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American Nightmare

Neoliberalism, Neoconservatism, and De-Democratization

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Neoliberalism and neoconservatism are two distinct political rationalities in the contemporary United States. They have few overlapping formal characteristics, and even appear contradictory in many respects. Yet they converge not only in the current presidential administration but also in their de-democratizing effects. Their respective devaluation of political liberty, equality, substantive citizenship, and the rule of law in favor of governance according to market criteria on the one side, and valorization of state power for putatively moral ends on the other, undermines both the culture and institutions of constitutional democracy. Above all, the two rationalities work symbiotically to produce a subject relatively indifferent to veracity and accountability in government and to political freedom and equality among the citizenry.

Keywords: *neoliberalism; neoconservatism; democracy; de-democratization*

Stuart Hall recently suggested that the various powers and rationalities configuring the present would be better grasped according to the logic of dreamwork than the logic of philosophical entailment.¹ The idea, no doubt, is to avoid imposing a monological, internally consistent, temporally linear, and systematic frame on that which is none of these things.² But Hall's provocative suggestion is also difficult to follow, and not only because of dreamwork's complexity. Certainly there is this complexity: according to Freud, dreams do not merely mediate between the jumble of life experiences and a preexisting unconscious formation, but are practiced on behalf of the organism—this is their work—in ways that exceed such mediation and actually reconstruct elements of the unconscious. But the figure of dreamwork taken up for political analysis also promises to puncture the conceit of our innocence and virtue: dreams often tell us things we would rather not know about ourselves, in particular revealing identifications and desires we consciously disavow. Patterning political analysis after dreamwork thus threatens to puncture a left political moralizing impulse

that wants everything the right stands for to be driven by nefariousness, smallness, or greed, and everything we do to be generously minded and good, an impulse that casts Us and Them in seamless and opposing moral-political universes.

Hall's challenge to break with monological, totalizing, and linear accounts, then, is impeded not simply by an intellectual hangover (from an episteme in which power was figured as unified, systematic, and purposeful) but also by a difficulty in left desire. This is a difficulty we can redress only through a willingness to reckon with the incoherent, multiply sourced, and unsystematic nature of political orders and rationalities on the one hand, and to avow identification and affinity with some of what we excoriate on the other. If, for example, many on the left share the rightist ambition to secure cultural and political hegemony and impose a moral order, such anti-democratic impulses bear careful scrutiny even, nay especially, as all sides adorn themselves in the robes of democracy.

The problematic of this essay is well-suited to the analytics of dreamwork. This is the problematic of thinking together American neoconservatism—a fierce moral-political rationality—and neoliberalism—a market-political rationality that exceeds its peculiarly American instantiation and that does not align exclusively with any political persuasion. The aim is not to understand the project of the American right tout court, as if there were such a unified endeavor or entity behind it, but to apprehend how these two rationalities, themselves composite, inadvertently converge at crucial points to extend a cannibalism of liberal democracy already underway from other sources in the past half century.³ Nor is the aim to sentimentalize liberal democracy as such, but rather to grasp the implications of its waning as a political form, and even to pose a question about whether democracy continues to have meaning as a term or aspiration. If, as I have suggested elsewhere, the institutions as well as the political culture comprising liberal democracy are passing into history, the left is faced both with the project of mourning what it never wholly loved and with the task of dramatically resetting its critique and vision in terms of the historical supersession of liberal democracy, and not only of failed socialist experiments.⁴

This essay does not pursue these projects of mourning or revisioning; rather, it frames their necessity by exploring the forces of de-democratization produced at the intersection of neoliberal and neoconservative rationalities in the United States. What are some of the accidental symbiotic effects of the convergences between these two rationalities, effects that not only hijack the meaning of democracy to sanction permanent and extreme class divisions, managed and bought political life, power concentrated in links

between corporate and governing elites, and imperial statism, but also destroy the foundation of democracy in the cultivation of a people's needs, desires, and orientation toward power and powerlessness? And what elements of left protest against these rationalities might reiterate these effects? The essay is concerned, then, less with the ostentatious clear-cutting of democratic institutions represented, for example, by elements of the USA Patriotic Act, court stripping, regressive tax schemes, certain practices of Homeland Security, anti-immigrant policies, or corrupt electoral practices than with the hollowing out of a democratic political culture and the production of the undemocratic citizen. This is the citizen who loves and wants neither freedom nor equality, even of a liberal sort; the citizen who expects neither truth nor accountability in governance and state actions; the citizen who is not distressed by exorbitant concentrations of political and economic power, routine abrogations of the rule of law, or distinctly undemocratic formulations of national purpose at home and abroad. This is the hollowing out that confronts us as a sustained political condition no matter how low Bush's star sinks, and no matter which party prevails in the upcoming 2006 midterm elections.

Thinking Neoliberalism and Neoconservatism Together

We begin with a set of formal concerns about the relation between a neoliberalism contoured by globalized capital but given a particular twist in each local context where it dwells, and a distinctly American neoconservatism that also has cousins in other fundamentalist and religiously inflected responses to late modernity but is homegrown and internally diverse even in the American context. How does a rationality that is expressly amoral at the level of both ends and means (neoliberalism) intersect with one that is expressly moral and regulatory (neoconservatism)?⁵ How does a project that empties the world of meaning, that cheapens and deracinates life and openly exploits desire, intersect one centered on fixing and enforcing meanings, conserving certain ways of life, and repressing and regulating desire? How does support for governance modeled on the firm and a normative social fabric of self-interest marry or jostle against support for governance modeled on church authority and a normative social fabric of self-sacrifice and long-term filial loyalty, the very fabric shredded by unbridled capitalism? And what might be the role of evangelical Christianity on one side and hyper-demonized enemies to the American

state on the other in facilitating this marriage? Again, the search here is not for a single or coherent logic, but for an understanding of the effects of two disparate streams of rationality in producing the contemporary landscape of political intelligibility and possibility. This involves discerning sites of social and psychological vulnerability, exploitability, or orientation that they respectively trade or draw on in one another. What effects of power, legitimacy, or authority consequent to one rationality become root soil for the other? As the figure of dreamwork would suggest, the aim is to discover what might appear as logical contradiction at the level of ideas to be grasped as partially and unsystematically symbiotic at the level of political subjectivity, and thus to depart from analyses that either distinguish values talk from material interests or reprise notions of “false consciousness.”

The essay first maps select elements of neoliberalism and neoconservatism, then considers their collisions and convergences, and concludes with a brief reflection on how fundamentalist Christianity as an emergent idiom of public life compounds the de-democratizing force of these two rationalities.

Neoliberalism

I have argued elsewhere that in order to comprehend neoliberalism’s political and cultural effects, it must be conceived of as more than a set of free market economic policies that dismantle welfare states and privatize public services in the North, make wreckage of efforts at democratic sovereignty or economic self-direction in the South, and intensify income disparities everywhere. Certainly neoliberalism comprises these effects, but as a political rationality, it also involves a specific and consequential organization of the social, the subject, and the state.⁶ A political rationality is not equivalent to an ideology stemming from or masking an economic reality, nor is it merely a spillover effect of the economic on the political or the social. Rather, as Foucault inflected the term, a political rationality is a specific form of normative political reason organizing the political sphere, governance practices, and citizenship.⁷ A political rationality governs the sayable, the intelligible, and the truth criteria of these domains. Thus, while neoliberal political rationality is based on a certain conception of the market, its organization of governance and the social is not merely the result of leakage from the economic to other spheres but rather of the explicit imposition of a particular form of market rationality on these spheres. Neoliberalism as a form of political reasoning that articulates the nature and meaning of the political, the social, and the subject must be underscored because it is

through this form and articulation that its usurpation of other more democratic rationalities occurs.

What are the salient features of neoliberal political rationality?⁸ First, in contrast with classical economic liberalism (and, it is important to remind American readers, the “liberalism” of neoliberalism refers to economic rather than political liberalism), neoliberalism is not confined to an expressly economic sphere, nor does it cast the market as natural and self-regulating even in the economic sphere. Part of what makes neoliberalism “neo” is that it depicts free markets, free trade, and entrepreneurial rationality as *achieved and normative*, as promulgated through law and through social and economic policy—not simply as occurring by dint of nature. Second, neoliberalism casts the political and social spheres both as appropriately dominated by market concerns and as themselves organized by market rationality. That is, more than simply facilitating the economy, the state itself must construct and construe itself in market terms, as well as develop policies and promulgate a political culture that figures citizens exhaustively as rational economic actors in every sphere of life. Familiar here are the many privatization and outsourcing schemes for welfare, education, prisons, the police, and the military, but this aspect of neoliberalism also entails a host of policies that figure and produce citizens as individual entrepreneurs and consumers whose moral autonomy is measured by their capacity for “self-care”—their ability to provide for their own needs and service their own ambitions, whether as welfare recipients, medical patients, consumers of pharmaceuticals, university students, or workers in ephemeral occupations. Third, neoliberal political rationality produces governance criteria along the same lines, that is, criteria of productivity and profitability, with the consequence that governance talk increasingly becomes market-speak, businesspersons replace lawyers as the governing class in liberal democracies, and business norms replace juridical principles. There are myriad examples of this transformation but perhaps none so poignant as G. W. Bush’s remark on the heels of his 2004 reelection: “I earned political capital in [this] campaign and now I intend to spend it.”⁹ Spend it he has, of course, to the point of exhausting the coffers, but significant for our purposes is the enormous difference between enacting a public mandate and accumulating individual political capital. The shift to a market rationality in governance is also apparent in the current American administration’s blithe reference to “legalisms” as something like bothersome mosquitoes flying around the execution of foreign and domestic policy, a reference that runs from responsiveness to the Geneva Conventions for war to the question of how best to secure marriage from invasion by homosexuals (“[T]he lawyers

are working on the best approach,” Bush said at one point). It is apparent as well in Bush’s routine reference to his job as one of “making difficult decisions” rather than executing the will of the people—a strikingly Schmittian resignification of executive power in democracy. And it appeared in Bush’s likening of massive worldwide protests against the launching of the Iraq war in 2003 to product-testing “focus groups.”¹⁰ All of these represent a business approach to governing, one in which democratic principles and the rule of law are neither guides nor serious constraints but rather tools or obstacles, a phenomenon Foucault formulated concisely as the “tacticalization” of law.¹¹

The saturation of the state, political culture, and the social with market rationality effectively strips commitments to political democracy from governance concerns and political culture. Consider: as class and other impediments to servicing the entrepreneurial self are radically depoliticized, what the neoliberals call “the equal right to inequality” is newly legitimated, thereby tabling democracy’s formal commitment to *egalitarianism*.¹² A permanent underclass, and even a permanent criminal class, along with a class of aliens or non-citizens are produced and accepted as an inevitable cost of such a society, thereby undermining a formal commitment to *universalism*. Civic and legal principles securing the political (as opposed to private) autonomy of citizens, such as those enumerated in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, have no place in a neoliberal schema, which means that neoliberal political rationality features no intrinsic commitment to *political liberty*.¹³ Citizenship, reduced to self-care, is divested of any orientation toward the common, thereby undermining an already weak investment in an *active citizenry* and an already thin concept of a *public good* from a liberal democratic table of values. And, as *law* is tacticalized or instrumentalized, it is radically desacralized, producing the conditions for its routine suspension or abrogation, and paving ground for what Agamben, drawing on Schmitt, has formulated as sovereignty in the form of a permanent “state of exception.”¹⁴ This is evident not only in such events as the openly political decision of the U.S. Supreme Court to halt the Florida recount in the 2000 presidential election—a decision markedly uncontested by the populace—or the abrogation of civil liberties in the name of security, but also in the strategic use of civil rights law to dismantle egalitarian projects ranging from affirmative action to progressive taxation.¹⁵ Meanwhile, democracy’s underpinning by a *free press* is loosened on one side by corporate ownership and on the other by laws tactically invoked to shield political officials but not journalists from revealing sources or leaking classified information.

Equality, universality, political autonomy and liberty, citizenship, the rule of law, a free press: however inadequately realized over several centuries of constitutional democracy in the Euro-Atlantic world, these are its fundamentals. And these are what neoliberal political rationality jettisons, or at least severely challenges, with its alternative principles of governance.

Neoconservatism

There has been lively debate in recent years about the intellectual origins, evolution, deviations, and hybrid forms of the phenomenon known as neoconservatism. Scholars and activists inside and outside its ranks have taken part, with two French writers contributing one of the best works on the subject.¹⁶ Francis Fukuyama is probably right to identify a significant departure from signature neoconservative principles at the moment of neoconservatism's ascendancy from political and cultural critique to political power in the form of the G. W. Bush administration. However, this essay is concerned with neoconservatism not as an intellectual project but as an emergent political rationality that both draws from and produces a particular political culture and political subject. So it is necessarily the bowdlerized version—the politically practiced hybrid rather than the original intellectual conceptualization—that is relevant here.

Indeed, in contrast with Fukuyama's reduction of neoconservatism to four foundational principles, or Grant Smith's tendentious account of neoconservatives as united in "articles of faith" centered on militarism, corporatism, and Israel, neoconservatism as a political formation is neither ideologically nor socially unified.¹⁷ It emerges from a contingent convergence of interests among evangelical Christians, Jewish Straussians, avowedly secular Cold Warriors who have made a fetish of the West, conservative feminists and other family moralists (Lynne Cheney types), random imperialists, and converted liberals and socialists who, in Irving Kristol's infamous words, have been "mugged by reality."¹⁸ Neoconservatism includes intellectuals and anti-intellectuals, secular Jews and evangelical Christians, chamber musicians turned Sovietologists, political theory professors turned policy wonks, angry white men, and righteous black ones. In short, neoconservatism is born out of a literally unholy alliance, one that is only unevenly and opportunistically religious, although we will later take up religion's importance in facilitating neoconservatism's appeal to a popular base, and especially in constructing a reception for its authoritarianism.

In Anne Norton's words, what unites the neoconservatives is the desire for

a strong state and a state that will put its strength to use. . . . [They] would have that state ally itself with—and empower—corporations. Neoconservatives reject the vulgarity of mass culture. They deplore the decadence of artists and intellectuals. They, though not always religious themselves, ally themselves with religion and religious crusades. They encourage family values and the praise of older forms of family life, where women occupy themselves with children, cooking and the church, and men take on the burdens of manliness. They see in war and the preparation for war the restoration of private virtue and public spirit. . . . Above all, Irving Kristol writes, neoconservatism calls for a revival of patriotism, a strong military, and an expansionist foreign policy.¹⁹

While the disparate elements of neoconservatism (which Irving Kristol calls an “orientation” rather than a “movement”) at times seem bound together primarily by shared objects of loathing—the United Nations, Amnesty International, and the World Court; latte liberals, redistributive welfarists, godless libertines, and flag burners; Muslims, European cosmopolitanism, critical intellectuals, Jane Fonda, San Francisco, and ethics committees—Norton's account suggests that suturing together its strange pieces is a strong, state-led and -legislated moral-political vision. Fukuyama, too, argues that neoconservatism is contoured by belief “in the possibility of linking power and morality” and especially the belief “that American power has been and could be used for moral purposes.”²⁰ The open affirmation of moralized state power in the domestic and international sphere is what sets off neoconservatism from an older conservatism, what makes it *neo*. As Norton argues, neoconservatism abandons classic conservative commitments to a modest libertarianism, isolationism, frugality and fiscal tightness, belief in limits and moderation, and affinity with aristocratic virtues of refinement, rectitude, civility, education, and discipline.²¹ Unlike its predecessor, it is animated by an overtly avowed power drive, by angst about the declining or crumbling status of morality within the West, and by a concomitant moralization of a certain imaginary of the West and its values. Thus, while many neoconservatives decry the “social engineering” they attribute to socialism and liberal democratic egalitarian projects such as affirmative action, integration, and poverty reduction, neoconservatism no more rejects state-led behaviorism than neoliberalism does. Rather, it identifies the state, including law, with the task of setting the moral-religious compass for society, and indeed for the world. This endorsement of state power, and attribution of moral authority to the state, is at odds with liberalism in every sense of the word.²²

Neoliberalism and Neoconservatism

What we have in neoliberalism and neoconservatism, then, is a market-political rationality and a moral-political rationality, with a business model of the state in one case and a theological model of the state in the other. And, even as many American churches and other religious institutions today have significant corporate dimensions (and often address their constituencies in neoliberal discourse) and even as many post-Fordist firms have taken on pastoral features and duties (and often address their workers or “team members” in pastoral discourse), there is serious material for collision here. Indeed, these two rationalities collide all the time in what many have framed as the impossibility of the Republican Party trying to be both the Party of Moral Values and Party of Big Business. Trivial examples include Super Bowl halftime shows and advertising in which Janet Jackson’s ambition for a new CD, Pfizer’s aim to sell Viagra to a youth- and sex-obsessed society, and ABC’s aim to plump its ratings for *Desperate Housewives* all lead to scandalous events that send the neocons into frenzies of regulatory fervor. More significant examples include the steady stream of political ethics scandals stretching from Gingrich to DeLay, Frist to Libby, and Duke Cunningham to Jack Abramoff, and corporate scandals stretching from Enron to WorldCom and from Halliburton to Harken. These rationalities also clash ostentatiously in the sphere of foreign policy, where what critics loosely refer to as imperial behavior veers between commitments to corporate interests and free trade on one side and statist moral crusades at odds with these interests on the other; produces inconstant and inconsistent treatments of various “threats” to security (Iraq, Iran, North Korea), “violators of human rights” (China, Cuba, the Taliban), and “threats to humanity” (the political economy of drugs and weapons); and increasingly divides over Israel as well. There is also tension between neoconservatism and neoliberalism about the sustainable level of federal debt generated by military expenditures: while neither rationality hews to the fiscal austerity and balanced federal checkbook promulgated by classic conservatives, neoliberals are more than a little unhappy about the military tab run up by the neocons.

But beyond the scandals and policy conflicts are the routine effects of neoliberal economics, governance, and political rationality on everyday life, effects that neoconservative commitments chafe against. These include the destruction of small businesses and local commerce; the elimination of jobs and union-secured wages, benefits, and workplace protections; and the gutting of federal- and state-funded infrastructure (education, transportation,

emergency services) that sustains families and towns. Here, the rich-get-richer dimensions of every aspect of neoliberalism run counter to neoconservatism's necessary reliance on a working- and lower-middle-class populist base, and especially its cultivation of a traditional masculinity and family structure undercut by falling real wages and depleted infrastructures and social services. And the upright, patriotic, moral, and self-sacrificing neoconservative subject is partially undone by a neoliberal subject inured against altruism and wholly in thrall to its own interest: the neoliberal rationality of strict means-ends calculations and need satisfaction (and the making of states, citizens, and subjects in that image) clashes with the neoconservative project of producing a moral subject and moral order against the effects of the market in culture and oriented to the repression and sublimation rather than the satisfaction of desire.

Perhaps most importantly, neoliberalism figures a future in which cultural and national borders are largely erased, in which all relations, attachments, and endeavors are submitted to a monetary nexus, while neoconservatism scrambles to re-articulate and police cultural and national borders, the sacred, and the singular through discourses of patriotism, religiosity, and the West. Neoliberalism looks forward to a global order contoured by a universalized market rationality in which cultural difference is at most a commodity, and nation-state boundaries are but markers of culinary differences and provincial legal arrangements, while American neoconservatism looks backward to a national and nationalist order contoured by a set of moral and political attachments inflected by the contingent ambition of Empire. More generally, neoliberalism confidently identifies itself with the future, and in producing itself as normal rather than adversarial does not acknowledge any alternative futures. Neoconservatism, on the other hand, identifies itself as the guardian and advocate of a potentially vanishing past and present, and a righteous bulwark against loss, and constitutes itself a warring against serious contenders for an alternative futurity, those it identifies as "liberalism" at home and "barbarism" abroad.

But here it is important to remember that neoconservatism is also born in part as a response to capitalism's erosion of meaning and morality, and that the founding neoconservatives, while opposed to communism as a political and social form, were rarely ardent free marketeers. To the contrary, in 1978, Irving Kristol, the original and iconic neocon, famously gave "two cheers" for capitalism for the freedom and wealth it accrues for most people, withholding the third cheer because "consumer societies are empty of moral meaning if not forthrightly nihilistic." So the conundrum of neoconservatism's concern to preserve or re-weave the moral fabric that corporate

domination shreds is actually a foundation stone of neoconservatism, at least among its intellectuals. However enthusiastic about corporate wealth today, and however close to it socially and politically, no neocon is a pure neoliberal, although many endorse neoliberalism to the point of making difficulty for themselves, and speak a strange verbal brew that mixes the idioms of moral rectitude and entrepreneurial calculation. Still, “corporate responsibility” has become as much the watchword of the neocons as of liberals or the left, even if each wants the corporation to be responsible to and for different things.

Even neoliberal political rationality does not aim to clear the state and society of moral and political norms; rather, it is available to promulgate and realize such norms through market mechanisms, through incentives rather than directives. (Well-known American examples include workfare and marriage benefits for the indigent, and “three strikes” laws that convert a third misdemeanor into a felony-level prison sentence.) Moreover, like neoliberalism, neoconservatism is not opposed to government even as it draws on this legitimating legacy of an older conservatism in its opposition to taxation and welfare. Neocons oppose state redistribution of wealth, not expensive government as such, just as they selectively favor government intrusion, censorship, and regulation for the under-races and underclasses, for critical intellectuals, and for security and morality issues. In Irving Kristol’s words,

Neocons do not feel . . . alarm or anxiety about the growth of the state in the past century, seeing it as natural, indeed inevitable. . . . People have always preferred strong government to weak government, although they certainly have no liking for anything that smacks of overly intrusive government. . . . Neocons and religious traditionalists . . . are united on issues concerning the quality of education, the relations of church and state, the regulation of pornography, and the like, all of which they regard as proper candidates for the government’s attention. And then, of course, there is foreign policy.²³

Again, just as neoliberals deviate from *laissez-faire* economics in mobilizing law and policy to support the market and shape social goals, neocons too are statist: they support state regulation of morality, state steering of the economy, and, of course, building a mighty state military enterprise. As the Straussians would have it, government is a pilot in the Platonic sense: it unapologetically steers the moral, political, and economic ship, and, as we shall see, draws in part on a religiously interpellated citizenry—submissive to hierarchy and authority, and largely indifferent to deliberation and

reasoning—to legitimate this. While neoconservative governance may do as much of this steering as possible through neoliberal political technologies that make good entrepreneurial actors and discerning consumers even out of welfare recipients and illegal immigrants, it does not shy from overtly deciding and enforcing norms across fields ranging from marriage to fiscal policy to war.

What is supplanted by neoconservative notions and practices of governance resting atop neoliberal productions of the political and the citizen? First, they displace liberal democratic modes of state legitimacy largely taken for granted in the postwar twentieth century, including those anointing “democratic” states as universal, procedural, and juridical; as religiously and culturally secular; and as peaceful and defense oriented. These nodes of legitimacy are replaced by a figure of a state that is openly partial, maneuvering, and political; openly invested in culture and the market; openly engaged in promoting a civic religion that links family form, consumer practices, political passivity, and patriotism; and openly and aggressively imperial. Each of these reformulations is significant unto itself, but together they establish a relation of mutual reinforcement between newly legitimated statism in domestic and international politics.

In addition, although neoconservatism, like neoliberalism, wraps itself in the mantle of “liberty” and “democracy,” neoconservative political projects displace the key principles and assumptions long associated with constitutional democracy. Equality is not a value to be found anywhere in the neocon or neoliberal universe; to the contrary, egalitarianism is understood as a “treacherous demagogic appeal,” to which “a property-owning and tax-paying population will, in time become less vulnerable.”²⁴ Not only does neoconservatism figure redistribution as a wrong against the middle class, but also the political rationality of neoliberalism is expressly about winners and losers based on entrepreneurial skill, and the political rationality of neoconservatism is about preserving what you’ve got and protecting your own, whether an individual family or the national family. More, the wealth of America is figured by neocons as part of its greatness (and part of what makes it desired by some foreigners, hated by others), hence an appropriate element of patriotic attachment. This renders as anti-American any resentment of the rich, reasoning that also neutralizes anger over a deteriorating standard of existence for a working class content, in Thomas Frank’s words, “to be underpaid and overweight” as long as it is also cooed to by the party of the rich as “the real America.”²⁵

Apart from egalitarianism, civil liberties, fair elections, and the rule of law also lose their standing at the conjuncture of neoliberalism and

neoconservatism, becoming instruments or symbols rather than treasures, indeed becoming wholly desacralized even as they are rhetorically wielded as beacons of democracy. Neoliberalism doesn't require them, and the neo-conservative priority of moral values and state power trumps them.

What this suggests is that the moralism, statism, and authoritarianism of neoconservatism are profoundly enabled by neoliberal rationality, even as neoconservatism aims to limit and supplement some of neoliberalism's effects, and even as the two rationalities are not concordant. Neoliberalism does not simply produce a set of problems that neoconservatism addresses or, as critics often claim, operate as neoconservatism's corporate/economic plank. Rather, neoliberal political rationality, which knows no political party, has inadvertently prepared the ground for profoundly anti-democratic political ideas and practices to take root in the culture and the subject. This is what permits neoconservatism to become more than a contestable political ideology or agenda whose star might rise or fall according to economic indicators, immigration politics, or success in imperial wars. Neoconservatism sewn in the soil prepared by neoliberalism breeds a new political form, a specific modality of governance and citizenship, one whose incompatibility with even formal democratic practices and institutions does not spur a legitimation crisis because of the neoliberal devaluation of these practices and institutions that neoconservatism then consecrates.

This argument varies not only from those that assimilate neoliberalism to neoconservatism but also from those, such as that advanced by Thomas Frank in *What's the Matter with Kansas*, which treat neoconservatives as duping the working poor and middle class with insincere "values talk," using their complicity and votes to pursue a corporate agenda directly at odds with their interests.²⁶ Frank argues that neocon leaders who "talk Christ but walk corporate" mobilize a working-class constituency on the basis of moral issues never delivered on but which keep this constituency bound to them. Hence the episodic revisitation of proposed constitutional amendments and other mostly doomed legislation to ban flag burning, abortion, homosexual unions, stem cell research, or the required teaching of evolution as science and commitments to secularism in public schools. While Frank is clearly correct about the neocon leadership's hand waving over such issues and its pursuit of policies at odds with the economic welfare of its working- and middle-class base, his analysis assumes rather than queries the "interests" he imputes to this base. Neoliberal de-democratization produces a subject who may have no such interests, who may be more desirous of its own subjection and complicit in its subordination than any democratic subject could be said to be.²⁷ That is, even as Frank explains

compellingly how the rich and powerful have exploited the disappointment and frustration of working- and middle-class America, this explanation hews to a model of objective interests on one side and ideological obfuscation and manipulation on the other. Thus it resurrects a certain political hopefulness through the worn figure of “false consciousness” and eschews the more troubling possibility of an abject, unemancipatory, and anti-egalitarian subjective orientation amongst a significant swathe of the American populace.

To see this more clearly, let us revisit four aspects of neoliberal de-democratization, considering them now as the seedbed of the new political form that I’m suggesting is produced at the intersection of neoliberal and neoconservative rationalities: (1) the devaluation of political autonomy, (2) the transformation of political problems into individual problems with market solutions, (3) the production of the consumer-citizen as available to a heavy degree of governance and authority, and (4) the legitimization of statism.

Political Autonomy

As neoliberalism eliminates political autonomy and the independent value of political participation from its table of values, it jettisons the democratic principle of sharing power and governance among the demos, or even the more modest democratic value of self-legislation or political participation. Habermas writes that the neoliberal conception of freedom

is linked with a normatively diminished conception of the person. The concept of the person as a ‘rational decider’ is not only independent of the idea of the moral person who determines her will through an insight into what is in the equal interests of all those affected; it is also independent of the concept of the citizen of a republic, who participates in the public practice of self-legislation.²⁸

Instead, democracy is equated with the existence of formal rights, especially private property rights; with the market; and with voting. Its practice among the people, whether in choosing political representatives, social policies, or political parties, is effectively reduced to an individual consumer good, little different in kind or importance from other consumer goods. “Neoliberalism also calculates that the use-value of civil liberties is consumed in the enjoyment of private autonomy. . . . [I]t does not add political autonomy as a further dimension of freedom.”²⁹ This means not only that neoliberalism “closes itself off from the intuition that citizens can be free only if they can regard themselves as . . . authors and addressees of the

law at the same time,” but also that civil liberties are easily set aside in the pursuit of a national moral project or whenever private autonomy is judged imperiled by issues of security.³⁰

Depoliticization of Social Problems

As neoliberalism converts every political or social problem into market terms, it converts them to individual problems with market solutions. Examples in the United States are legion: bottled water as a response to contamination of the water table; private schools, charter schools, and voucher systems as a response to the collapse of quality public education; anti-theft devices, private security guards, and gated communities (and nations) as a response to the production of a throwaway class and intensifying economic inequality; boutique medicine as a response to crumbling health care provision; “V-chips” as a response to the explosion of violent and pornographic material on every type of household screen; ergonomic tools and technologies as a response to the work conditions of information capitalism; and, of course, finely differentiated and titrated pharmaceutical antidepressants as a response to lives of meaninglessness or despair amidst wealth and freedom. This conversion of socially, economically, and politically produced problems into consumer items depoliticizes what has been historically produced, and it especially depoliticizes capitalism itself. Moreover, as neoliberal political rationality devolves both political problems and solutions from public to private, it further dissipates political or public life: the project of navigating the social becomes entirely one of discerning, affording, and procuring a personal solution to every socially produced problem. This is depoliticization on an unprecedented level: the economy is tailored to it, citizenship is organized by it, the media are dominated by it, and the political rationality of neoliberalism frames and endorses it.

Thus, the much-discussed commitment of neoliberalism to “privatization” has ramifications that exceed the outsourcing of police forces, prisons, welfare, militaries, and schools on one side, and the corporate buyout of public endeavors and institutions on the other. Privatization as a value and practice penetrates deep into the culture and the citizen-subject. If we have a problem, we look to a product to solve it; indeed, a good deal of our lives is devoted to researching, sharing, procuring, and upgrading these solutions. At the same time, as a quick tour of any “public” university or an hour of listening to “public” radio makes clear, distinct thresholds between the corporate and public domains are eroding, leaving only occasional conflict of interest violations, fought out at relatively legalistic levels, in their wake.

The Governed Citizen

As neoliberalism produces the citizen on the model of entrepreneur and consumer, it simultaneously makes citizens available to extensive governance and heavy administrative authority. We have already seen that neoliberals themselves have a keen appreciation of the production of certain kinds of subjects and behaviors through market incentives and deterrents. But apart from express governance aims, there is the basic critical theoretical insight that the choosing subject and the governed subject are far from opposites; indeed, individual rational action on one side and state or religious authority on the other, while operating in different semiotic registers, are quite compatible. Frankfurt school intellectuals and, before them, Plato theorized the open compatibility between individual choice and political domination, and depicted democratic subjects who are available to political tyranny or authoritarianism precisely *because* they are absorbed in a province of choice and need-satisfaction that they mistake for freedom.³¹ From a different angle, Foucault theorized a subject at once required to make its own life and heavily regulated in this making—this is what biopower and discipline together accomplish, and what neoliberal governmentality achieves.

Statism

As neoliberalism identifies the state with entrepreneurial and managerial functions, and remakes the state on the model of the firm, it facilitates and legitimates arrogations of power by the state that would be unacceptable to a democratic culture or within a democratic table of values. It replaces strictures on democratic proceduralism and accountability with norms of good management: effectivity or profitability. Indeed, it sets aside legality, accountability, and truthfulness in favor of these criteria. Hence, for example, G. W. Bush's routine response to questions about whether the pretext for invading Iraq was founded and legitimate: "Did we get rid of Saddam or not?" "Is the world a better place for it or not?"

The Supplement of Religion

If the de-democratizing effects of neoliberalism—its devaluation of political autonomy, depoliticization of social problems, accommodation to heavy degrees of governance in everyday life, and legitimate statism—prepare the ground for the authoritarian features of neoconservative governance, the

political mobilization of religious discourse is an important fertilizer. This mobilization simultaneously contours a submissive, obedient citizen and organizes a post-9/11 wounded and defensive national patriotism.³² To be clear, I am not arguing that the God-talk with which Bush woos a substantial piece of his constituency is part of the general agenda, platform, or vision of neoconservatism. Nor would I concur with those who insist that neoconservatism is relentlessly millenarian or inextricably bound up with the “rapture Christians”—there are too many secularists and Jews at the neoconservative helm for such claims to be viable. Rather, my argument is that a religiously interpellated populace, and an increasingly blurred line between religious and political culture, and between theological and political discourse, facilitates the reception of the de-democratizing forces of neoconservatism and neoliberalism.

What is frequently identified today as the late modern eruption of the theological in the political is a matter for another essay, but we have already glimpsed one aspect of it in the openly moral quality of neoconservative statism. Carl Schmitt, drawing on the French jurist Maurice Hauriou, affirmatively theorizes this quality in his little-read work, *Three Types of Juristic Thought*.³³ Here, the state is figured as providing not only order and unity but also the “guiding idea” for a human community. Indeed, it is this guiding idea, and not naked power alone, that Schmitt understands as producing the order and unity of the nation-state. Executive power stands for the being of the state insofar as it represents state unity through this idea, and this unity in turn founds state authority. Such an account of the state and executive power, which could not be further from the classical liberal account but is too Catholic to be Hobbesian and affirms too contingent a notion of “guiding idea” to be Hegelian, would seem as critical in understanding the neocon model of politics as Schmitt’s more routinely cited decisionism and friend-enemy distinction.³⁴ Neoconservative governance models state authority on church authority, a pastoral relation of the state to its flock, and a concern with unified rather than balanced or checked state power. This model acquires purchase in a political culture shaped by the late modern decontainment of religion consequent to waning nation-state sovereignty, a sovereignty originally designed in part precisely to contain and subtend both economic and religious power. As state sovereignty weakens, these forces surge back into public and political life.³⁵ Put slightly differently, after several centuries of formal though always incomplete separation of religious and political discourse—attained through state sovereignty and through privatization of religion through doctrines of secularism and tolerance, and also secured through Christianity’s easy hegemony

in the West—these containment strategies are faltering. One consequence is the de-privatization of religious claims in general, and, within the United States, an increasingly overt mixing of Christianity into political discourse and debate. This adds a further fillip to the forces of de-democratization we have been considering, especially given the anti-democratic characteristics of contemporary Christian fundamentalism in the United States.

Far from considering this iteration of Christianity closely or comprehensively, I want only to identify select features of its effect on public discourse that bear on the problem at hand. First, most religious truths, but especially those deriving from the New Testament, are relentlessly tethered to a declarative modality of truth. “God said ‘let there be light’ and there was light” was surely among the earliest and most dramatic instances of the power of performative speech, the original recognition that a saying can be a doing and a making, that an utterance can bring its truth into being and thus literally make and re-make reality. Today, this kind of truth would seem to fill a vacuum in a radically disenchanted world—one particularly short on meaningful truths and adherence to practices of truth, even to valuations of truth, a phenomenon hardly originating with neoliberalism but unquestionably accelerated by it. The declaration of what is true, right, and good without any necessary reference to facticity has become a well-known neoconservative modality of political truth—it is characteristic of Bush’s accounts of the war in Iraq, generally pronounced to be going swimmingly or at least making progress when the opposite is patently evident, and it is characteristic as well of neocon depictions of marriage as having had a single set of characteristics “since time immemorial” and of tax schemes said to help the working or middle classes that patently favor the rich. The rhetorical power of a declarative rather than reasoned or argued truth is buttressed by the neocon defense of truth and moral certainty against what is targeted as the epistemological and moral relativism of the opposition; since neoconservatism makes moral-political fetishes of truth, consistency, and moral certitude in this way, the declarative truths have more purchase than they otherwise might. Moreover, this modality of truth articulates with another popular neocon truth modality, “truth from the gut,” which corresponds with the personal moment of conversion in evangelicalism.³⁶ Here, truth derives from inner conviction or certainty that no amount of facticity or argument can counter. Though truth issues from theological sovereignty in the first modality and from a place kindred to the soul in the second, the two forms share not only God’s voice but also a common indifference and imperiousness to interrogation, deliberation, and facts. When such indifference,

or even hostility, becomes a political norm, both intellectual contestation and political accountability are dramatically devalued, often to the point of being rendered disloyal or traitorous.

Declarative and revelatory truths are but one site of fundamentalist Christianity's facilitation of a neoconservative political order. Christian fundamentalism also makes a virtue of *submission* to this truth and to the authority that speaks or wields it. It is anti-democratic and anti-intellectual insofar as it devalues not merely facts but also deliberative autonomy and deliberation themselves. This truth-authority-submission relation is further supplemented by valorizing the *fealty* that binds subject to god and religious community: the basis of religious belonging rests in this combination of belief, submission, and fealty. Again, the combination of submission and fealty toward a state-declared truth is exactly the structure of the peculiar form of patriotism promulgated by neocons.

Now add inequality. Whatever egalitarianism is derivable from certain Christian traditions, in contemporary Christian fundamentalism, the relationship of God and his subjects and the phenomenon of church hierarchy itself legitimates inequality as natural, good, and permanent. That is, even if we are all equal in the eyes of God, there is not only authority but also legitimate hierarchy in Christian fundamentalism. When this sensibility infiltrates what is left of public culture, when the pastoral model becomes the political model, inequality—not merely submissiveness toward authority but also legitimate stratification and subordination—takes shape as a political norm rather than a political challenge.

The combination of submissiveness toward a declared truth, legitimate inequality, and fealty that seeps from religious to political rationality transforms the conditions of legitimacy for political power; it produces subjects whose submission and loyalty are constitutive of the theological configuration of state power sketched in Schmitt's work on juristic thought. These religious elements supply ingredients for a strong and continuous exercise of executive power that cannot be extracted from secular democratic principles. When Christian religious culture bleeds into political culture, and when executive power robes itself in religious purposes (such as the missions to "conserve marriage" as a heterosexual institution, to preserve "unborn life," or to "free the unfree world"), executive power obtains a prerogative and legitimacy not routinely available to liberal democratic states. Indeed, a late modern theologically oriented state resting on a religiously shaped public culture can draw upon sources of power and legitimacy kept at bay by a strong church-state distinction, and a strong distinction between religious and political nationalities.

One small icon of contemporary American patriotism provides an instance of this de-democratization via a religious modality of authority: those ubiquitous yellow ribbon magnets, often affixed to the hind end of SUVs and minivans, that read, "Support Our Troops."³⁷ With their strangely anonymous address and channeling of authority, unlike many bumper stickers expressing a position or posing a question, these take the form of a command and also contain an implicit reprimand, perhaps doubting that the reader does support the troops and certainly scolding those who do not. Insofar as the command itself is without content and is framed by an old-fashioned symbol of pious memoration, they also convey a position of sheer moral rectitude: it is hardly clear what such support entails apart from not *not* supporting the troops, or perhaps not *not* supporting the war in which the troops are fighting, or not *not* supporting the president who ordered the troops into battle. And what to make of the posting of such a command and reprimand in this prosaic place—on the backs of generally outsized vehicles ferrying occupants to various stations of daily life: work, school, the kids' soccer practice, the mall?

Yet the contentlessness of the message, along with its reprimand, its sentimental and depoliticized framing, and its prosaic location, perfectly emblemize the hollowness of absolute and non-deliberative submission to authority. The contentlessness is the content: the vacuity expresses the very lack of action or participation that is contemporary citizenship, the substitution of ordinary family and consumer life for democratic participation. And the disinclination to deliberate about whether and how the war and the troops are to be regarded also corresponds to a resolute, even patriotic, refusal to think or desire for others to think, let alone think differently. Moreover, the command, "You, too, should submit," is, in the deepest way, religious and anti-democratic, an indication that something of the Schmittian theological state may indeed be upon us.

If this is what Americans face today, it is not only because the current president links state purposes with God's purposes but also because the exercise of executive power rests on a pacified and neutered citizenry in which a combination of religious and neoliberal discourses have supplanted liberal democratic ones. This strand of state power exploits and borrows from a religious structure of authority for its own, makes use of the religious antipathy to democracy for its own, and this among other things to launch an imperial endeavor that, through the use of civilizational discourse, identifies the state with the West and Christianity against what are figured as stateless fundamentalist barbarians. In this way, the populism of evangelical Christianity can be mobilized for state authority and power, thus

converting it to right-wing political populism. However, this would not be possible if not for the weakening of liberal democratic institutions and democratic culture already achieved by neoliberal rationality. Neoconservatism's authoritarianism takes root here . . . quite possibly to a greater degree than the neocons would wish. I do not think the neocons are fascists, nor am I convinced that the language of fascism is entirely apt for grasping or diagnosing our current predicament.³⁷ But neoconservatism does valorize power and statism, and when those energies are combined with the moralism and the market ethos, and when a public is molded by the combination of these energies and rationalities, a fiercely anti-democratic political culture results. This is a culture disinclined to restrain either statism or corporate power, and above all one that literally comes to resent and even attack the classic principles and requirements of constitutional democracy.

This attack comes at a time when globalized market forces and neoliberal political rationality are already threatening liberal democratic constitutionalism with obsolescence. Thus, as the principles are attacked from one direction, the institutions are undermined from another, at which point the left—without an independent vision of its own—often finds itself in the peculiar position of being little more than an advocate for a declining liberal democracy. In the absence of a substantive left vision, an absence that inevitably breeds a politics of reaction, the neoconservative moral agenda and contempt for civil rights would seem to push many liberals and leftists either into a competing moralism or into repulsing all moral claims in the public and the social with civil libertarianism and a hollow secularism.³⁸ Similarly, the neoliberal dismantling of public provisions and services often pushes liberals and leftists into an anachronistic welfare statism. However understandable, these responses take inadequate measure of contemporary configurations of power and sidestep what may be the most critical question for radical democrats and social egalitarians today, which is not the question of how best to defend civil liberties, secularism, or welfare statism, but whether the democratic dream—the rule of the demos for the demos—is finished. How might the extraordinary powers that construct and organize collective life today be democratized? Are we really democrats—do we believe in or want popular power anymore? Do we believe the demos can or should govern itself, sharing, as much as possible, the various (political, social, and economic) powers that currently govern it? If not, what is the significance of this faltering belief for a left project? And, if we do still believe, how would renewed efforts to democratize power contest the forces and rival the lures of contemporary anti-democracy?

Notes

1. Stuart Hall, remarks on the occasion of the launch of the Center for Citizenship, Identity and Governance (CIGS) at the Open University, Milton Keynes, UK, March 2005.

2. William Connolly has offered a different metaphor, that of the “resonance machine,” for capturing the relations or imbrication of different rationalities that together construct the contemporary political landscape, and especially for doing so without resorting to causality, crude materialism, theories of manipulation, or meta-theory. See William Connolly, “The Evangelical-Capitalist Resonance Machine,” *Political Theory* 33, no. 6 (December 2005): 869-86.

3. In his *Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), David Harvey also explores the political and analytic relationship between neoliberalism and neoconservatism. But he regards them as largely issuing from the same source (the corporate class) and serving the same function, namely, restoration and consolidation of upper-class political and economic power from the dilution and crises it suffered in the third quarter of the twentieth century. And even as the two “isms” vary on matters such as individualism and morality, he identifies the open state authoritarianism and militarism of neoconservatism with the prospect of rescuing neoliberalism from its contradictory relationship to the state and to freedom (see 78-86). Harvey’s account is quite useful for debunking the common view of neoliberalism as anti-statist and also for linking neoliberalism to the imperial discourse of freedom promulgated in U.S. post-Cold War foreign policy (see chs. 3 and 7). It is less useful for understanding the distinctions between neoliberal and neoconservative rationalities, their different sources of promulgation, and the chafing between them.

4. Wendy Brown, “Neoliberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy,” *Theory and Event* 7, no. 1 (Fall 2003): http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/theory_&_event/.

5. It is not strictly accurate to denote neoliberalism as amoral. There is both its availability to utilization for governance aims such as law-abiding behavior or protection of the traditional family form, and there is its figuration of the subject as entrepreneur and normative promulgation of entrepreneurship itself. However, neoliberalism takes distance from conventional moral discourse in its affirmation of a wholly instrumental rationality: it affirms market strategies across all fields of life and is formally indifferent to the ends for which these strategies are employed.

6. Brown, “Neoliberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy.”

7. Michel Foucault, “Politics and Reason,” in *Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977-84*, ed. L. Kritzman (New York: Routledge, 1988).

8. This discussion is a summary of the longer account of neoliberal rationality and democracy in Brown, “Neoliberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy.”

9. Bush’s precise words were as follows: “Let me put it to you this way: I earned capital in the campaign, political capital, and now I intend to spend it. It is my style.” G. W. Bush, White House press conference, November 4, 2004, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/11/20041104-5.html>.

10. “Size of protest—it’s like deciding, well, I’m going to decide policy based upon a focus group,” Bush said. See “Antiwar Protests Fail to Sway Bush on Plans for Iraq” *New York Times*, February 19, 2003. p. 1.

11. Michel Foucault, “Governmentality,” in *The Foucault Effect*, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 95.

12. See Jürgen Habermas, “Learning from Catastrophe?” in *Postnational Constellations*, trans. and ed. Max Pensky (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001), 51-52.

13. “Of course, the democratic process protects equal private liberties, but for neoliberalism it does not add political autonomy as a further dimension of freedom.” Habermas, *Postnational Constellations*, 94.

14. Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

15. Even as neoconservatives carry on about “strict constructionism” in constitutional adjudication, constructionism itself becomes a contingent cover for the tacticalization, an irony that was nowhere more evident than in the spring 2005 neoconservative campaign to eliminate the filibuster for judicial appointments in the United States.

16. Alain Frachon and Daniel Vernet, *L’Amérique messianique* (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 2004). For other accounts, see, inter alia, Irwin Stelzer, ed., *The Neocon Reader* (New York: Grove, 2005); Norman Podhoretz, “Neoconservatism: A Eulogy,” in Norman Podhoretz, *The Norman Podhoretz Reader* (New York: Free Press, 1995); James Mann, *The Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush’s War Cabinet* (New York: Viking, 2004); Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clark, *America Alone: The Neo-conservatives and the Global Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Anne Norton, *Leo Strauss and the Politics of American Empire* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2004); Shadia B. Drury, *The Political Ideas of Leo Strauss* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1988); Joseph Dorman, *Arguing the World: New York Intellectuals in Their Own Words* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Gary Dorrien, *Imperial Designs: Neo-conservatism and the New Pax Americana* (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2004); and Mark Lilla, “The Closing of the Straussian Mind,” *New York Review of Books*, November 4, 2004.

17. Although Fukuyama insists on four founding principles of neoconservatism, he also says this:

Neoconservatism’s contemporary enemies vastly overstate the uniformity of views that has existed within the group of self-identified neoconservatives since the 1980s. Their lack of uniformity became particularly prevalent after the unexpected demise of communism in 1989-91, when unity on foreign policy evaporated and neoconservatives began debating among themselves the nature of American national interests in the post-Cold War world.

Francis Fukuyama, *America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power and the Neoconservative Legacy* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2006), 39; see also Grant Smith, *Deadly Dogma: How Neoconservatives Broke the Law to Deceive America* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Research: Middle Eastern Policy, 2006).

18. Those who insist on the Christian fundamentalist core of neoconservatism today do not reckon with this complex ensemble.

19. Norton, *Leo Strauss and the Politics of American Empire*, 178. Norton’s description specifically aims to reveal the affinities of neoconservatism with Nazism.

20. Fukuyama, *America at the Crossroads*, 63, 48.

21. Norton, *Leo Strauss and the Politics of American Empire*, 168-78.

22. For Fukuyama, this description of neoconservatism is already the corruption of it by the “Kristol-Kagan agenda,” the “expansive, interventionist, democracy-promoting position” that overextends the idea of activist foreign policy and especially “regime change.” Fukuyama, *America at the Crossroads*, 40-44.

23. Irving Kristol, “The Neoconservative Persuasion,” *Weekly Standard*, August 25, 2003, http://www.weeklystandard.com/Utilities/printer_preview.asp?idArticle=3000&R=EC72321FB.

24. Ibid.

25. Thomas Frank, *What's the Matter with Kansas* (New York: Henry Holt, 2005).

26. Ibid.

27. Frank's depiction of the neoconservative strategy renders it brilliant and (overly) complete, one which is explicitly aimed at duping the working and middle classes about their "real" social and economic interests and using their resentment of liberals and concern with morality to do so. In brief, he argues that by setting up an antagonism between an image of the little guy who is upright, moral, and hardworking, and an image of liberals characterized as elitist and profligate in every way, the neocons use a moral language (Bush's 2004 campaign theme of "We share values") to link the interests of the corporate class and those of the workers. This language makes liberals rather than capitalism responsible for the vulgarity of culture and moral degradation, and identifies liberals primarily with support for gay marriage, abortion, women's rights, secularism, and a free speech defense of pornography. As this strategy thoroughly moralizes both the left and the right agendas, it metonymically associates all that each side stands for and gives everything from war, taxation, free trade, and welfare to the UN a moral valence. This tactic also links the right with godliness, and positions God for the unborn and against homosexuality, and as a free market capitalist, an American, and a freedom fighter in the Islamic world.

28. Habermas, *The Postnational Constellation*, 94.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

31. T. W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, and Daniel J. Levinson, *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper, 1950); Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon, 1964); Max Horkheimer and T. W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom* (New York: Henry Holt, 1941); and Plato, *The Republic*, see especially the critique of democracy.

32. See dissertation in progress by Elisabeth Anker, "The Venomous Eye: Melodrama in the Making of National Identity and State Power," Department of Political Science, University of California, Berkeley.

33. Carl Schmitt, *On the Three Types of Juristic Thought*, ed. G. Schwaab, trans. J. Bendersky (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 2004). I am indebted to David Bates, "Political Theology and the Nazi State: Carl Schmitt's Concept of the Institution," *Modern Intellectual History* (forthcoming), for drawing my attention to *Three Types of Juristic Thought* and to this aspect of Schmitt's theory of the state.

34. Irving Kristol writes that "statesmen should, above all, have the ability to distinguish friends from enemies," and Bush routinely defends his approach to foreign policy by arguing for the importance of decisiveness and strength, and the inappropriateness of public deliberation. See Kristol, "The Neoconservative Persuasion."

35. For a more fully developed version of this argument, see Wendy Brown, "The Return of the Repressed: Sovereignty, Capital, Theology" in *The New Pluralism: William Connolly and the Contemporary Global Condition*, ed. David Campbell and Morton Schoolman (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, forthcoming in 2007).

36. See Ron Suskind, "Faith, Certainty, and the Presidency of George W. Bush," *New York Times Magazine*, October 17, 2004, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/10/17/magazine/17Bush.html?ex=1>, for an extended discussion of G. W. Bush's eschewal of facts, even those delivered by his closest advisors, in favor of truth from the "gut" or "instinct" and decisions based on views that collide with the facts but that he made after he "prayed over them." Importantly, however, this eschewal would not be viable unless it was shared by a substantial part of the

electorate. See Timothy Egan, "All Polls Aside, Utah Is Keeping Faith in Bush," *New York Times*, June 4, 2006, p. 1.

37. An anonymous reader of this manuscript underscored the significance of this message being attached to cars by magnets rather than adhesives. In the scheme of neoliberal culture, s/he noted, "showing commitment to our boys (and girls) in uniform is one thing; tarnishing the car with sticky stuff is another."

38. More than a few have argued for the language of fascism to describe the current conjuncture. In an otherwise incisive and informative essay on the global imperial design of American foreign policy, Falk argues for its fascist dimensions without exploring what actually constitutes fascism or what resonance the term carries. See Richard Falk, "Will the Empire Be Fascist?" http://www.transnational.org/forum/meet/2003/Falk_FascistEmpire.html. At the 2005 American Political Science Association annual meeting, Washington, D.C., August, an entire panel was devoted to the question "Is It Time to Call It Fascism?" See also Sheldon Wolin, "Inverted Totalitarianism," *The Nation*, May 19, 2003, <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20030519/wolin>; and Sheldon Wolin, "A Kind of Fascism Is Replacing Our Democracy," <http://www.commondreams.org/views03/0718-07.htm>. While I am sympathetic to the content of these analyses, my worry about the move to use an old name (especially one super-saturated with a particular history and signification) for a new configuration of power is, first, that the novel aspects of this configuration may be insufficiently grasped and analyzed, and, second, that focus on the fascist dimensions of *rule* eclipses the importance of the faceless social and cultural forces of de-democratization I have emphasized in this essay. In short, the nomenclature threatens to keep the focus on an oppressive "them" rather than a subjective "us."

39. In suggesting the absence of a substantive left vision, I do not discount endeavors such as the World Social Forum, the Living Democracy movement, the International Forum on Globalization, and the many other multinational and often transnational organizations, protests, and workshops that have taken place under the sign of anti-globalization or "Another world is possible" over the past decade. These are only to be applauded but do not (yet?) add up to either a vision for democratic governance or a strategy for democratizing existing powers. As so many radical movements, parties, and leaders have learned over the years, the difference between protest and strategies for taking power, let alone governing, is quite significant.

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