalism marks the historical epochal transition from an economic policy with a Keynesian basis to one with a Hayekian matrix: social justice and market justice will no longer coexist, for the only one that will survive is market justice, converted—in fulfillment of Thrasymachus' theorem expressed in the *Republic* (338c)—into "the right of the strongest," τὸ τοῦ κρείττονος συμφέρον. According to Hayek's canonical view, the concept of social justice is, from the neoliberal point of view, a mere "empty and meaningless" *ens imaginatio*.

As Harvey points out in his [Brief History of Neoliberalism](#) (2005), this perspective originates in the right quadrant and particularly in theorists such as von Hayek and von Mises, later finding its operational strongholds in Reagan and Thatcher. The general idea, explains Harvey, is that of a deregulation of the market, judged capable of regulating itself; a deregulation through which the economy becomes *superiorem non recognoscens* and the de-sovereignized State becomes a mere "policeman" who watches over the markets and defends them when necessary. The neoliberal *ordo* has reinvented the State with an anti-Keynesian function, as an "armed guard" of the disorderly order of competitiveness and as the ultimate guarantor of the interests of the borderless neoliberal oligarchic bloc and its hegemony.

The neoliberal State intervenes in the economy; but—this is the novelty—it is structured in such a way that it can be managed unidirectionally by the cosmopolitan elite for its own benefit, thanks to the overturning of the relationship between politics and economics; and this, in a range that extends from the bailouts with public money of banks and private companies (with the redefinition of the State as an immense insurance company, issuing policies for the benefit of the cynical wolves of Wall Street) to the police repression of protest movements led by the national-popular Servant against the globalist order (from the G8 of Genoa in 2001, to the French plazas with the yellow vests in 2019).

The disavowal of politics by the market is being completed by the gradual erosion of the basis of legitimacy of the democratic state and its social foundations, which were the result of the Keynesian compromise between the political and the economic: politics must now be subjected to a subordinate role, unable to interfere in the economy, acting exclusively as its servant and its "bodyguard." This is what we propose to call "the neoliberal depoliticization of the economy." In its essence, the Keynesian compromise was the delicate device constructed to redistribute wealth from top to bottom and thus guarantee an acceptable balance between democracy and capitalism. Since the end of real socialism and with the absolute subsumption of the left under capital, the gradual decomposition of the welfare state has continued in its main determinations (from pensions to compensation, from pregnancy to illness), all evidently incompatible with the "challenges" of competitiveness without borders, *id est*, with the requirement to produce as much as possible, at the lowest possible price.

Connected with the vertical reorganization of the balance of power made possible by the triumph of the techno-capitalist paradigm in 1989, de-democratization is based, as noted above, on de-sovereignization and, together, on supra-nationalization, that is, on the displacement of the center of power from the dimension of democratic sovereign states to post-democratic transnational entities. As Costanzo Preve emphasizes, "the 'public' political decision is emptied and rendered marginal through its 'private' transfer to the great centers of the financial oligarchies," with the consequent transition from national parliaments to private boards of directors. By this route, which is legitimized as a liberation from the belligerence of national States and which, in reality, aims at the neutralization of democratic sovereignty (which implies citizenship and representation) and the convergent strengthening of the cosmopolitan financial oligarchy "for superfluous peoples," the disjunction between the devices of popular representation and decisions of a macroeconomic nature is achieved. The economy becomes depoliticized as it is increasingly freed from democratic control, just as politics—or what we continue to call it—becomes "economicized," insofar as it becomes simple followership of the economic interests of the dominant groups ("business committee of the dominant classes", to borrow Marx's formula). *L'état c'est moi* is today the formula no longer pronounced by the king, but by the neoliberal oligarchic class

as a whole.

The tax reliefs implemented by the liberal governance for the benefit of the lords of capital are also inscribed in this horizon of meaning, among others, in coherence with the undemonstrated motivation, according to which they originate generalized increases in the levels of employment and income. The stateless "hoods of finance"—as Federico Caffè called them—and the borderless capital giants are, in fact, tax evaders according to the law—the e-commerce giants, for example, pay a tax of about 3%—while the middle and working classes suffer a fiscal hyper-pressure that, in fact, represents a permanent expropriation.

From an examination of the balances of power of turbo-capitalism it is clear that "market" not only does not rhyme with "democracy," but proceeds by emptying its content and eroding its spaces. Herein lies the true essence of the post-1989 "Second Restoration," as Badiou called it in *The Century*: victorious capital takes all. And it goes on the offensive, de-sovereignizing the national states as the last bastions of resistance to the domination of the global economy, attacking the middle and working classes and deconstructing the spaces of the still perfectible noucentische democracies.

Increasingly, especially since the 1990s, neoliberal governance has debased electoral democracy in the name of expertise—and that "expertise" to which they refer is never that of the workers and the national-popular masses, but, on the contrary, coincides with the exclusive expertise of the "technicians," as they are piously called, using an anodyne and falsely super partes term, the bankers and top managers. This was pioneered by Frank Fischer in *Technocracy and the Politics of Expertise* (1990). According to the order of liberal discourse, the power to decide will not be vested in the sovereign people (which is, after all, another way of saying "democracy"), but in the "committee"—or task force—of "experts," i.e., bankers and top managers. In other words, beyond the glassy theater of appearances, it is the economy, the market and the ruling class who really decide, and in a way that is anything but democratic. And it is also for this reason that neoliberalism can also be understood as the hijacking of common experience through expertise.

As has already been recalled, even with regard to the aversion to the people as a sovereign subject (crystallized in the category of "populism"), the new left and the neoliberal oligarchic bloc create a system. And such an involution is synthesized in the following formula—since the people do not have the capacity to decide and choose, it is necessary to annul them, so that without the people—and here comes the paradox—democracy can function better. It was as a result of the conclusions drawn in *The*

Crisis of Democracy: Report On the Governability of Democracies, the 1975 study jointly prepared by Michel Crozier, Samuel Huntington and Joji Watanuki, commissioned by the "Trilateral Commission"—that the dominant groups have been searching for new conceptual tools to govern the people by regenerating the "just distance" between above and below, threatened at that stage by the growing democratic participation and by the not yet fully anesthetized critical capacity of the subaltern classes.

The reduction of trade union power, the piloted reduction of popular participation in political life and the spread of generalized apathy, openly appeared as some of the privileged strategies for the vertical readjustment of the balance of power. The very devaluation of the people as an essential part of democratic life has been, to an ever-increasing extent after 1989, the high point of this post-democratic reorganization characteristic of neoliberalism.

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[Featured](#): *Capitalism*, by Jack Andriano; painted in 2020.
