5-2015

Contesting the Dominance of Neoliberalism: The Ideograph as a Force for Social Change

Jordan Tyler Becker
Bates College, jbecker@bates.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://scarab.bates.edu/honorstheses

Contesting the Dominance of Neoliberalism:
The Ideograph as a Force for Social Change

An Honors Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Rhetoric
Bates College

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Science

by

Jordan Tyler Becker
Lewiston, Maine
April 6, 2015

Acknowledgements

There are many people to whom I and this thesis will forever be in debt.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my advisor Professor Stephanie Kelley-Romano, who has provided me with the perfect mix of contradictions that any student needs in order to muster the will to complete their work[1] (including but not limited to): compliments, criticism, empathy, indifference, "normal" love, "tough" love, bewilderment, interest, skepticism, advice, personal anecdotes, solidarity, humor, dedication, blind faith, understanding, misunderstanding, self-sacrifice, informality, and trust. I first met Stephanie the day before classes began freshman year, and I convinced her to let me into her already-too-full What is Rhetoric? class, because I assured her that I would be a major. The fact that I never once wavered on this decision is surely because of her constant role in my life as a student. I have grown so much in the last four years because of her, and it was with her that I was able to develop the kind of informal yet productive camaraderie between professor and student that I had always dreamed of having. Such a relationship was the whole reason I wanted to go to a liberal arts college in the first place. So, Stephanie thank you so much for everything, but most of all for putting up with me, my convoluted and messy thoughts, and my even-more convoluted and marathon-like sentences. Thank you for knowing which emails to ignore completely and which ones to respond to posthaste. Thank you for sticking by my side for the last four years, for making me read Foucault for the first time, for teaching me and challenging me, for believing in me even when I could not,

---

[1] I write this at 2:15 am on 4/3/15, because of the suggestion by the wonderful Misty Beck (who I know is, like me, fond of footnotes herself; thus it seems only fitting to acknowledge her in one) that writing the acknowledgements section is a wonderful source of procrastination on the larger, more essential parts of the thesis. I note this only to say that I have not yet completed my work, and that, in the spirit of full disclosure, the sentence from which this footnote is derived in the main text is an object of optimistic speculation that I will, in fact, complete this thesis. As of now, whether this optimism will bear fruit and prove to be validated, no one can say for sure.

and most of all: for making sure to call me back to offer support in one of my most desperate and stressful thesis meltdown moments, even though you were going through the midst of the greatest personal crisis possible in your life: the Jayhawk's loss in this year's March Madness tournament.

I would like to thank Bill Corlett for sitting on my thesis panel, for ensuring that the first text I encountered in Western Political Theory was Audre Lorde's *Sister Outsider* and that the second text was Plato's *Republic* (the brilliance and radicalism of this one-two punch, this reversal of the typical canonic understanding of the Western tradition, is one that I grow to appreciate more and more as I grow older and more sophisticated in my political analysis), and especially for being one of the most warm and personable figures I have met in my life. The only course I have taken with him to completion, I took first semester freshman year, and this semester, my final semester senior year, I attempted to (and failed) to audit a seminar of his. Upon entering the room and seeing me on the first day of the course, Professor Corlett exclaimed something along the lines of, "surely, it cannot be...is that Jordan Becker?" Even after nearly four years of separation, it was as if no time had passed between us. I will carry the memory of that moment with me for the rest of my life. If I become only half the thinker, half the teacher, half of the person that Bill Corlett is, it will surely be one of my greatest accomplishments.

Special accolades are doubtless due to Jan Hovden, for her advice, understanding, and support on some of the more esoteric and theoretical aspects of my thesis, as well as for sitting on my thesis panel. She perhaps most of all trusts in my atypical method of composition (*extreme* procrastination, followed by an intense period of organic and perfectionist writing of one, near-final draft) to deliver the goods in the end. I know of no other teacher who would be so lenient and supportive of my particular method, who never once urged me to change my ways.

iii

Most of all, I know of no other teacher who would give a student an A+ in their course, even if, *especially* if, said student turned in a rough draft of a paper some three-weeks late. I won't name names, but the careful reader probably will understand perfectly well who this student is.

I would also like to thank the many other professors at Bates (as well as at the Trinity campus in Rome) who influenced my thinking and taught me so much, and who, no doubt, each deserve paragraphs like the ones dedicated to Professors Kelley-Romano, Hovden, and Corlett, but because of my own personal failings, will not receive them. They include: Sonja Pieck, Gwen Lexow, Hilmar Jensen, Cynthia Baker, Steven Dillon, Kati Vecsey, Robert Strong, Charles Nero, Jon Cavallero, Martin Andrucki, Livio Pestili, and Chiara Lucarelli.

I would like to thank the following teachers I had in high school who inspired my love of learning and were the ones who really laid the foundation for the work that I was able to do in college: Patrick McManus, James Shivers, Carol Blejwas, Scott Ferguson, and Sean Harris.

I would now like to thank the entire contingent of Bates students who joined me on the first floor of the library for countless hours of procrastination, commiseration, inspiration, bonding, and intellectual labor. To name all the names of those who comprised this motley crew would prove exceptionally difficult, but special consideration must be made to Sarah Cancelarich, Alison Kimball, Sam Gazecki, Jake Nemeroff, Tenzin Namdol, Maddie David, and Irem Ikizler. I would also like to formally apologize to Lydia Rubenstein for distracting her for nearly the entirety of the 2014 Fall Semester and for a significant portion of the 2015 Spring Semester.

I would like to thank Allie Skaperdas for her companionship throughout the process of writing an honors thesis in rhetoric. She and I probably could not be more different as students, yet we have been in the same classes for almost every single one of the requirements for the

iv

rhetoric major. We began this journey together four years ago as freshmen, and we have completed it together as the two honors students in the department this year.

I would like to thank the members of BEAM (former and present), as well as the other environmentalists I have met who inspire me to be politically active, and who are my comrades, in success, in failure, and always in solidarity: Annie Cravero, Ben Breger, Ben McCormack, Ali Mackay, Ethan Zwirn, Megan Lubetkin, Noel Potter, Zsofia Duarte, Sophia Thayer, Jenny Rosenfield, Eileen "Beanie" O'Shea, Madeline McGonagle, BoRa Kim, Miles Goodrich, Michael Butler, Taryn Hallweaver, Crystal Goodrich, Andy Jones, and Shaun Carland.

I would like to thank all my other friends at Bates. I wouldn't have made it through without them. It is futile of me to try to list all their names here, no doubt I will forget many important people, but try nonetheless I will: B. VanDerburgh, Ashleen O'Brien, Sam Scribner, Ben Merkert, Kai Payne, Jeremy Mack, Alex "Bubba" LeFevre, Erika Schmidt, Shana Wallace, Emma Lutz, Jameson Jones, Esperanza Gilbert, Alex Druck, Cam Campion, Nicole Danser, Jonathan Schwolsky, Grace Glasson, Becky Culp, Kara McGowan, Katie Polio, Thomas Koshy, Nikhil Krishna, Sam Myers, Leah Schulz, Adina Brin, Eliza Kaplan, Pamela Ross, Carlie Rice, Mack Stern, Kevin Williams, Matt Silverman, Aaron Rubin, Joseph Marques, Nick Auer, Gabe Imber, Eliza Gabriel, Lila Chalabi, Nick Steverson, Sophie Pellegrini, and Henry Schwab.

I would like to thank my roommate, compatriot, and best friend Jack Kay for his existential support the last four years of college, and especially for the many nights this year where we inevitably reprised the same theoretical debate over and over again, where my penchant for Marxism clashed with his commitment to a more postmodern or poststructuralist understanding. Our mutual love of critical theory and politics developed at a similar time and turned into a positive feedback loop. For many reasons, intellectual and not, this thesis could not

understanding of myself. Some of these figures grace the pages of my bibliography, but even for those who do not, this thesis would not have been possible without their influence on both my style and my substance: Naomi Klein, Howard Zinn, David Foster Wallace, Noam Chomsky, Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Kenneth Burke, Emma Goldman, Audre Lorde, Alexander Berkman, Karl Marx, David Harvey, Louis Althusser, Allen Ginsberg, Jeffrey Eugenides, Marge Piercy, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Leo Tolstoy, J. K. Rowling, Lev Grossman, Henry David Thoreau, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., Philip Roth, Annie Dillard, Edward Abbey, Helen and Scott Nearing, Kurt Vonnegut, Junot Diaz, Anthony Bourdain, Neil Postman, Vladimir Nabokov, Jamie Peck, Alain Touraine, Pierre Bourdieu, Raymie McKerrow, Jennifer Egan, James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, Albert Camus, Walter Benjamin, Susan Sontag, Frantz Fanon, Angela Davis, Roberto Bolaño, William Faulkner, Victoria Jackson, and Wilhelm Reich.

For Mom

"Philosophers have hitherto only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is

to *change* it." – Karl Marx (2002), Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach

Contents

Introduction

I came to the topic of this thesis through a deep sense of frustration with the limits of mainstream American politics. The American political situation has been generally defined by a series of dichotomies; unlike many other democracies, the United States is dominated by the two-party system. The choice between either of these parties is commonly characterized as a choice between the lesser of two evils. Especially since I have been able to vote, I have come to agree with such an interpretation. What is more is that the choice between either party did not feel like much of a choice at all; the two parties felt somewhat homogenous, only different from each other in more subtle or minor ways. If I had had the ability to meaningfully choose something that significantly deviated from what either of them represented, I would have, but that has not been the case.[2] My first question to lead me to write this thesis was to ask: What brought about this political reality?

As a student of rhetoric, I knew that this situation had to be the product of some kind of symbolic or ideological construction, some kind of narrative, or myth that functioned as a "terministic screen" (Burke, 1966) that undergirds and structures the way that most Americans understand the limits of political possibility. As a student of political economy, I knew that there probably were also material structures that reinforced and reproduced this terministic screen. I had read *The Shock Doctrine* by Naomi Klein (2007), and because of it was familiar with an abstract concept of "neoliberalism." In neoliberalism, I seemed to find an answer to my question that satisfied both aspects of my curiosity, as neoliberalism operates on the plane of

---

[2] There are, of course, third party candidates in the United States, but they pose no real threat to the establishment. I have voted for them in the past, but I have no false pretenses about such a vote, at present, arousing meaningful political change on the federal level. Local politics, though, is another story.

ideology/symbols and the plane of material/economic structures. Neoliberalism, I then concluded, must be what is responsible for the present state of American politics.

But this was not the end of it; what I had originally thought to be an answer was really just the beginning of a whole new series of questions. The more I investigated neoliberalism, the more I realized how contested such a term was. Whereas I had originally understood it to be a simplistic, universal, and totally dominating ideology along the lines of someone like Anderson (2000), I quickly found that there were many scholars and critics (to name a few, Barnett, 2005; Gamble, 2001; Castree, 2010; Peck, 2004) who had more complicated and nuanced theories and explanations of neoliberalism's character, its power, and its functioning. Eventually I read Touraine's (2001) book, *Beyond Neoliberalism*, which flipped my thinking on its head. He proposes that leftists who characterize neoliberalism as a totalizing ideology of pure domination and hegemony are akin to those on the right (like Fukuyama, 1992) who celebrate neoliberalism as the end of history, the final victory of free market capitalism against all other forms of economic management. Both sides, Touraine (2001: 1) argues, hold "one essential feature in common: neither believes in the existence of autonomous social actors who are capable of influencing political decision-making." What the right was to celebrate, the left was to mourn, but for either side, there was nothing to be done. This was not a conclusion I was willing to make; I am not yet able to concede the possibility for social actors to arise, challenge, and change the social order. I refuse to submit to such blind pessimism, though I am not completely optimistic either. Regardless, I know that, at the very least, the future is not yet decided, and we must attempt, at the very least, to change the social world. My central question then quickly evolved. Though it may be stated quite simply, it is not easy to answer. "How," I asked, "may we contest the dominance of neoliberalism?"

2

The following thesis is my attempt at an answer. Its structure is as follows:

In Chapter 1, I discuss many of the theoretical difficulties surrounding a proper understanding of what exactly neoliberalism is and what it is not. I go into further detail about what I summarized earlier: the characterization of neoliberalism as singular, unified, and completely dominate, and the resistance by many, including myself, to accept such a characterization. In my account of neoliberalism, I revisit its origins, attempting to construct, after Peck (2008), a genealogical understanding of the creation of neoliberalism: who made it, for what reasons, and how. I argue that it has a diverse set of origins and as such its ideological core contains a multitude of contradictions and uncertainty. Then, I trace the ways that neoliberalization, i.e., the implementation of neoliberal theories into practice since the 1970s, also occurred in many, varying ways that was dependent on the spatio-temporal contingencies of particular contexts.

In Chapter 2, I return to the field of rhetoric to consider the question of how rhetoric influences public behavior. My goal was to provide a theory of rhetoric that was capable of understanding the contradictions of neoliberalism that neither limits the term by assigning to it a single meaning nor suggests that it is too messy to be a theoretically useful way of understanding structures of power and influence. Drawing from several rhetorical and social theorists (Barthes, 1972; Bourdieu, 1977; Condit and Lucaites, 1993; Lippmann, 1922), I propose that the conflicts and compromises between ideological interest groups participating in a process of public argument create a "law" of public opinion is developed, a law that structures the possibilities of political action and of the nature of rhetoric itself. This law, called doxa, causes people to misrecognize what is historical and arbitrary as natural and inevitable (Bourdieu, 1977). Further, I discuss how mythic speech (Barthes, 1972) functions to depoliticize and naturalize what was

3

historical, and how a combination of ideological groups employ this kind of speech to produce a basis for a society's doxa.

In Chapter 3, I turn to examine a further connection McGee (1980) made between myth and ideology called the ideograph. Ideographs are words or phrases that represent a society's collective commitments. They are dynamic, and their meanings often change depending on their history of past usages and their present uses, especially in relation with other, connected ideographs. Then I examine three different kinds of ideographic critique made by rhetorical scholars. The first is one that analyzes the ways that ideographs obscure aspects of politics and function to preserve the status quo. The second involves understanding how different social groups contest for control over the meanings of ideographs, in a kind of proxy war where the core values of a society are at stake. The third and final involves analyzing the ways that social actors have already adjusted the meanings of ideographs in order to break free from doxa and change their political reality. It is this third kind of critique that I find most exciting, as it has as its justification, a basis for liberation.

In Chapter 4, the final section of my argument, I make the case for an understanding of ideographs that goes beyond their mere use as critical tools for analysis. Rather, I propose that they are in fact the very structures which oppressed groups must try and control, because control over ideographs yields control over the potential for political change. I argue that, to contest neoliberalism's dominance, social actors may intervene on the level of the ideograph — by reappropriating the meanings of old ideographs and creating new ones that have never been seen before — and in doing so, generate a positive vision of the future that will make the possibility for political change, for movement beyond neoliberalism, a realistic opportunity.

4

I conclude somewhat optimistically, with an understanding of neoliberalism's rise as intricately related to rhetorical processes of public argumentation. These same processes that allowed for its ascendancy, in my view, allow for the potential of its downfall. When oppressed people speak and invoke ideographs with new meanings, they transform themselves into social actors who have the capability to make meaningful social change in the world. Neoliberalism, therefore, may be challenged on the very level of the ideograph, and it is the responsibility of activists, intellectuals, and social actors to take up this challenge, so that they might find a new vision of society that will one day remake the world.

Chapter 1:
A History of Neoliberalism

I: Entering the Debate on Neoliberalism

In the starkest terms, we may say about neoliberalism what Perry Anderson (2000: 13) does in his polemical editorial that set out his vision for the rebirth of the *New Left Review*: "whatever limitations persist to its practice, neo-liberalism as a set of principles rules undivided across the globe: the most successful ideology in world history." This sentiment, of an uncontested and hegemonic neoliberalism, is one reflected in many simplistic characterizations of neoliberalism on both the left and right. From Margaret Thatcher's famous saying, "There is no alternative," to the French idea of *la pensèe unique*, both the right — celebrating the prospect of a new economic utopia, conceived on their terms, rising to power — and the left, feeling exasperated rather than celebratory about such a prospect, reduced neoliberalism to an omnipotent, monolithic power that cannot be stopped.

The limits of such a reductionist understanding of neoliberalism have been widely noted, and contemporary scholarship on neoliberalism has often been an attempt to expand the understanding of neoliberalism as a complex ideological process that is at once subject to temporo-spatial contingencies and a connection to a widespread, global movement (Barnett, 2004; Castree, 2010; Denord, 2009; Flew, 2014; Ferguson, 2009; Gamble, 2000; Peck 2004, 2008, 2010; Peck and Tickell 2002, 2003;Touraine 2001).

It is tempting to produce scholarly work which reduces our complex global society, in a Manichean fashion, to a dichotomy comprised by the proponents and adversaries of a singular and coherent neoliberal order. In the spirit of full disclosure, I will admit that this is exactly the

kind of scholastic endeavor that I had originally intended for this thesis. But after reading the

authors cited above, my understanding of neoliberalism and its critics changed. Despite my

sympathy with figures like Ignacio Ramonet (1995) — who in an eloquent and damning editorial

in the pages of *Le Monde Diplomatique*, defined *la pensée unique[3]* as a "*visqueuse doctrine qui,*

insensiblement, enveloppe tout raisonnement rebelle…Cette doctrine, c'est la pensée unique, la

seule autorisée par une invisible et omniprésente police de l'opinion"[4] — I cannot subscribe to

the belief that neoliberalism is a *pensée unique*, a single doctrine that envelops and precludes all

rebellion and resistance. As Touraine (2001) demonstrates, a view of the world split into two

factions, *la pensée unique* and *la contre-pensée unique*, precludes the possibility for nation-states

and social movements to be actors, yielding all power to an international hegemony of

transnational corporate conglomerates, finance capital, and a political elite whose debate seems

to belong in puppet theatres instead of parliamentary chambers. Touraine is not alone in his

analysis, as others (Barnett 2005; Ferguson 2009; Flew 2012; Flew 2014) have also called into

question the usage of the term neoliberalism (and its derivatives) as an "intellectual dumping

ground," something to denounce and to posture against.[5] These authors note with irony that, for

all the intellectual activity *against* neoliberalism on the left, no real solutions or exits have been

found. Instead of attempting to theorize a way out of the neoliberal hegemony, the left has been

---

[3] In French, literally, "the unique thought;" it translates better as "the only way of thinking." Ramonet, of course, is writing against such a way of thinking. Touraine (2001) describes the position of Ramonet and his allies, like Pierre Bourdieu (1998), as "*le contre-pensée unique,*" which is literally "against the unique thought."

[4] Translation my own: "A viscous doctrine that, insensibly, envelops all rebellious reasoning...This doctrine is the only way of thinking, the only one authorized by an invisible and omnipresent police of opinion."

[5] Though the term was first used by liberal economists in the 1920s (Plehwe, 2008) and continued to be used by prominent neoliberal theorists for years after, e.g. Milton Friedman who worked to develop what he called "the doctrine of neo-liberalism," (quoted in Peck, 2008: 7) the contemporary proponents of what its opponents call "neoliberalism" do not generally use the term, "because neo-liberalism has come to signify a radical form of market fundamentalism with which no one wants to be associated," (Boas and Gans-Morse (2009), quoted in Flew, 2012: 45).

content to observe, record, and denounce the everyday order with ever increasing frustration, indignation, and panic.

The critiques of theories of neoliberalism are based on relatively similar principles. Touraine (2001), Barnett (2005), and Clarke (2004) observe that theories of neoliberalism often overstep their own bounds and associate it with more power than it really has. In this way, theories of neoliberalism are self-defeating; they are not attempts to develop a positive program. Indeed, they fail to account for the social actors that *have already appeared* to challenge neoliberal policies, and they invoke a pessimism that leads to pitiful dead-ends: the populism of nationalist and fascist social movements; the defense of status quo institutions on the basis that they are the last barrier society has to prevent its further decline, positing that law and order are superior to the fight against inequality; or the rise of an ultra-left solely capable of loud and embittered denunciation. Rather than pursuing these political dead-ends, scholars must develop the necessary analyses leading out of the neoliberal nightmare that would take the (always positive, never negative or "anti") form(s) of "more initiatives, more negotiations, more projects, and more truly social conflicts, through which the essential (and constantly changing) links will be established between the constraints and opportunities of the economy, and the demands or resistance of social actors," (Touraine 2001: 79-80). Likewise, my thesis is an attempt to formulate a positive rhetorical theory that is able to account for and augment the creativity and inventiveness of social actors in their capacity to contest neoliberalism's dominance in the domain of public argument.

In addition to the critique addressed above, Barnett (2005) also develops another line of argument that bears summarizing, as it concerns the questions of ideology, rhetoric, social control, and political consciousness that I will consider in the following chapters. Barnett argues

8

against two analytical frameworks often used in tandem when considering neoliberalism: (1) the Gramscian, neo-Marxist concept of a dominant ideology that a ruling bloc of elite actors use to normalize the subordination of the masses and (2) the Foucauldian understanding of neoliberalism as a discourse and form of governmentality in possession of "instrumental mechanisms by which clearly defined actors, possessed with clearly articulated interests, pursue their clearly articulated programmes," (2005: 9). He opposes both neo-Marxist and Foucauldian interpretations on the basis that there is no coherent project down from which neoliberalism-as-hegemony could filter and that neither Gramscian hegemony/ideology theory nor Foucault's theories of governmentality address how exactly consent is secured, how the top-down initiatives of hegemony and governmentality "get at" the everyday people whom they supposedly coerce. His arguments are rightly skeptical of the quick and easy explanations provided by the notion of a coherent and dominant neoliberal ideology or governmentality, but ultimately his rejection of the utility of these theories is itself also an oversimplification that ignores the nature of ideological power relations and the ever-elusive, ever-changing "public opinion" they supposedly act upon.

The reservations that Barnett has with dominant ideology/governmentality theories and their conclusions — that the average person is "formed and normed" after these ideologies somehow have "gotten at" them — are also relevant to the current project. His concerns stem from the fact that the "invocation of [neoliberal] hegemony...lacks any clear sense of how consent is actually secured, or any convincing account of how hegemonic projects are anchored at the level of everyday life, other than implying that this works by 'getting at' people in some way or another" (Barnett, 2005: 9). It seems to me that a theory of rhetoric and public argumentation might clarify some of the relationships that are muddled and obscure for Barnett:

9

between the material existence of life and the symbolic existence of ideology, between the external forces that attempt to influence the behavior of individuals and those individuals themselves (it must also account for the tendency of these individuals to try and actively resist ideological influences). Ideology is not a simple system, and the processes whereby it "gets at" the public are not so straightforward either, but this does not mean that they do not exist. In fact, it is the duty of the rhetorical scholar to attempt to clarify such theoretical ambiguities.

This question was formulated in a similar way by Condit (1987: 2) when she asked, "How, then, does one make plausible the claim that rhetoric influences social processes?"[6] Rhetorical scholarship is predicated on the fact that this claim is not only plausible but true, and for this reason, like Barnett, rhetorical scholars cannot accept the simplicity of the dominant ideology thesis as such. Rather, rhetoric itself is the vehicle for the give and take of public discourse that constructs what is not any single coherent or totally dominant ideology, but rather "the law" that is "a temporary compromise between competing ideological interests" which comes from the result of a process of contestation for the control of and the appropriation of "a shared rhetorical culture . . . to express their particular interests" (Condit and Lucaites 1993: xv). The take-home here is that ideologies do not need to be wholly dominant, coherent, or clear in order to wield real political power, shape rhetorical culture, and influence the public to take political actions. The court of public opinion is fundamentally discursive in nature, thus whoever participates in such discourse can control the very language by which the public understands and debates political questions. Rhetoric is at once the act of conflict by which the different (allowable) members of the public try to gain power and control and the very site of that conflict itself, insofar as the conflict legitimates the authority and the power to define ideographs, on the

---

[6] I will also discuss this question at some length in Chapter 2, but it is worth introducing here as well.

micro-scale, and to define the shared rhetorical culture at large, on the macro-scale. Barnett (2005: 11) prefers to criticize "neoliberalism-as-hegemony" or "neoliberalism-as governmentality" for failing "to account for the forms of receptivity, pro-activity, and generativity that might help to explain how the rhythms of the everyday are able to produce effects on macro-scale processes, and vice versa." In fact, I believe it is the study of rhetoric and public argumentation that will correct this failure. An understanding of the crucial functions of rhetoric and symbols in creating knowledge, public opinion, and political reality will be able to provide an accounting for how the micro level of individual existence is related to the macro, collective level.

Thus, I am willing to accept the understanding of neoliberalism as a discourse or form of governmentality and as an ideology that has achieved some level of dominance, as long as one recognizes that neoliberalism is not a monolithic, totalizing hegemony that has "gotten at the public" in some kind of magical or undefined way. Indeed, even Peck (2010: 30) is willing to concede that "there may be...a certain degree of truth… [to the] claim that neoliberalism has become omnipresent, but it is a complex, mediated, and heterogeneous kind of omnipresence, not a state of blanket conformity." Neoliberalism has collected its power and its public appeal in the same way that all ideologies do: by engaging in public discourse and wrestling symbolic/ideological power from its enemies through a process wherein the terms (or ideographs) of a shared rhetorical culture are subject to appropriation and redefinition so that they more closely align with neoliberal values and motives. The purpose of this thesis then, in a larger sense, is to show at least some of the ways that neoliberalism has taken control of many aspects of the shared rhetorical culture in the United States, so that we may better understand how and where to contest its dominance and ill-effects.

I want to again emphasize the importance of the last aspect of my thesis, the focus on a constructive analysis that will leave us with a better understanding of the way *out* of neoliberal hegemony. If I am to properly fulfill this objective, then I must present an understanding of neoliberalism that does not fall into the trap of the *pensèe unique*, which overstates the power and coherence of neoliberalism, reducing the term to a purely negative pejorative rather than a positive, useful, and descriptive one. When I speak of neoliberalism, it must be understood that I do not mean any single doctrine, agenda, or political orientation, because neoliberalism is not any *single* thing at all; neoliberalism is, rather, a constellation of compromises between ideals and reality, between economists and philosophers, between nation-states and international institutions, between the emphasis on an individual's liberty and the state power that secures it for them. But, despite all of this uncertainty and variance, I refuse to concede that neoliberalism is meaningless or totally empty, "signifying nothing," as Macbeth might say. Neoliberalism is an ideological position which, though it has its own internal variance and dynamic nature, has developed as the result of a positive and self-aware campaign to (1) create a new kind of politics that had never existed before and (2) remake the world in light of this politics. Neoliberalism's history, as we will see, is not so messy as to justify Barnett's (2005: 9) hyperbolic claim that "there is no such thing as neoliberalism!"

Indeed, there is such a thing as neoliberalism, and even more, it is not enough merely to make such a claim. It is important, surely, to understand what is dominant in society, what controls the masses, what subjugates them, what informs the structure of their very thoughts, and what forces order their daily lives; but it is not enough only to understand what is dominant and what is, in the final analysis, oppressive — after understanding the current order, there must be the impulse to write the foundation for the next. This, we will see, is one of the lessons that the

12

neoliberal theorists best understood. It was not enough for them to analyze the world and its injustices and leave it at that; rather their analysis of and dissatisfaction with the historical and the present theories of political economy (with the doctrinaire application of *laissez-faire*, with socialism, and with the Keynesian compromise between classical liberalism and socialism) was the point of the departure for their developing a *new* theory of liberalism. The end of the analysis of the present was the beginning of the theorizing of the future. The same creative and positive impulse is necessary if an answer to neoliberalism is to be developed. And it is this impulse, which, more than anything else, guides this thesis.

This leads me to another perspective on neoliberalism that offers enlightening insights, but is not fully relevant to the rhetorical focus of this thesis. Nonetheless, I will briefly mention it, as it provides a parallel way to understand the hegemonic aspects of neoliberalism as well as the potential to move beyond neoliberalism in the future. I have mentioned it already: the understanding of neoliberalism as a form of what Foucault called governmentality. The study of governmentality, as Foucault himself defines it, is the study of "the art of governing" (2008: 2). By this he does not mean to investigate specifically what policies and practices governments actually implement; rather his concern is the reasoning and rationale behind the policies themselves; his object of study is "government's consciousness of itself" (Foucault 2008: 2). What is illuminating to those who wish to challenge the dominance of neoliberalism is that Foucault points out that "there is no autonomous socialist governmentality. There is no governmental rationality of socialism" (2008: 92). The critics who want to move beyond the Manichean conception of neoliberalism as the *pensèe unique*, like Foucault, point to failures in the positive development of alternatives. Foucault's critique of socialism follows a similar logic; socialism has failed to develop an autonomous art of governing of its own and because of this, it

has failed to challenge the dominance of the neoliberal governmentality since the 1970s. Socialist governmentality, if it exists at all, "is not hidden within socialism and its texts. It cannot be deduced from them. It must be invented" (Foucault 2008: 94). No matter the problems and injustices associated with the neoliberal project, it is clear that its origins are much more closely associated with invention than adherence to any canonical text, and this commitment to invention is probably neoliberalism's greatest advantage, enabling its contemporary success and dominance. Likewise, it is instructive to learn from the success of neoliberalism's strategy. Even if the neoliberal order is flawed, its rise to power was not, and if it is to be contested or replaced, it will have to be defeated at its own game, so to speak.

This is not a thesis on governmentality, and I do not intend to discuss neoliberalism as a form of governmentality, nor do I propose to develop the ever elusive "socialist governmentality" as an alternative to the neoliberal order. I mention governmentality only in order to provide a larger perspective on scholarly work that uses it as a framework for analyzing neoliberalism (Barnett, 2005; Ferguson, 2009; Flew 2012; Flew 2014), and also to demonstrate in another way the need to go beyond the dualistic world of *la pensée unique* and *la contre-pensée unique*. The left may be content to posture against the neoliberal order, to critique and dissect neoliberal governmentality, and to denounce the neoliberal ideology until the end of time, but it will not be able to contest neoliberalism if it does not positively develop an alternative — an alternative governmentality, an alternative ideology, and ultimately, an alternative social order.

Accordingly, the object of this thesis is to develop a theory of rhetoric's role in the rise and fall of ideologies, so that neoliberalism — or any other oppressive dominant ideology for that matter, fascism is on the rise once more, after all — may be challenged and *replaced*. My

14

first commitment is therefore to analysis. Along with Raymie McKerrow, I want rhetorical scholars to approach discourse not with the question "is this discourse true or false?" but with a critique of domination, asking "how the discourse is *mobilized to legitimate the sectional interests of hegemonic groups*" (Giddens 1979, quoted in McKerrow, 1989: 93). But I also have a second commitment: to invention. Thus, the rhetorical critic must also ask "how may a counter-hegemony mobilize itself to challenge the *already-legitimized* interests of hegemonic groups?" It is from this perspective that my account of neoliberalism begins.

I will address, in the next section, the nature and history of the incoherency and messiness of the neoliberal ideological project, or "thought collective." Furthermore, I will show that despite this messiness, the ascension of various neoliberal tendencies — through the contingent and spatially-realized process of "neoliberalization" — is clear. These tendencies operate on both the level of ideology and of the material world, shaping, respectively, public opinion and public policy. To schematically outline these tendencies, we can break neoliberalism into the discrete stages of "proto-neoliberalism", "roll-back neoliberalism," and "roll-out neoliberalism," with each stage employing different strategies and structures to facilitate society's transition, ideologically and materially, to the present state of neoliberal dominance (Tickell and Peck, 2003). Whereas the "proto-neoliberalism" of the late 1970s involved the beginnings of spending cuts and an assault on organized labor; it was in the "roll-back neoliberalism" of the 1980s and early 1990s where the "destructive and deregulatory moment" began in earnest, with a movement away from the typical structures of a social-democratic welfare state through a combination of privatization, deregulation, marketization, reduction in overseas aid, international structural adjustment programs, the liberalization of finance markets, and the ratification of free trade agreements (like NAFTA) (Peck, 2010: 26). And it was in the

15

present period (since the 1990s) of "roll-out neoliberalism" that the "creative and procreative moment" began: through the "moral re-regulation of the urban poor," "the expansion of the penal state apparatus" and other policies of social control; the "extension of...market-complementing forms of...technocratic economic regulation within neoliberal parameters;" and the formation of a continuously evolving relationship between the global and the local such that policies may be established, shared, and adapted all over the world in a manner that aspires to create a state of "permanent adaptability and reflexivity in fields like urban governance and social/penal policy" (Peck, 2010: 26; Peck and Tickell, 2002, 2003). ~~(For a further summary of the differences between the different kinds of neoliberalization please refer to the tables in Appendices 1 and 2).~~

The following two sections — a "prehistory" of neoliberalism (i.e., its formation as an ideology from the 1930s to the '70s) and a history of the process neoliberalization (the actual imposition of neoliberal policies since the late '70s) — will not be explicitly ordered by the three historical periods of neoliberalization that I just outlined, but, nevertheless, these three periods provide an insightful approach to understanding the specific ways in which neoliberalism is an intricate,   ever-evolving, and dynamic ideologico-political system.

II: A Prehistory of Neoliberalism

I have written above of neoliberalism, without clearly defining what exactly it is that I mean by such a term. As with any ideological system, neoliberalism is complicated, multifaceted, and nuanced; its scope and precise meaning have changed throughout history and across the globe, though it still has retained some kind of essential character. This character, what neoliberalism is and what it is not, has implications on the ways neoliberalism functions as an ideology that both inspires and limits public behavior and societal organization.

Speaking etymologically, we can break down the term neoliberalism into its constituent parts: "neo," meaning new; and "liberalism," referring to the intellectual and political tradition that sprung forth from the European enlightenment in the seventeenth century. Whatever neoliberalism is, it must therefore be understood as a reformulation of liberalism. Accordingly, in my account of neoliberalism, I will explain first what liberalism was, then what neoliberalism shares with the liberal tradition, and lastly, what exactly is so *neo-* about it.

Liberalism, as John Gray (1995: 78) contends, was "the political theory of modernity." Though certain liberal values were foreshadowed by Greco-Roman civilization, it only emerged in the seventeenth century as a coherent politico-intellectual tradition, and it only became a political identifier in the nineteenth century, when it began to signify a political position rather than the classical virtue of liberality (Gray 1995). Liberalism — though it has wide internal variety, disputes, and differences — is still a single tradition, and each variant of it has the same basic four characteristics: it is *individualist*, asserting that the moral claims of an individual should be given priority to those of social collectives; it is *egalitarian,* in that it holds that all people are created equal and should be treated as such under the rule of law; it is *universalist*, affirming that all people are united with the same interests, desires, and moral worth (and that

this unity spans over all cultural differences and norms); and finally it is *meliorist*, insofar as it maintains that all social and political institutions can be improved (Gray 1995: xii). No matter the differences between any of the thinkers and movements associated with the storied history of liberalism, they all hold these four values in common. Further, these are also the four values and topoi around which meaning is contested, both for the different kinds of liberals themselves and for anti-liberals in their own right.

The American and French revolutions of the late eighteenth century were the two most dramatic political expressions of the liberal ideal at the time, though it took until the nineteenth century for the "golden age" of the *laissez-faire*[7] liberal era to commence in proper.[8] This period continued until "the catastrophe of the First World War shattered the liberal world that had prevailed for the century between 1915 and 1918" (Gray 1995: 32). The War marked the emergence of the state's role in the lives of ordinary citizens. In England, men were compelled to enter the military through conscription; food was rationed and controlled from the top-down by the government; government began to play a role in regulating the size of industries, reducing some while enlarging others; and freedom of movement was restricted. As J. P. Taylor, the English historian writes, "The state established a hold over its citizens which, though relaxed in peacetime, was never to be removed and which the Second World War was again to increase.

---

[7] *Laissez-faire*, in a literal translation of the French is "let them-do;" in English it would be rendered more sensibly as "let them-be."

[8] Many writers typical see nineteenth-century England as the best example of the golden age of liberal theory and practice; it was place where the state played a minimal role in the life of the average citizen — there were no passports for international travel, no customs, no official identity cards, no visa requirements for foreigners, and no compulsory military service. This view of England is accurate to some extent, but it also ignores some of the philosophical and political undercurrents of the time that produced a split between the "classical liberalism" of a minimal state and a strict commitment to *laissez-faire* and free market doctrines and a new "revisionary liberalism" developed by figures such as J. S. Mill, which allowed new roles for the state in the name of distributive justice and social harmony. Thus there never was a period of "pure" classical *laissez-faire* liberalism as such. For a more involved discussion on the different currents of liberal thought at the time, especially on the divide between classical and revisionary liberalism — a divide that prefigures the development of neoliberalism, which is a clear turn towards the restoration of the classical ideals at the expense of the revisionist ones — please refer to (Gray, 1995: especially 26-35).

The history of the English people and the English state merged for the first time," (quoted in Gray 1995: 35). The period of classical liberalism in Europe had ended forever, and it had taken World War I to bring about its end.

While anti-liberal and revisionary liberal sentiments were certainly in the intellectual air of the nineteenth century (one must not forget that the second half of the century was the time when Marxism was first developing), it was not any of these intellectual movements *alone* that were responsible for the death-knell of classical liberalism. Rather, as Gray (1995) argues, it was the political life of the time, the emerging democracies and campaigns for votes, the discord following World War I and the fall of European empires, and the growth of nationalist movements that posed the greatest challenge to the classical liberal ideology. As I will discuss in the chapters to come (especially in Chapter 4), there is a two-way relationship between historico-political developments in material reality and the ideological/symbolic developments in public opinion: one the one hand, what may happen politically is constricted by the ideological foundations of society, but on the other, political developments also are involved in determining what ideological structure best fits a given society at a given point in history. In a larger sense, theory cannot be considered divorce from practice, nor practice from theory.

By the 1930s, the western world had moved away from the ideal of a minimal, *laissez-faire* state that protected the liberty of its citizens by staying out of their lives. In England, revisionary liberals such as John Maynard Keynes tried to find a middle ground between the classical ideals that had fallen out of favor and the socialist ones that had risen to prominence and popularity. In America, the Great Depression, the election of Franklin Roosevelt and his New Deal created a new kind of managerialist state that performed an active role in the lives of

the citizens.[9] In Germany, the Nazi party had begun its rise to totalitarian autocracy, and in Russia, the Bolsheviks managed a market-less state with a centralized socialist command economy. Though the specific circumstances surrounding liberalism's waning popularity varied around the western world, its defeat was still more or less pervasive. Moreover, in all these cases, change was not the result of strictly ideological or material forces but rather a combination of the two.

World War II only exacerbated this political situation and "the quarter of a century" that followed it "is commonly characterized as the period of Keynesian consensus," (Gray 1995: 38). It is this period of Keynesian consensus that is the impetus for the neoliberal project.[10] As Jamie Peck observes, "neoliberalism is consequently a reactionary creed in practically all sense of the word," (2008: 4). Neoliberalism's development is a reaction to the decline of classical liberalism and the rise of its revisionist and socialist counterparts; it is an attempt to revitalize and remake the *laissez-faire* doctrine of the nineteenth century for the new world of the twentieth. This *re-*making of liberalism for the modern, contemporary world, is what is so *new*, so *neo* about *neo*liberalism. There was no way that the liberal age of the nineteenth century could have been

---

[9] Perhaps the greatest legacy of the New Deal and Roosevelt's welfare state is the Social Security system and it is no coincidence that Social Security numbers are used as state identifiers outside of the context of Social Security's welfarist role — the rise of the welfare state is bound up with the rise of the state that keeps track of its citizenry and issues identification cards such as passports, driver's licenses, and Social Security cards. The managerialist state and the surveillance state are one and the same.

[10] "Keynesian consensus" refers to the historical period between the post-World War II years and the neoliberal revolution that was to begin in the late 70's and early '80s when Keynes' (1936) economic theories provided the basis for a new kind of (revisionary) liberalism that was to be the dominant model of governance for most western nation-states. Keynes advocated for a state that used its "powers...to moderate the effects of market forces, to relieve poverty and promote social welfare" (Gray, 1998: 15). Further, Keynesianism "not only assumed full employment as the most indispensable precondition of a sustainable welfare state, it also imposed an overriding obligation on national government to promote it" (Gray, 1998: 28). Karl Polanyi (1944: 3) argued that "the idea of a self-adjusting market implied a stark utopia" and was essentially a fiction. This was the mainstream view during the period of Keynesian consensus, insofar "as it was recognized that free markets are highly imperfect institutions" and that "to work well they need not only regulation but active management" (Gray, 1998: 196). In essence, "Keynes' burden, as Eric Hobsbawm reflected, was to… 'save capitalism from itself'" (Hobsbawm, quoted in Peck, 2010: 68). And for a brief period, many western nations took up this burden. Accordingly, we can see that neoliberalism's burden was to save capitalism from Keynes.

repeated in a new world that had been drastically changed by two world wars, the Russian Revolution, the end of the colonial period, and the turn from *laissez-faire* economies to socialist and mixed ones.

Thus neoliberalism is at once a desire to return to forsaken ideals and also to go beyond them, creating a new utopian vision (in an intellectual culture that was openly hostile to it) heretofore unknown to the human imagination. The twofold desire to return to classical liberalism and then to transcend its limits is apparent in several of the founding texts of neoliberal thought. Friedrich von Hayek laments in *The Road to Serfdom* (1944) of the break from history that occurred with the move away from individualism towards collectivism and socialism, writing that on the one hand, "we have progressively abandoned that freedom in economic affairs without which personal and political freedom has never existed in the past," while on the other, "there is nothing in the basic assumptions of liberalism to make it a stationary creed; there are no hard-and-fast rules fixed once and for all" (Hayek, 1944: 13,17). Indeed, neoliberalism operates first as a conservative intellectual movement, mourning the nineteenth-century values that the world largely abandoned in the first half of the twentieth, and thereafter it becomes creative, imbued with a will to go beyond the "crude rules...of the nineteenth century" that "were only a beginning," fully aware that there was "still much to learn" and "still immense possibilities of advancement" (Hayek 1944: 18).

Despite Hayek's importance as a seminal figure in neoliberalism's development, he was not the first to attempt to rewrite liberalism for the 20th century. Walter Lippmann, who will also be useful to us for his theorizing on the topic of *Public Opinion* (1922), published *The Good Society* in 1937, which was "enthusiastically welcomed by the liberal intellectuals in Europe"

21

(Plehwe, 2009: 13).[11] The reception of *The Good Society* marked a new turn in liberal thought, which through the 20s and 30s had continued to percolate underground, in places like Ludwig von Mises' *Privatseminar[12]* discussions. In 1938, Louis Rougier, a French Philosopher, organized a conference in Paris to honor Lippmann's work; this conference, The Colloque Walter Lippmann (CWL) was the very first public meeting of the international neoliberal intelligentsia; thinkers such as Wilhelm Röpke (who would go on to be a prominent economist and policy maker in the West German version of neoliberal thought, called *ordoliberalism*), Hayek, and Mises attended (Denord, 2009).

While, it may not have appeared so at the time, the CWL was a landmark event in the development of neoliberalism. "In retrospect," Denord (2009: 48) writes, "the participants in the Colloque Lippmann would appear to have constituted a prestigious conclave," as they would go on to win Nobel prizes, advise political leaders, and shape public policy on the institutional level in the years that followed. The CWL was the first time when the ideology came together as a coherent political agenda, with its own basic axioms (the priority of the price mechanism, free enterprise, the system of competition, and a strong and impartial state) (Plehwe, 2009). Similarly, it was the first time that many of the architects of the ideology came together to discuss their goals, their beliefs, and their strategy.

---

[11] It might be of interest to note that early neoliberal thinkers, such as Lippmann, were also interested in the ways to mobilize, shape, and control *doxa*, or public opinion. Figures like Lippmann were the preeminent experts on public opinion, and they laid the groundwork for the advertising revolution in the second half of the 20th century, a revolution that pre-figured the neoliberal turn later on. What is essential is that the modern conception of public opinion (e.g., Lippmann is famous for inventing such fundamental concepts as the *stereotype*) is wedded to the earliest prehistory of the neoliberal tradition. This link, between the creation of a new ideological order and a theory of influencing public opinion, helps to explain the dramatic success of neoliberalism well into the early 21st century.

[12] Literally, "private seminar." The *Privatseminar* was a discussion where liberal thinkers could meet and discuss their theories behind closed doors. Hayek himself was invited in 1924, and the mentorship of Mises proved quite influential and formative for him (Peck, 2008).

This does not mean that those who attended the Colloque were all in agreement about the positive direction neoliberalism should take as it evolved. Rather, the CWL showed how, even in its earliest moments, neoliberalism was a diverse intellectual community, originating and developing in Paris, Freiburg, Geneva, London, New York, Chicago, and Vienna. It was difficult for the attendees to even to settle on the name for their new doctrine, with terms like "individualism," "positive liberalism," and "left-wing liberalism" all possible considerations (Denord, 2009: 48). "The term *neoliberalism* became prevalent only after the Colloque for strategic reasons," meant to distinguish the neoliberals from liberal theorists who refused to go beyond *laissez-faire* in attempting to apply liberalism to the new crises and problems of modernity (Denord, 2009: 48). From the earliest possible stage, dynamic and contradictory rhetorical processes of argumentation — as well as the formation of ideographs (for the name of an ideology is certainly an ideograph, as the name of an ideology is the very shorthand one uses to refer all of the ideas behind which the ideology stands; for more on this see Chapter 3) — were involved in the creation and positive development of neoliberalism.

World War II put an end to all the neoliberal activity of the late 1930s that was centered around meetings like the Colloque Lippmann, but this is not to say these early developments were all for nothing. They prefigured the later direction of neoliberalism's evolution on the intellectual level and laid the foundations for its strategy to recapture control of society and make itself into *doxa*. Neoliberalism had begun to emerge as a distinct ideology for the first time, a response to both socialism and to *laissez-faire*, originating from all over Europe and America, drawing from different theoretical and intellectual traditions, full of internal disputes and contradictions, but still nonetheless a product of thinkers that were, despite their differences,

committed, in the final analysis, to the same basic project: the revitalization and reformation of the principles of classical liberalism for the 20th century (Denord, 2009; Plehwe, 2009).

Neoliberalism has long been associated with dedicated societies and think-tanks committed to its development, circulation, and promotion. Hayek, after publishing *The Road to Serfdom*, founded the Mont Pelerin Society (MPS) in 1947. It was the first neoliberal think-tank of its kind, a second try at a Neoliberal International, nine years after the original attempt at Paris' Colloque. At the Hotel du Parc outside of Geneva, many notable liberal thinkers gathered to discuss the future of the liberal ideal. Prior to the Mont Pelerin Society such thinkers found themselves in a period of intellectual exile; their ideological opponents had political power, and they often found it difficult to even find jobs (Harvey, 2005; Peck, 2008). Thus, the society members likened themselves to the underdogs they truly were: the last prophets of liberalism, lost in world that had abandoned its liberal roots. They had "a sect-like mentality," and were "self styled 'intellectual pilgrims' — true believers in the cause of free-market reconstruction" (Peck, 2008, p. 5). This marginal status ultimately was productive and generative for their cause, as it allowed them to reconcile internal differences that would have destroyed them if they did not have the looming specter of the Keynesian and Socialist consensuses threatening to destroy their common cause — it was the Mont Pelerin Society against the world, for more of its early history than not.

The founding statement of this society again demonstrates the twin characteristics of neoliberalism: a reactionary conservatism and a creative transcendence. The impetus for the MPS' formation is that "the central values of civilization are in danger. Over large stretches of the earth's surface the essential conditions of human dignity and freedom have already disappeared...Even that most precious possession of Western Man [sic], freedom of thought and

24

expression, is threatened…" (Mont Pelerin Society, 1947). The statement goes on to list six different matters on which "further study is desirable,"[13] the pursuit and study of such matters is what went on to become the positive development of the neoliberal ideology. Its closing phrase perhaps best represents the dual character of neoliberal thought, stating that the end of the Society is "to contribute to the *preservation* and *improvement* of the free society [emphasis mine]" (emphasis mine, Mont Pelerin Society,1947).

What emerges from this dual commitment to conservatism, the preservation of old forms, and to invention, the development of new forms and the evolution of old ones, is an ideological system that is varied, contradictory, and divergent. There is no one specific set of ideals, or policies, or programmes that one could point to and call neoliberalism and have that be the end of it. There is no "neoliberal manifesto" that lays out the doctrine as it was meant to be and as it is today. The "Statement of Aims" discussed above is the only "official" statement that the MPS ever released, and as Plehwe points out, the lack of any "formal sanctioned...definition of neoliberalism...is precisely what we should expect...if the MPS had been convened in 1947 to *construct* a new version of liberalism, rather than simply codify what had been received hallowed wisdom" (2008: 24). Rather than any static entity, neoliberalism is a system of

---

[13] Plehwe (2008: 25) notes with humor, "after all, isn't the appeal to the need for 'further study' the last refuge of academic scoundrels?" Regardless, the different matters on which "further study is desirable" are as follows:

1. The analysis and exploration of the nature of the present crisis so as to bring home to others its essential moral and economic origins.
2. The redefinition of the functions of the state so as to distinguish more clearly between the totalitarian and the liberal order.
3. Methods of re-establishing the rule of law and of assuring its development in such manner that individuals and groups are not in a position to encroach upon the freedom of others and private rights are not allowed to become a basis of predatory power.
4. The possibility of establishing minimum standards by means not inimical to initiative and functioning of the market.
5. Methods of combating the misuse of history for the furtherance of creeds hostile to liberty.
6. The problem of the creation of an international order conducive to the safeguarding of peace and liberty and permitting the establishment of harmonious international economic relations. (Mont Pelerin Society, 1947)

knowledge or "thought collective," that has been trying to create a new version of liberalism ever since the 1930s, and it is still at it today.

Even at the first meeting of the MPS, the members were hardly able to come to a consensus about the direction that their program would take. The founding statement they published was actually their second attempt; the first draft was much closer to a concrete manifesto than the final version, and it was for this reason that it was rejected (Mirowski and Plehwe, 2008). The final, published version has much less specific content in it; it is less clear in its direction than the first draft. Plehwe "[interprets] this not only as evidence of a fair amount of dissension within the ranks of the MPS; *but also as evidence that the transnational band of participants did not have a very clear idea of where the project was headed in 1947*," (2008: 25, emphasis mine). The group that gathered at the MPS was "*neo*liberal in the sense of the participant's broadly shared understanding that a simple 'restoration' of nineteenth-century classical liberalism was not appropriate for the times, politically, economically or socially. However, demarcating a proper role for the state...proved beyond the reach of the meeting," (Peck, 2008, p. 15). The only clarity for the contemporary observer of the founding of the MPS is how unclear, imprecise, and indefinite the very origins of neoliberalism are. The recognition of this points to the rhetorical nature of the struggle to capture public opinion: even the creation of a single ideology involves a complicated system of discursive contestation between allies; the complexity only increases when ideologies that are actively opposed to each other — in terms of their principles, practices, and goals — clash with one another in the public sphere.

Neoliberalism's beginning as a conservative and reactionary ideology is clear; this is the sense of shared values that all society members had, the "first principles" on which there was a relative consensus (Peck, 2008). But after these first principles, the positive development of

26

neoliberalism proved difficult; the different MPS members could not reach agreement on what their program would entail. "The challenge," as Peck describes, "was to determine a set of tightly constrained, yet positive, functions for the state, as the foundation for a *designed* market order," (2008: 15). The question of how such a market order should be *designed*, built with a state as its center, remained one of contention for the forefathers of the neoliberal order who gathered at Mont Pelerin. In Hartwell's history of the MPS, this contentious atmosphere is all too apparent. He recounts George Stigler attempting to find a starting point for their designs, "'can we agree...that the first step [for monetary stability] should be to bring all money-making institutions under the control of the state?' They could not agree. It was the same for proposals to solve the problems of mass unemployment, monopolies, and poverty," (Hartwell, quoted in Peck, 2008: 15). Neoliberalism, even in its infancy, was full of discord, friction, and contradiction. These are basic aspects of its constitution. No matter how much it matures, it will never escape the conflict from which it was born. This is the reason why neoliberalism, both in terms of its "theoretical framework" and its application in practice is, even today, neither unified, nor "entirely coherent" (Harvey, 2005: 21).

MPS, in the earliest days of neoliberalism's intellectual birth and development, served not as a place for the positive invention of the ideology, but rather a locus wherein the heterogeneous members could gather, network, and debate — secluded and safe from rejection by the mainstream political and economic developments of the era. The earliest theorists and proselytizers of neoliberalism no doubt had in common a basic sense of the principles on which society should be organized, but when they finally assembled as a collective, the heterogeneity possible within their common understanding became all too apparent. This again should surprise no one, as the positive development of any kind of program intent on restructuring the political,

27

economic, and social relationships between persons, markets, states, and the world-at-large will require disagreement, debate, and difference in order to mature and emerge as a real force of change upon the world's stage. The basic aspects of neoliberal thought facilitate the emergence of a wide array of differences of approach, on both theoretical and practical terms. In light of this, to characterize neoliberalism as a unified *pensèe unique* is to gravely misunderstand the situation; rather it is an arabesque woven by a diverse group of thinkers who interpreted certain common principles in different ways; they were, as the saying goes, on the same page, though not on the same line; or to use a different metaphor, they were on similar wavelengths, though they deviated in terms of amplitude or phase. The case of the early MPS (or the Colloque Walter Lippmann, for that matter) and its internal indeterminacies undoubtedly shows that there was no clear, singular starting point for neoliberalism, and we will also see this theme in the rest of the history of neoliberalism's development, insofar as it came forth as an intellectual idea and a political order that (re)-wrote public policy. There are no monoliths to speak of here.

III: Neoliberalization: How "Actually Existing Neoliberalism" Came to Be

All that I have written so far has been about neoliberalism and its history as an intellectual tradition. I still must explain how this intellectual tradition diffused from the academy into the mainstream, becoming *doxa*, and similarly, I must recount neoliberalism's history as a political movement that motivates the policy directives of civil society through governments, international institutions, and non-governmental organizations.

Neoliberalism, as an intellectual movement, remained largely in the margins in the decades that followed the first meeting of the MPS. Except for the case of *Ordoliberalism* in post-WWII West Germany, neoliberalism would not find itself in a position to dictate public policy in most of the world until the 1970s. This, of course, does not mean that the MPS or other groups of neoliberal thinkers were not hard at work developing their theories and attempting to cultivate mainstream acceptance. The opposite is true. For example, it was in this intermediate period, when neoliberalism was for the most part underground, that the "Chicago School proper took shape as a recognizable 'project'" (Peck, 2008: 17). The intellectual work of neoliberalism never stalled, unpopular as it may have been in the 50s or 60s, an era marked by state forms that can be classified with the descriptor of "embedded liberalism." Embedded liberalism refers to a "form of political-economic organization" that was a part of the Keynesian consensus of the post-World War II era, wherein "market processes and entrepreneurial and corporate activities were surrounded by a web of social and political constraints" (Harvey, 2005: 11). Embedded liberalism was the dominating ideology of its time, and its seeming omnipresence served to marginalize neoliberal thinkers and their ideas.

As a result, embedded liberalism was the ideology that the neoliberal intelligentsia reacted *against*, and it was what they successfully defeated in the 1970s. Thus if one is to

understand neoliberalism's rise, one must understand the form that it was *designed to replace*.
Embedded liberalism involved accepting that

> the state should focus on full employment, economic growth, and the welfare of its
> citizens, and that state power should be freely deployed, alongside of or, if necessary,
> intervening in or even substituting for market processes to achieve these ends. Fiscal and
> monetary policies usually dubbed 'Keynesian' were widely deployed to dampen business
> cycles and to ensure reasonably full employment. A 'class compromise' between capital
> and labour was generally advocated as the key guarantor of domestic peace and
> tranquility. States actively intervened in industrial policy and moved to set standards for
> the social wage by constructing a variety of welfare systems (health care, education, and
> the like) (Harvey, 2005: 10).

Embedded liberalism proved quite fruitful for the advanced capitalist countries of North America
and Europe[14] during the 1950s and 60s, but this system began to fall apart in the late 1960s and
early 70s in the "stagflation" crisis, when both unemployment and inflation surged, while real
interests rates plummeted into the negative (Harvey, 2005). This made the growth necessary for
capital accumulation impossible, and imperiled the world economy. The result of this crisis was
that the "Keynesian system of political economy disintegrated" (Skidelsky, quoted in Peck 2008:
29). If embedded liberalism involved a system of "constraints" that were imposed on capital by
states, then "the neoliberal project" was "to disembed capital from these constraints," as it
understood these constraints to inhibit growth and to be detrimental to the solvency of markets
(Harvey, 2005: 11). Neoliberalism was able to justify the elimination of these constraints

---

[14] The high levels of growth in the 50s and 60s were only really enjoyed by the advanced capitalist countries of the
First World, while most other countries were left behind. "Attempts to export 'development' to much of the rest of
the world largely stalled. For much of the Third World, particularly Africa, embedded liberalism remained a pipe
dream" (Harvey, 2005: 11).

because it theorized that doing so would free the market and allow the world's economy to escape from the stagflation crisis.

It was this period of crisis and transition that marked the real beginnings of neoliberal hegemony. Neoliberalism's basic strategy has always involved exploiting various crises in order to impose public policy changes in a top-down, authoritarian, and undemocratic manner (Klein, 2007). The fiscal crisis of the 1970s is just one example of this strategy in action. As Peck (2008: 30) writes, "Neoliberal nostrums gained widespread traction in the 1970s, purposefully narrating a set of crises that they had been designed to exploit." The work of the neoliberal theorists in the post-war period of embedded liberalism, had been to design an economic/political framework that could be put to work when the time was right. Or as, Milton Friedman himself put it, in *Capitalism and Freedom*, "Only a crisis — actual or perceived produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around. That, I believe, is our basic function: to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes politically inevitable" (Friedman, 1982, viii-ix). Indeed, the 1970s represent a moment of great political crisis for the advanced capitalist countries of North America and Europe. No one could have possibly seen the deregulatory, neoliberal transition coming, in the late 60s, not even Milton Friedman, who while describing the political economic zeitgeist of 1965 wrote, with regret, to *Time* magazine that "we are all Keynesians now" (Friedman, 1965). Even Richard Nixon, would say in 1971 that "I am now a Keynesian in economics," a remark that the *New York Times* reported "must have staggered conservatives in the audience" (Silk, 1971). The Keynesian consensus, at the beginning of the 70s, was known to everyone, conservative and liberal alike; there is little doubt that at this time neoliberal policies were considered "politically impossible."

31

But, while looking back on the history of the neoliberal transition, we should not be so quick to assume with Friedman that this transition was "politically inevitable," no matter how obvious or inevitable this transition might seem in retrospect. Rather, "the capitalist world stumbled towards neoliberalization as the answer through a series of gyrations and chaotic experiments" (Harvey, 2005: 13). Just as we have seen the intellectual development of neoliberalism proved to be messy, polycentric, and far from monolithic, we will see that the actual political transitions into neoliberalism (a process I will henceforth refer to as *neoliberalization*) was equally messy. Rather than a history of mere political inevitability, the history of neoliberalization is a history of conflict and compromise between a wide array of interest groups, ideological forces, and political blocs. This is not to say that the neoliberalization of the 1970s happened by accident, coincidence, or mere happenstance. Rather, the crisis was purposefully exploited, and the transition was purposefully constructed. While the ascendance of neoliberal theories was certainly not the only historical possibility leading out of the stagflation crisis — as the left postured to try and acquire *more* state control and regulation of the economy in many European nations and even in the United States (Harvey, 2005: 12-13)— it *was* the historical possibility that beat out the others. Likewise,

> it is absurd to suggest that [neoliberal theories] were passively 'lying around' as
> Friedman would have it. They had been scrupulously formulated… as a total critique of
> Keynesian rationality, and they had been peddled relentlessly through free-market think
> tanks, through the financial community and business organizations, and through the elite
> and mainstream media...*The neoliberal counterrevolution was not just passively devised;
> it was actively delivered*," (Peck, 2008: 29-30, emphasis mine)

All of this is to say that the neoliberal transition is one that was primarily rhetorical in nature[15];
the public had to be sold on this new doctrine. This was something that early neoliberals knew
from the very beginning — that after their doctrine was developed on the intellectual level, it
would have to be translated and made available for public consumption. This necessity was
apparent even as early as the first meeting of MPS where, along with the intellectuals who would
be the creative force behind the doctrine, "a number of sympathetic journalists" were also
invited, so that the new developments of the neoliberal doctrine could be disseminated to the
public at large (Peck, 2008: 35). What is more is that for neoliberal doctrine to become *doxa*, it
would have to seize ideological control of the culture at large, and as I will argue, it seized power
on the very level of the ideograph.

But to turn briefly away from the specific rhetorical focus I have just brought up, I would
like to relate more broadly the story of neoliberalization since the 1970s, to see the political-
economic context — or what we can call, following Bitzer (1968), the rhetorical situation —
surrounding the rhetorical discourse of neoliberalism.

Neoliberalization "should be thought of as a contingently realized *process*, not as an end-
state or 'condition'" (Peck and Tickell, 2003: 165). Insofar as it is a *process* that is ongoing and
ever shifting, adapting to the context and situation of the time period, neoliberalization by

---

[15] This claim is only true in the centers of global capitalism. Neoliberalization in the peripheries was not rhetorical,
because it was done by authoritarian, rather than democratic means. "In countries such as Chile and Argentina in the
1970s… [neoliberalization] was swift, brutal, and sure: a military coup backed by the traditional upper classes (as
well as by the US government), followed by the fierce repression of all solidarities created within the labour and
urban social movements which had so threatened their power" (Harvey, 2005: 39). Of course this is not to say that
the "repression" or censorship imposed by authoritarian regimes did not operate within the realm of rhetoric;
censorship consolidates the power of a regime by limiting the rhetorical possibilities available to the regime's
opponents. But the point is that the initial moment of neoliberalization — the coup—was accomplished not by
rhetorical means but by military ones. The rhetorical means were then implemented afterwards to ensure that the
public did not mobilize itself against the coup. This was not the case in the democratic centers of global capitalism
(i.e., Britain and the United States), as the democratic nature of those societies necessitated neoliberalization to be
accomplished within the realm of the rhetorical rather than that of the military.

33

definition cannot occur in the exact same way in different situations, no matter the extent to which "archetypal echoes" of "classic" forms of neoliberalization may be identified in subsequent transitions (Peck, 2010: 21). These echoes, and the necessary departures from them, represent the dual character of neoliberalism that I discussed in the previous section: (1) the commitment to conservatism and the preservation of old forms, and (2) the creative transcendence necessary to move forward in new and unexpected contexts.

  The story of neoliberalization begins in Chile circa 1973: "the very first experiment with neoliberal state formation" (Harvey, 2005: 7). After Pinochet's brutal coup that overthrew the democratically elected socialist leader, Salvador Allende, neoliberalization began. A group of Chilean economists known as the "Chicago boys" were put in charge of reconstructing the Chilean economy. These economists earned the epithet "Chicago boys" by way of their economic studies at the University of Chicago, under Milton Friedman himself. They were able to study at the University of Chicago because the United States government implemented "the Chile project" in 1956, a program designed to fight communism in Latin America. This program allocated money to train Chilean economists at the most rabidly anti-red economics program in America at the time: the Chicago school of Milton Friedman (Harvey, 2005; Klein, 2007). The Chile project was one of the first ways that the neoliberal ideology was exported from the Global North to the Global South, again pointing to the calculated nature of neoliberal transitions over the world. This was not a case of ideas "lying around," waiting for the opportunity to become popular, as Milton Friedman himself would claim. Rather, it was, as Juan Gabriel Valdés, the Chilean foreign minister in the 1990s, said "a striking example of an organized transfer of ideology from the United States to a country within its direct sphere of influence . . . the education of these Chileans derived from a specific project designed in the

34

1950s to influence the development of Chilean economic thinking" (quoted in Klein, 2007: 62). These ideas led to the economic reforms and deregulation of the Chilean economy under Pinochet. Public assets and natural resources were privatized and allowed to be exploited without regulations, and free trade became the law of the land, as "the right of foreign companies to repatriate profits [from Chile]...was guaranteed" (Harvey, 2005: 8).

This first instance of neoliberalization was marked by the authoritarian manner in which both military and economic elites intervened with the social democratic tendencies of Chilean politics. This authoritarian aspect is one of the most common characteristics of periods of neoliberalization, as neoliberalization has again and again, been imposed upon the masses by a group of elites. The uneven and multiscalar nature of neoliberalization means that exactly who these elites are may differ from place to place (they may be military leaders, technocrats, politicians, financiers, etc.), but the same basic structure and pattern is at work no matter which group — or combination of groups — of elites is running the show.

Another "iconic case" of neoliberalization comes with the story of New York City's fiscal crisis in the 1970s. New York City had become "ungovernable" by 1975, as the city's commitments to welfare programs, combined with the recession and diminished federal aid dollars, pushed the city into bankruptcy (Harvey, 2005; Peck 2010). Adept as ever at exploiting a crisis that would change the politically impossible into the politically inevitable, the forces of neoliberal reaction[16] quickly mobilized to reconstruct the organization of New York City with

---

[16] In the case of 1970s America, the forces of neoliberal reaction consisted of a varied combination of interest groups. Political lobbies such as the US Chamber of Commerce, The National Association of Manufactures, and the Business Roundtable; think-tanks with corporate financial backing like the Heritage Foundation, the Hoover Institute, the Center for the Study of American Business, the American Enterprise Institute, and the National Bureau of Economic Research; finance institutions and investment bankers (capitalist elites); politicians and their associates and advisor; and corporate political action committees (PACs) were all involved (Harvey, 2005:43-46). In the 1970s there also developed an "unholy alliance between big business" and the Christian right (Jerry Falwell's "moral majority") that was essential in cementing at the core of neoliberalism an ethic of individual responsibility and

the, now classic neoliberal tactic of a conditional bailout, saying to the city in essence,
"implement these austerity measures now, or default on your debt." To the neoliberal reformers
of the time, New York City represented the height of Keynesian waste (New York City, at the
time had arguably the most robust system of social welfare in America), and they sought to make
an example of New York's excesses (Harvey, 2005). President Ford's Secretary of the Treasury,
William Simon, advised Ford to refuse to aid the city, and suggested that "the terms of any bail-
out…should be 'so punitive, the overall experience so painful, that no city, no political
subdivision would ever be tempted to go down the same road'" (quoted in Harvey, 2005: 46).[17]
New York City's neoliberalization dramatically showed the way that a group of elites (in think
tanks, political office, and financial institutions) could change the fundamental structure of
governance, without resorting to democratic means.

And punished New York City was. The results of the bailout were drastic. The city's
most powerful unions were crushed; public employees were either laid off or had their wages
frozen; social services like healthcare, public transit, and education were gutted; and the CUNY
university system began to charge tuition for the first time (Harvey, 2005). The city's physical
and social infrastructure was either destroyed or left to rot, without the hope of future public
investment; spending cuts came alongside tax cuts that prefigured a reconstruction of the city
economy to emphasize the finance, consumerism, and media industries; "broken windows"
policing was introduced to crack down on petty crime, in the hope of restoring social order

---

"moral righteousness" (Harvey, 2005: 50). These were just some of the players who advocated and facilitated America's neoliberalization.

[17] Mainstream politicians and their aides are notorious for circulating through the "revolving doors" between all the different groups that comprise the so-called, forces of neoliberal reaction (corporations, think-tank, financial institutions, PACs, etc.). For example, William Simon, after his stint as the Secretary of the Treasury, became the "head of the ultra-conservative Olin Foundation," and also would "go out of [his] way to urge the PACs to direct their efforts towards funding Republican candidates with right-wing [i.e., pro-business, pro-market, and neoliberal] sympathies" (Harvey, 2005: 49).

without addressing the causes of crime itself;[18] and the city abdicated its former role of providing social services to the poor, instead relying on NGOs, volunteer organizations, and charities to handle the burden (Peck, 2010). The elites of the city benefited greatly, as "corporate welfare substituted for people welfare," and capitalist enterprises received all kinds of subsidies and tax incentives (Harvey, 2005: 47). The city was once more open for business.

But material changes for New York City were really just the tip of the iceberg. The most dramatic effect of New York's neoliberalization came on the ideological level: New York City changed how America understood the role of city government. As Harvey (2005: 47) notes, after New York City's crisis

> city government was more and more construed as an entrepreneurial rather than a social democratic or even managerial entity. Inter-urban competition for investment capital transformed government into urban governance through public-private partnerships. City business was increasingly conducted behind closed doors, and the democratic and representational content of local governance diminished.

This crisis became a model for a new way of understanding government that was about to take America by storm with the Reagan administration of the 1980s. The neoliberalization of New York "was sort of a rehearsal for the larger neoliberal reorganization that would take place in the United States under Ronald Reagan," and it would "serve as an example of how government could be used to reassert class power and shift priorities towards...the new ideas that would be known as neoliberalism" (Moody quoted in Peck, 2010: 140). The case of New York City set a

---

[18] This policing style is also what led to the development of the now infamous "stop and frisk" policy of New York City, as well as the high incarceration rates of the poor communities of color that had been basically abandoned by the city in its attempt to save money by gutting social services. For more information about the causes and effects of this style of policing and incarceration on urban populations please refer to (Davis, 2003; Alexander, 2013; Taibbi, 2014).

powerful precedent for the forces of neoliberalization, establishing that "in the event of a conflict between...financial institutions and bondholders' returns, on the one hand, and the well-being of the citizens, on the other, the former was to be privileged" (Harvey, 2005: 48). Government had previously been understood to be a force that had a *primary responsibility* to secure the well-being of its citizens, but after New York City's reconfiguration, the primary responsibility of government changed. Government's primary responsibly was now to ensure the well-being of a profitable business climate, with the understanding that the profits would "trickle down" to provide for the general welfare of the citizenry (for discussion of "The Neoliberal State in Theory" see Harvey, 2005: 64-66). The edifices of embedded liberalism were crumbling in America, on the institutional and ideological levels. A new governing ideology was being erected upon the ruins: neoliberalism.

With the case of New York City, the economic policies that had been tested in Pinochet's Chile had finally been put into place in the United States — and to great effect. Though the exact circumstances of Chile's neoliberalization are quite different than New York City's, the same basic tendencies are reflected in each, as elite groups of policy makers, economists, and think-tanks designed and pushed a politico-economic agenda onto the public without considering first what these public wanted for itself. It all "amounted to a coup by the financial institutions against the democratically elected government of New York City, and it was every bit as effective as the military coup that had earlier occurred in Chile" (Harvey, 2005: 45). The contrast between these two cases is but one example to show that though neoliberalization may have many different faces and forms, these different forms may still wield immense political power and result in similar policy proscriptions and institutional restructuring.

The popularity of neoliberal thought continued to increase as the 1970s moved on,

nurtured by the work of various free market think-tanks like the Mont Pelerin Society, the Institute of Economic Affairs in London, the Heritage foundation in Washington D.C, and the International Center for Economic Policy Studies in New York City (though it changed its name to the Manhattan Institute in the early 80s) (Peck, 2010). The work of neoliberal theorists in the academy was further lauded on the international stage, as Hayek was awarded the Nobel Prize in economics in 1974, and Friedman was to win his in 1976. The journal *Commentary* emerged as powerful intellectual political force during this time period as well, rising, as its website describes, to become "the flagship of neoconservatism" (Commentary). But besides the brief interlude in New York City, the whole of America would not experience neoliberalization full-scale until 1979 (Harvey, 2005; Peck, 2010).

 The opening salvo in the full-fledged national project of neoliberalization was fired in 1979 by Paul Volcker, the chairman of the US Federal Reserve under President Carter. His new monetary policy abandoned the Keynesian and New Deal era concerns of full employment in an effort to curb inflation at all costs (Harvey, 2005). The real rate of interest, which had often dipped into the negative in the 1970s economic crisis, was made by positive by order of the Federal Reserve (Harvey, 2005). This new policy was known as the Volcker shock (see Appendix 3), because it initiated "a long deep recession that would empty factories and break unions in the US and drive debtor countries to the brink of insolvency, beginning the long era of structural adjustment" (Henwood quoted in Harvey, 2005: 23). These high interest rates benefited only the bankers, financiers, and lenders who underwrite loans, because the high

interest rates allowed capital to extract value from the rest of the economy (i.e., all those who require debt to do business or to live their lifestyle).[19]

Volcker's monetarist policies were only the very beginning of neoliberalization. As Harvey (2005) notes, the adoption of strict monetary policy designed to counteract inflation is not enough to warrant sufficient conditions for neoliberalization. There had to be further interventions into governance for neoliberalization to continue. Ronald Reagan's election in 1980 ensured that these further interventions did come (what is more is that his victory was a result of businesses learning to act as a class and political bloc, using the Republican Party as their instrument to fight politically for their interests) (Harvey, 2005: 48). Reagan would go on teach the rest of the country the lessons of 1970s New York City, as he sought to deliver on his inaugural promise to "curb the size and influence of the Federal establishment," (Reagan, 1981) with a massive campaign of deregulation, budget cuts, and tax cuts. He also began an offensive to break the back of organized labor in the form of trade unions, as he refused to budge during the 1981 PATCO strike of air traffic controllers. Reagan was able to exploit the high level of unemployment (10%) that was a direct result of the Volcker shock to ensure that labor could not afford to fight and roll back the tides of neoliberalization. Deindustrialization became the rule of the day, as plant closures began in the unionized industrial regions of the northeast and midwest, and industry moved to the non-union states in the south, if not abroad to places like Mexico or South-East Asia. Labor had been stripped of its political power (Harvey, 2005).

But Reagan's assault on organized labor did more than take on strong political-economic forms (e.g. changing tax incentives, strike-breaking, deindustrialization). These interventions,

---

[19] For more on the way that neoliberal society has created a "poverty industry," relying upon "debtfare," for the majority of people to survive and make do, please refer to (Soederberg, 2014). If her thesis is accepted, the high interest rates of the Volcker Shock proved disastrous to the general population, as it made the debt that most require to function in society more expensive and difficult to repay.

though destructive to organized labor's political power in an immediate sense, would do nothing to pacify the anger of labor at its own demise. That is, these interventions took away the *political* ability of labor to act together as unified class in pursuit of its interests, but they did nothing to frustrate the *ideological* unity of the working class: the senses of solidarity and hope that are the reason laborers fight together in political conflicts. Though labor had lost in the moment, one could imagine that it would retreat temporarily with an intention of fighting back in the future, eager to take back its former power and influence. From this perspective, it would seem that Reagan's biggest success was his ability to win the political battles that allowed him to shift the balance of power away from the hands of labor and into the hands of capital. But these victories, if they were only on the plane of politics, would have been temporary. Presumably, the scales could be tipped back in the other direction in the years to come, through electoral mechanisms and political-economic reform, if not outright revolution. This line of thinking is typical of a Marxist understanding of history: because of the contradictions between capital and labor, and no matter how bad the situation is for labor at any point, *it is inevitable* that labor will fight back and revolt against capital to establish the next level of society, communism. This is also analogous to Polyani's (1944) understanding of "double movement," wherein the first movement of the destructive capabilities of the self-adjusting, free market is checked by a second, resistant movement that develops in order to protect society from being annihilated by the hands of the market. The concept of the double movement was Polanyi's key insight into understanding how the "stark utopia" (Polanyi, 1944: 3) of classical liberalism was defeated; embedded liberalism, it seems, was the secondary movement that developed to protect society from the whims of the first movement, the *laissez-faire* market.

41

But where was the double movement against Reagan? The first movement, "the principle of economic liberalism, aiming at the establishment of a self-regulating market" is apparent in the neoliberal transition described above. But the second movement, "the principle of social protection aiming at the conservation of man [sic] and nature as well as productive organization, relying on the...support of those most immediately affected by the... market...the working and the landed classes [i.e., labor]...using protective legislation, restrictive associations, and other instruments of intervention as its methods" never seemed to take root (Polanyi, 1944: 132). After all, if we are willing to accept Harvey's (2005: 19) characterization of neoliberalization as "a *political* project to re-establish the conditions for capital accumulation and to restore the power of economic elites" then we can easily observe that its political success has been, by and large, unchallenged, even decades after his presidency, as economic elites have not had it so good — in terms of their political power and their ability to extract profits from the economy — since the Gilded Age. In the years after Reagan's interventions, income inequality has continued to grow, wealth has been increasingly concentrated in the hands of the few, real wages have stagnated, and the rich have benefited from massive tax cuts (Gilson and Perot, 2011; Harvey, 2005).please refer to Appendices 3-7 for graphs that demonstrate the aforementioned economic developments).

Therefore, the real impact of Reagan is that he stopped the process of double movement dead in its tracks, crushing the hope for labor to organize and defend "society" (in Polanyi's terms) from the destructive powers of the free market. Reagan ensured that his reforms would maintain permanence by changing labor's ideological understanding of itself, stripping away the notion that labor is in conflict with capital, and attempting to instead replace it with the understanding that *labor and capital share the same interests*. Reagan was able to obscure the

contradiction between labor and capital and then ensure that this illusion itself would be naturalized. Reagan's largest victory came not from using "a big stick" to beat labor down, but from convincing "labourers as individuals to break with collective action" by offering to them "a number of carrots" that appealed to their interests.[20] Similarly, Reagan was able to change the mainstream understanding of the ideograph <human rights>, such that "the structure of the American free market coincided with the imperatives of human rights" (Gray, 1998: 108). This conflation of the free market being an essential component of <human rights> is one of the most important ideological foundations of neoliberal thought; it has lasted long after Reagan. Stuckey and Ritter (2007: 647) also note this relationship in George W. Bush's rhetoric, as his uses of <human rights> carry "with [them] a strong connection to economic neoliberal ideology...which [privileges]...particular economic 'rights' above political 'rights'" in a way that ensures "market fundamentalism and neoliberal orthodoxy" are the foundations of " 'democratic' freedom." It was the ideological changes that Reagan made to working class understanding of their interests and "essential" freedoms that are the real, lasting effects of his presidency.

Therefore, it is not that Reagan was able to muster the political will to crush organized labor; it is that he was able to get labor to celebrate its own demise. It is not that Reagan operated on the level of politics, because the level of politics necessarily involves double movement, the struggle between the two different and opposed organizing principles of society; it is that he

---

[20] Harvey (2005: 53) describes how this process came to pass: "The unions' rigid rules and bureaucratic structures made them vulnerable to attack. The lack of flexibility was often as much a disadvantage for individual labourers as it was for capital. The virtuous claims for flexible specialization in labour processes and for flexitime arrangements could become part of the neoliberal rhetoric that could be persuasive to individual labourers, particularly those who had been excluded from the monopoly benefits that strong unionization sometimes conferred. Greater freedom and liberty of action in the labour market could be touted as a virtue for capital and labour alike, and here, too, it was not hard to integrate neoliberal values into the 'common sense' of much of the workforce. How this active potentiality was converted into a highly exploitative system of flexible accumulation (all the benefits accruing from increasing flexibility in labour allocations in both space and time go to capital) is key to explaining why real wages, except for a brief period during the 1990s, stagnated or fell...and benefits diminished."

operated on the level of ideology, which, in the last instance, determines what is and is not political, eliding the terms of the double movement altogether. The genius of Reagan is not that he changed the short-term balance of political power; it is that he changed the very meaning of politics itself.

Examining the Clinton administration, the first Democratic presidency après-Reagan, shows quite clearly how the nature of politics had been changed by the Reagan administration. Clinton had no choice but to continue the trends that had been set by Reagan, because Reagan had quite simply *depoliticized* the questions of economic management by conflating neoliberal economic policies with the very idea of Americans' right to freedom. As Gray (1998: 109) writes, "in fashioning a public culture in which the imperatives of the free market, the interests of corporate America and the demands of human freedom could no longer be distinguished, the Reagan presidency set the agenda not only for George Bush but also for Bill Clinton." The fate of the economy, in other words, was no longer in the hands of the democratic mechanisms of American institutions (like electoral politics). It was not even in the hands of the *president*, as "in the political climate that the neo-conservative ascendancy… created Clinton may have had no choice but to" sign the Welfare Reform Act in 1996, in order to attempt to "stave off the worst excesses of the Right-wing...platform by implementing those parts of it which [had] electoral support" (Gray, 1998: 109). The effect of this reform was to divest "the federal government of most of its responsibilities for welfare provision" (Gray, 1998: 109). The fate of the economy had really been left in the hands of elites on Wall Street and in the Federal Reserve. As Clinton himself put it, in a now-infamous remark made in reaction

to the assertion that Wall Street interests effectively possessed a form of veto power over

his economic policy, with an investment exodus and soaring interest rates likely

following imprudent or interventionist moves in Washington: 'You mean to tell me that the success of the [economic] program and my re-election hinges on the Federal Reserve and a bunch of fucking bond traders?' (quoted in Peck, 2010: 237).

And indeed Clinton was re-elected in 1996, on the basis of an economic program that did not deviate substantially from Reagan's model (Meeropol, 1998; Pollin, 2003). In fact, the policy directives of Clinton's administration (along with Tony Blair's in Britain at the same time) became known as "The Third Way," that is to say a compromise that ended up somewhere between the free-market, neoliberal ideology and the old Social-Democratic legacy of embedded liberalism (Arestis and Sawyer, 2004). But the Third Way, in reality, reeks more of capitulation than compromise, representing the ways that the "Democratic Party...was fundamentally riven by the need to placate...corporate and financial interests while at the same time making some gestures towards improving the material conditions of life for its popular base" (Harvey, 2005: 51). Clinton, whether he originally intended to or not (for he ended up having little agency in this regard, as his prescient remark about those "fucking bond traders" shows), was forced to choose corporate interests over popular ones, such that he "offered only a mildly less severe version of neoliberal orthodoxy, adhering fundamentally to all its basic tenets" (Pollin, 2003: 173). It is with the Clinton presidency that we can observe how neoliberalism had narrowed down the acceptable limits of political choice, as both Democrats and Republicans became advocates of neoliberal policies, in one way or another." Neoliberalism under Reagan was no doubt mainstream, but it is the Clinton era which shows the real truth of its hegemonic powers. It had taken forty-odd years of intellectual labor, and another 17 years of political developments, but by the mid-90s, neoliberalism had become doxa.

The crisis for American politics, and the *raison d'être* of this thesis, is the fact that Clinton's variation on neoliberalism became the active direction for the Democratic Party. In mainstream American politics, the Democratic Party ought to be the major force of resistance *against* the strict neoliberal dogma of the Republican Party, but as we have seen the Democrats have been co-opted by the neoliberal agenda in their own way. Therefore, the legacy of the Clinton administration represents the ideological sea-change that occurred post-Reagan, which pushed both the traditional left and right further rightward. As Pollin (2003: 174), notes, "the Clinton framework… [served] the crucial function of defining a left boundary for the neoliberal model against which George W. Bush could retreat rightward." The boundaries of politics have fundamentally changed; Clinton's Democratic Party, "in most respects represented a conventional center-right agenda," so that the fundamental choice in mainstream American politics became one between a center-right party and a far right-party (Pollin, 2003: 5). The effect of neoliberalism in America has been to diminish the boundaries of political possibility, so that voters have a much more limited and less meaningful choice if they are to choose between the policies of the Democratic or the Republican parties.

The compression of political potential into a series of variations on neoliberal themes is not solely an American problem. The reconfiguration of the traditional boundaries of left and right in American politics has drastic implications for countries all over the world, in the Global North and the Global South, in the centers and the peripheries, in the First and Third Worlds. While scholars (Peck and Tickell, 2002; Clarke, 2004; Peck, 2004; Barnett, 2005; Peck, 2008; Peck 2010; Flew, 2014) are rightly skeptical of a strict understanding that neoliberalization is monolithic and has a *direct* path from the centers of global capitalism to the peripheries, there

46

still is ample evidence to show that the decisions of the US (and other advanced capitalist countries in Western Europe and Japan) impact foreign nation-states (Pollin, 2003).

What is known as the "Washington Consensus" demonstrates the way that US interests influence and set the policy standards for the international institutions – like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization (WTO) – that are responsible for regulating global trade and finance. Pollin (2003: 6-7) writes that even in foreign states, "the parameters of acceptable economic policy are established in Washington D.C.," because the US "controls the major voting bloc" at both the IMF and the World Bank. Rudi Dornbusch, the famed international economist, summed up the situation rather bluntly: "The IMF is a toy of the United States to pursue its economic policy offshore" (quoted in Pollin, 2003: 7). US dominance of these international financial institutions is but one of the ways that developments in American politics impact the world at large.

But the neoliberal ideology is not spread globally through the institutions of international finance alone. Nef and Robles (2000), for instance demonstrate that neoliberalism's spread has much to do with the contemporary revolution in communications technology since the 1980s, which is produces public opinion. They write that "communications technology, irrespective of its wide spread is neither neutral, nor freely available. It is a highly concentrated business, driven by transnational capital and deregulation" (Nef and Robles, 2000: 33). This technology, they posit, has emerged in such a manner that it is responsible for "an unprecedented explosion of cultural imports practically everywhere," and the sources for these "cultural imports" are most often the United States' rapidly expanding entertainment and media industries (Nef and Robles, 2000: 34). What is more is that this media programming which is currently being disseminated all over the world, "shows marked uniformity," such that "the global news and entertainment

47

networks are the conveyor-belts in the transmission of a common neo-materialist and hedonistic worldview" (Nef and Robles, 2000: 34). This system of news media also has at its heart what Richard Hofstadter (1965) refers to as "the paranoid style in American politics" that works well to generate controversy, fear, excitement, high levels of viewership, and of course, increased advertising revenues.

Nef and Robles' arguments are similar to Herman and Chomsky's (2002) analysis of the consolidation of private control over the mass media and the limiting effects that this consolidation has on the variety of perspectives that mainstream mass media is willing to portray. This is to say that counter-ideological arguments against neoliberalism have been preempted by a regime of *effective* censorship established by the small group of elite interests that own and dominate communications technology and the mass media. I do not argue — nor do Herman and Chomsky — that this censorship is conspiratorial in nature, but rather that it stems from a system of forces that guides the media in a certain direction; this system is what Herman and Chomsky (2002: 1-2) attempt to analyze and explicate in their "propaganda model" of the mass media, which examines how through the news passes through a series of "filters…[that] fix the premises of discourse and interpretation, and the definition of what is newsworthy in the first place."[21] Herman and Chomsky (2002: lx) propose that

> most biased choices in the media arise from the preselection of right-thinking people,
> internalized preconceptions, and the adaptation of personnel to the constraints of
> ownership, organization, market, and political power. Censorship is largely self-

---

[21] These filters, that interact with each other and are mutually reinforcing, consist of:
   1) the size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms; (2) advertising as the primary income source of the mass media; (3) the reliance of the media on information provided by government, business, and 'experts' funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power; (4) 'flak' as a means of disciplining the media; and (5) 'anticommunism' as a national religion and control mechanism (Herman and Chomsky, 2002: 2).

censorship, by reporters and commentators who adjust to the realities of source and

media organizational requirements, and by people at higher levels within media

organizations who are chosen to implement, and have usually internalized, the constraints

imposed by proprietary and other market and governmental centers of power.

Furthermore,

The mass media are not a solid monolith on all issues. Where the powerful are in

disagreement, there will be a certain diversity of tactical judgments on how to attain

generally shared aims, reflected in media debate. But views that challenge fundamental

premises or suggest that the observed modes of exercise of state power are based on

systemic factors will be excluded from the mass media even when elite controversy over

tactics rages fiercely. (Herman and Chomsky, 2002: lx)

Their argument is quite similar to the one that I make about neoliberalism (insofar as it is

understood as non-monolithic and pluralistic, yet still powerfully guides political and economic

power in consistently similar directions) and about the divide between the Third Way Democrats

and the hardcore neoliberal/neoconservative Republicans. It is not a contradiction to state the fact

that the mass media (or even neoliberalism-in-general) can be understood to have *both* some

degree of internal variance/inconsistency on specific cases as well as a generalized bias on a

systemic level. But the result of such a situation is that the differences that arise are differences

in tactics but not in overall strategy. Thus one may make the depoliticized "choice" between the

Third Way variant of neoliberalism espoused by Clintonian Democrats and the Reaganesque

variant of ultra-orthodox neoliberalism. But this is no real choice at all; real choice (at least in

political terms) involves *major differences* in strategy: like the choice between neoliberalism or

Keynesianism, or the even more distinct choice between the capitalist mode of production or the

socialist. And it is this kind of choice that mainstream American politics cannot presently offer, because neoliberalism has done the ideological work necessary to consolidate the political playing field.

This certainly is the lesson that can be drawn from the Obama administration, which offers the best evidence as to how neoliberalism's lack of a well-defined, core program has allowed it to be flexible and adaptable in the face of crisis, so that it is able to maintain its power and hegemony. "In as far as Obamanomics defines a space of ideological principle," Peck (2010: 262, emphasis mine) writes, "this has taken the form of a series of *adaptations of the mutating neoliberal order, rather than any kind of significant break with that order*." After all, the result of Obama's first major economic action, the Wall Street stimulus package designed to resolve the 2008 financial crisis, was a clear win for the banks, as the "massive infusions of public funds, with remarkably few strings attached," allowed for "the banking system [to rapidly stabilize]" and become "even bigger…Before long, Wall Street profitability was...restored, and the major banks brazenly reintroduced their bloated bonus systems" (Peck, 2010: 247). Thus capital was allowed once again to re-consolidate its power, even in the aftermath of a crisis for which it was responsible.

Obama's version of neoliberalism certainly does not accord to the strict, orthodox line of the early theorists — no doubt Hayek would roll in his grave at the prospect that he and Obama shared an ideology — but this fits the picture of neoliberalism and neoliberalization that I have attempted to draw in the previous pages. Neoliberalism's creative tendency has been hard at work since the 1970s when it was first unleashed to remake the economic realities of the world. The 2008 financial crisis proves that neoliberalism is wily and adaptable and that the process of neoliberalization can march forth despite a context that seems to justify its end. As Peck (2010:

277) writes, "we seem to be confronted with a rerun of a familiar story: ever crisis-prone, neoliberalism loses another of its nine lives, but again manages to fail-and-flail *forward*. As the world emerges shakily from the Great Recession, neoliberalism has not so much been replaced as repaired." The extent of neoliberalism's power and dominance can be observed in its reaction to a crisis of its own design (the 2008 subprime disaster). It did not make any concessions or changes that would deal with the root contradictions and problems that are the genesis of such crises, but it, instead, used its ability to evolve and adapt to further consolidate its power.

Ultimately, it is on the basis of neoliberalism's creativity and adaptability to its contingent, spatio-temporal context(s) that the monolithic conceptions of *pensée unique* should forever be rejected. Such a characterization is far too reductionist and simple to provide even the faintest hope of moving beyond the new face of neoliberal practice(s) in contemporary society. Rather, an understanding of an ever-evolving neoliberalism that is a complex system of various economic, political, and ideological interests, all competing for dominance in the public sphere, must be developed if any alternatives will be created, much less actively pursued. Peck (2010: 276) describes that "an especially perverse outcome of the global economic crisis might therefore be the consolidation of a more broadly embedded, *multipolar* neoliberal order, coupled with historically receding scope for meaningful action against socioeconomic inequality and environmental degradation." But the consolidation of neoliberalism into a "default status" for societal organization does *not* preclude the possibility for alternatives, for neoliberalism always has existed — and still does exist— side by side with its ideological alternatives. It merely makes the competition between all of these neoliberal variants and counter-neoliberal alternatives all the more important.

And it is on this basis that a rhetorical perspective of ideology and public opinion is essential if the ever "evolving web of relays, routines, and relations" that is neoliberalism will ever hope to be understood or challenged (Peck, 2010: 34). As we will see in Chapter 3, ideographical critique will allow critics to understand the multifaceted ways in which the neoliberal ideology is evolving in relation with all else in the public sphere. This kind of criticism is also necessary if we critics are to understand the boundaries of neoliberal ideology — where it ends and others begin — insofar as it "must always cohabit with others" (Peck, 2010: 30). Neoliberalism does not exist in a vacuum, and any theory of ideology must not treat it as such. This is why a perspective that assigns significance to the process of public argumentation in creating public opinion is absolutely essential to developing an understanding of the ways that neoliberalism emerged, dominated, and hopefully, will fall. The fact that all of these ideologies exist in the realm of public debate is perhaps the greatest hope that the opponents of neoliberalism have today. As we will see in Chapter 4, the emergence of new ideologies, through the re-appropriation of lost ideographs, as well as the creation of new ones, may provide the innovative spark that the left needs in order to contest, on the level of public opinion, neoliberalism's dominance. While the outcome of this conflict may be uncertain, the circumstances, the stakes, and its method are not: the object of this struggle is nothing less than the ability to redefine public opinion and reconfigure public institutions. It is through the process of public argumentation, with the weapons of rhetoric, ideology, and ideographs, that this battle will be fought.

Chapter 2:
The Creation of Doxa Through Myth, Rhetoric, and Public Argumentation

The nature of the political landscape is inevitably shaped by the words which constitute it; power flows through words and changes the face of the world. It is all too easy to observe: we have seen the speeches that have mobilized armies of soldiers and armies of workers, convincing them to, respectively, destroy the world and then rebuild it. Words shape our beliefs and basic values; their meanings resound through every moment and aspect of our lives, imbued with the power to change the very way we understand our connection to reality. Or else they are used to ensure that our understanding — and consequently our political situation — never changes. One who controls the order of words, their meanings, their relations, can control the mass of the public, of "the people," so to speak. After all, we must recognize, with Murray Edelman, that "political language is political reality" (quoted in Campbell and Jamieson, 2008: 8).

I wish to complicate Edelman's aphorism: he is correct insofar as political language and political reality are necessarily implicated with each other, yet their relationship is not straightforward, operating with a clear pattern, or direction. There is no one-way street connecting political language to political reality. This presents the following problem to rhetorical critics: public discourse has some measure of "influence" on the general population, but it is difficult to ascertain exactly how much and to what degree this "influence" affects public behavior. The question, posited by Condit (1987: 2), "How, then, does one make plausible the claim that rhetoric influences social processes?" is still an open one.

53

Some scholars, as Condit and Lucaites (1993: x) argue, would answer by casting rhetoric "in the role of 'handmaiden,' completely subordinated to the inexorable power and presence of a dominant and controlling ideology." But to subjugate rhetoric to such a minor part in the story of power, politics, and ideology would be to make Plato's mistake all over again. Rhetoric is not mere flattery, like cookery. And likewise political speech is not "mere" rhetoric. "The result," of such a false understanding of the nature and purpose of rhetoric, "has been a failure (or refusal) to acknowledge rhetoric as a discursive, ideological practice that is and can be actively affected by both individuals and groups. . . [and] has ignored the extent to which the very phenomenon of 'change' itself is the function of an active sociorhetorical process" (Condit and Lucaites, 1993: x). Rhetoric is neither static nor strictly bound within the confines of any one ideology — it is, instead, creative and constructive in itself. Rather than rhetoric being purely subordinate to a dominant ideology, fated to repeat the dictums of a certain system of beliefs and values of a certain elite to the general public, rhetoric is itself the field upon which ideologies clash and are, inexorably, transformed.

Condit's (1987) solution — to the problem of the boundaries of ideology and rhetoric — is that it is through the rhetorical process of public argumentation that the elusive "public opinion" is formed. Rhetoric is the vehicle for the give and take of public discourse that constructs *what is not any single coherent or totally dominant ideology*, but rather "the law" that is "a temporary compromise between competing ideological interests" (Condit and Lucaites, 1993: xv). This "law" is a result of the rhetorical process in which many different interest groups draw from "a shared rhetorical culture . . . to express their particular interests" (Condit and Lucaites, 1993: xv). What is important to note here is the notion of a shared rhetorical culture, for it is this culture which determines the structures of language, the meanings of words, and

54

consequently the values and understandings said words can make. Whoever can influence this rhetorical culture the most has control of political language and, consequently, control of political reality. Thus, while the dominant ideology thesis is rejected for its lack of complexity and its failure to address the discursive and embattled nature of public opinion, its ultimate message still holds: whoever has control over discourse can control the language by which the public negotiates political questions, and this is the process by which rhetoric itself is politicized.

Walter Lippmann (1922), one of the first theorists of public opinion, also understood this phenomenon in a similar way. He writes that the world is much too large and complicated for people to understand through their direct experiences. Rather, a person's understanding of the world comes from the ways that the world has been "explored, reported, and imagined" *by and for* them. People eventually create "a trustworthy picture inside [their] head of the world beyond [their] reach," and it is on the basis of this picture that they take action in society (Lippmann, 2002: 29). In other words, these mental pictures serve as the motives behind any political activity. Lippmann's concern is an epistemological one. He recognizes that these mental pictures are necessarily *created*; they are abstractions, simplifications, and/or fabrications of the world-as-it-really-is — they represent, instead, the-world-as-we-have-come-to-know-it. They are derived from an epistemological process, rather than any ontological experience of reality. It is these pictures, in the instances that they are used to justify the actions of groups of people or of "individuals acting in the name of groups," that are considered "Public Opinion with capital letters" (Lippmann, 1922: 29).

If public opinion — i.e., the motives for political action in a given society — is understood to have a basis in an epistemological process, then it follows that political power will entail having influence on the epistemological process that constructs public opinion. This power

is conferred on the symbolic level, as "he [sic] who captures the symbols by which public feeling is for the moment contained, controls by that much the approaches of public policy" (Lippmann, 1922: 206). What is more is that political contests will take shape around symbols, with "ambitious factions" fighting amongst one another for "possession" of them (Lippmann, 1922: 207). This situation is not so different from the one that Condit (1987) describes wherein competing ideological interests vie for control over the law that shapes public opinion.

We may call this law that shapes public opinion *doxa*.[22] "Every established order," Bourdieu (1977: 164) writes, "tends to produce...the naturalization of its own arbitrariness." *Doxa* is the experience that a particular social order's organizational structure is not arbitrary but natural, that it is the only possible social order, that it is *inevitable*, that — as Margaret Thatcher famously put it — "there is no alternative." "The doxic mode" occurs when "the world of tradition" is experienced "as a 'natural world' and taken for granted," such that there is "immediate adherence" to these traditions, because the doxic subject fails to recognize the "possibility of different or antagonistic beliefs" (Bourdieu, 1977: 164). Understanding doxa shows that the means by which one acquires knowledge itself are not politically neutral, as "the instruments of knowledge of the social world are...political instruments which contribute to the reproduction of the social world by producing immediate adherence to the world" (Bourdieu, 1977: 164). This is saying, in other words, that not only is knowledge bound up with political understanding and the potential for political transformation, but that the epistemological process by which one gains knowledge of reality is fundamentally political from the beginning. Any notion of "objectivity" is politicized from the very first instance, *as power is conferred on the*

---

[22] I am aware that the classical rhetorical understanding of doxa is somewhat different from Bourdieu's, but for the purposes of this thesis my readers should be aware that in all instances where I have used the term, it has been used in Bourdieu's sense and not any other.

basis of supposed objectivity. Therefore we must acknowledge that "the theory of knowledge is a dimension of political theory because the specifically symbolic power to impose the principles of the construction of reality — in particular, social reality — is a major dimension of political power" (Bourdieu, 1977: 165). This "symbolic power" that allows one control over the construction of reality is the final object of rhetorical struggles and public argumentation; to the victor goes the power to define the field of doxa.

The field of doxa is the field of that which is taken for granted (Bourdieu, 1977: 166). This is quite different from what is understood to be the field of majoritarian opinion, as to say that an opinion is held by a majority is to also say, implicitly, that there are minorities who hold other opinions. But the field of doxa precludes any other alternatives and is automatically a field of unanimity, because "the adherence expressed in the doxic relation to the social world is the absolute form of recognition of legitimacy through misrecognition of arbitrariness" (Bourdieu, 1977: 168). Because doxa involves a state of being where one is "unaware of the very question of legitimacy, which arises from competition for legitimacy, and hence from conflict between groups claiming to possess it," doxa implies that there no conflicts between groups; there are not even multiple groups which could potentially have conflicts (Bourdieu, 1977: 168). Rather there exists only the one, doxic grouping. It is the lack of any other contradictory opinion that would point to the arbitrary nature of the doxa at hand that is what confers *absolute legitimacy* to the doxic relation; doxa precludes any debate over legitimacy, because doxa, by definition, consists exactly of those matters whose legitimacy cannot be seen or understood as legitimacy and therefore cannot be called into question. Consequently, the power to construct and enforce doxa is precisely the power to define what may be called into question and what may not.

Bourdieu (1977) notes how the construction of doxa is tied to a mythic, rather than logical understanding of the world. This aspect of doxa is what makes it so resilient to being challenged by logical criticism, "because [logical criticism] can only challenge the relationships consciously established between words, it cannot bring out the incoherent coherence of a discourse which, springing from underlying mythic or ideological schemes, has the capacity to survive every *reductio ad absurdum*" (Bourdieu, 1977: 158). As we saw in our analysis of neoliberalism's history in Chapter 1, the "incoherent coherence" of such a discourse is what grants it its resiliency, its adaptability, and its power to delimit the boundaries of political questions. No matter how awful the crisis it creates, nor how logically unstable the doctrine seems when put into actual practice (rather than just as an utopian, theoretical ideal), neoliberalism's survival persists in the face of absurdity (Peck, 2008). This should be no surprise to the critic who understands neoliberalism as an epistemological discourse, with a mythic or ideological core, that constructs a doxa of its own.

Bourdieu's (1977) theory of doxa stems from an understanding of the way that the objective (but arbitrary) structures of a social formation define the boundaries and limits of the aspirations of the subjective agents that are actors in this social formation. This process occurs on the level of practice (or day to day life) but also, and more importantly, on the level of the symbolic: of language and image. As Langer (1949: 385) demonstrates, "myth and language appeared to be genuine twin creatures," and to try and strictly separate the two would be to misunderstand their fundamental relationship, for "language, on the one hand, seems to have articulated and established mythological concepts, whereas, on the other hand, its own meanings are essentially images functioning mythically." This relationship between myth and language is the reason why "logical criticism [of doxa] inevitably misses its target" (Bourdieu, 1977: 158).

58

Insofar as doxa is articulated through language — and if language cannot be separated from its origins in myth in any meaningful sense — then doxa, too, must draw its power from myth.

If myth shapes doxa, then we must understand the structure and function of myth. Myth, according to Barthes (1972: 109) "*is a type of speech*." Furthermore, it is a kind of speech that has risen to prominence through a historical process, rather than a natural one; myth is a type of speech that has been arbitrarily constructed and chosen by humanity over the course of human history (Barthes, 1972: 110). In this way, not only is myth essential to granting doxa authority and power — but myth is also a form of doxa in its own right, as it has been misrecognized as a natural, rather than arbitrary, construct.

As far as myth is a type of speech, such a type of speech is not defined by its "object nor by its material," as mythic speech can have any meaning, and it can be made of any signifying material, whether oral or written language, painting or photography, etc. (Barthes, 1972: 110). Rather, myth is defined by the way it *functions*.

Mythic speech's function is distinct because it is a second-order semiological system of signification, derived from a first-order semiological system like everyday language (but this system does not exclusively have to be language, it can be any signifying system). Barthes (1972: 112) notes that "any semiology postulates a relation between two terms, a signifier and a signified," but we cannot reduce our analysis to only include the two terms of signifier and signified. Rather we must focus on three things: the signifier, the signified, and also the correlation that unites the two. Semiology operates by combining the signifier and the signified into a third thing: the sign. On the plane of analysis, the three terms, signifier, signified, and sign may be separated into distinct categories, but outside of that, on the plane of experience, the only thing we grasp is the sign that has already absorbed and now represents the associative total of

59

signifier and signified all at once. To borrow an example from Barthes (1972: 113): "take a bunch of roses: I use it to *signify* my passion. Do we have here, then, only a signifier and a signified, the roses and my passion? Not even that: to put it accurately, there are here only 'passionified' roses." These "passionified" roses are what we may observe in the realm of experience as a sign filled with a meaning, but under analysis, they can be reduced to a signifier that is empty of meaning (the rose themselves), the signified (passion), and the associative total of the two that is the sign ("passionified" roses).

Myth functions as a second order semiological system by taking the sign from an already existing semiological chain and appropriating it into an empty signifier. This signifier can then be imbued with a new signified, mythic content, so that it becomes an altogether *new* sign at the end of the process — so it may become, in other words, *a myth*. Now we can properly understand what Barthes (1972) meant when he wrote that myth can be defined neither by its object nor its material, because it is clear that myth does not care what kind of material it uses: any sign resulting from *any* semiological chain (no matter whether that sign comes from language, drawing, photography, film, everyday objects etc.) may be appropriated into a mythic signifier and imbued with a mythic, signified content. "However different at the start," the materials of mythic speech "are reduced to a pure signifying function when they are caught by myth," as "myth wants to see in them only a sum of signs, a global sign, the final term of a first semiological chain" (Barthes, 1972: 114).

It is worth reviewing some of the terminology Barthes establishes to forestall theoretical ambiguities about the two different semiological systems that operate in myth. The main problem is that the signifier in myth may be looked at from the perspective of language (the first-order system) and from the perspective of myth itself (the second-order system). This creates

60

terminological confusion, as our terms should reflect the analytic perspective (whether of the linguistic system or of myth) that we take in an instance of criticism. Barthes' (1972: 117) solution is as follows:

> On the plane of language, that is, as the final term of the first system, I shall call the signifier: *meaning*…on the plane of myth, I shall call it: *form*. In the case of the signified, no ambiguity is possible: we shall retain the name *concept*. The third term is the correlation of the first two...but it is not possible to use this word again [the sign] without ambiguity, since in myth...the signifier is already formed by the *signs* of the language. I shall call the third term of the myth the *signification*.

Therefore, when we refer to the *meaning* of the mythic signifier, we understand that we are referring to the sign that is the result of a first-order semiological chain; conversely, when we refer to the *form*, we understand that we are referring to the empty, *meaningless* signifier of myth that has yet to come across its signified, mythic content, i.e., its *concept*. Lastly, we know that when we speak of the *signification*, we are speaking of the myth *qua* myth, the myth itself, that is, the myth as the total association of *form* and *concept* into one, unified whole.

The dual character of the mythic signifier is where we can observe myth's appropriative function. The signifier begins as a *meaning*; it is full and rich and real; it is self-sufficient and can stand alone, though it is also tied to its context, especially its history. But "when it becomes form, the meaning leaves its contingency behind; it empties itself, it becomes impoverished, history evaporates, only the letter remains;" it has become a form (Barthes, 1972: 117). Whereas the meaning is full of contingent relationships — e.g., to history, to geography, to morality, to narrative — the form is empty and divorced from them. The form, at a distance from the richness of the meaning, requires the *concept* to fill it, for it to become a signification. But the form does

61

not suppress or erase the meaning, rather it subordinates it, it "impoverishes it, it puts it at a distance, it holds it at one's disposal...the meaning loses its value, but keeps its life, from which the form of the myth will draw its nourishment" (Barthes, 1972: 118). The meaning is a source of power that the form will draw upon and then banish all in one instant. "The form of myth is not a symbol," insofar as the meaning is still present, on some level, in the form (and for the form to become a symbol it would have had to erase the presence of the meaning altogether); rather, in form "this presence is tamed, put at a distance, made almost transparent...it becomes the accomplice of a concept which comes to it fully armed," and "once made use of, it becomes artificial" (Barthes, 1972: 118). It is in the mythic signifier's duality, the dialectical relation between meaning and form, that myth draws its power; it is able to evaporate the historicity and the contextuality of the meaning, to "tame" it, and in so taming, rely on it for signifying power. "It is this constant game of hide-and-seek between the meaning and the form which defines myth" (Barthes, 1972: 118).

But despite the relative emptiness of the mythic signifier, of the *form*, mythic speech as a whole (signifier and signified together) is not ahistorical, empty, or random. It is the mythic concept that provides the context for the signification. "This history which drains out of the form," Barthes (1972: 118-119, emphasis mine) writes, "will be wholly absorbed by the concept. As for the latter [the concept], it is determined, *it is at once historical and intentional; it is the motivation which causes the myth to be uttered... The concept reconstitutes a chain of causes and effects, motives and intentions*." Myth is not apolitical, and it does not occur naturally; it is not uttered in a vacuum. The concept, then, is the *raison d'être* of myth: the desire to propagate the mythic concept, through the medium of the form, is the genesis of myth. For the signified content of myth is "filled with a situation," and it is this situation which fills the empty space that

62

the meaning used to hold in the form; "through the concept...a whole new history...is implanted in the myth" (Barthes, 1972: 119). What the concept represents is the mythic understanding of the world. This understanding is a particular, partisan one, as Barthes (1972: 119, emphasis mine) will tell us that "what is invested in the concept is less reality than a *certain* knowledge of reality." Further, this understanding is not solid or corporeal when considered divorced from the form; the concept is "formless [and] unstable," it has an "open character," it is "confused," and, most importantly, it requires the form in order to become solidified, to become myth proper (Barthes, 1972: 119).

To give a brief example of the nebulous nature of the concept, think of the concept "Americanness"[23]. It is a whole series of formless associations that very much have to do with a long list of contingencies: it implies a certain reading of history, of geography, of morality, of the value (positive or negative) of immigrants, of the necessity of a strong American army, of the value of "freedom," of the importance of private property or home ownership, etc. I could go on and on. We may say that the concept brings with it a whole mess of confused perspectives and thoughts that are constantly in motion and flux, that are fundamentally unstable; one would not say that any one of these perspectives is what Americanness *is* in itself, but it would likewise be impossible to deny their role, however small, in establishing certain aspects of the concept of

---

[23] Barthes notes the necessity of neologism in defining ephemeral, contingent mythic concepts. He notes that

the dictionary supplies me with a few [names for concepts]: Goodness, Kindness, Wholeness...but by definition since it is the dictionary which gives them to me, these particular concepts are not historical. Now what I need most often is ephemeral concepts, in connection with limited contingencies: neologism is then inevitable. China is one thing, the idea which a French petit-bourgeois could have of it not so long ago is another: for this peculiar mixture of bells, rickshaws, and opium-dens, no other word possible but *Sininess* (Barthes, 1972: 121).

It is from this formula that the concept of Americanness is derived.

From this quote, it is also important to note the similarity that the mythic concept has to Lippmann's (1922) conception of a stereotype (after all, this image of "sininess", of rickshaws and opium dens, is surely a stereotype of the grossest order). Specifically, Lippmann (1922: 89) suggests that when encountering a familiar trait "which marks a well-known type," we must "fill in the rest of the picture by means of the stereotypes we carry about in our heads." In reality, a text does not provide the mythic concept to its reader, it only provides the signifier. The reader themself must bring the concept — the stereotype — to bear upon the signifier for the myth to function.

Americanness. But when this concept meets a form: it is solidified. This is, for instance, one of the mythic purposes of the American flag. The flag has an immediate meaning in that it represents the American nation, but in reality, it goes much further than just representing the nation: a certain mass of land with a certain border, a certain mode of governing, a certain kind and number of people who live there. Really what the flag represents is the totality of confused associations that constitute Americanness. One need only look at the American flag, waving in the wind, to have a concrete and *real* sense of all those associations and perspectives that, just a moment ago, were formless in the void of the concept; the waving flag then signifies, in a *concrete* manner, Americanness. Thus when the concept collides into and fills the form, myth has been born.

What is also essential to note is that while the mythic concept, the signified, is generally understood to be one particular thing, the mythic signifier can be almost anything at all. Any mythic concept, then, has at its disposal an unlimited number of forms it can appropriate to signify itself (Barthes, 1972). The concept of Americanness can be signified through any number of different forms or images: the flag aflutter in the wind, *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, a slice of apple pie, the frontiersman building a log cabin for his family with his own hands, the tune of "Yankee Doodle," American soldiers liberating emaciated Jews from German death camps in World War II, the Horatio Alger tale of the impoverished man who becomes rich through his hard work and good fortune, and so on.

The mythic concept, then, when it signifies itself through a particular form, *deforms* the specific meaning of the signifier. The meaning, as I noted before, is not lost; "this distortion is not an obliteration," as the meaning remains, albeit "half-amputated...deprived of memory, not of existence...at once stubborn, silently rooted there, and garrulous, a speech wholly at the service

64

of the concept" (Barthes, 1972: 122-3). Myth's power comes from the fact that it is "speech *stolen and restored*. Only, speech which is restored is no longer quite that which was stolen," that is, the meaning cannot regain its full presence that it had prior to being mythologized, and the form cannot ever be purely empty, completely devoid of the traces of the meaning (Barthes, 1972: 125). This change, this *distortion* of what is being signified is myth's primary function. But more than this is that myth *intends* to distort; it is motivated to do so, it has an "imperative, buttonholing character: stemming from an historical concept, directly springing from contingency...it is *I* whom it has come to seek" (Barthes, 1972: 124). Myth is driven to find an audience, because it desires to signify something to them; there is an intentionality behind mythic speech, in other words, a *motive*.

But myth's true effect is to naturalize this motive, to transfigure history into nature. The motive is hidden in plain sight: "what causes mythical speech to be uttered is perfectly explicit, but it is immediately frozen into something natural; it is not read as a motive, but as a reason," for the situation, to the myth-consumer, appears as if the form "*naturally* conjured up the concept, as if the signifier *gave a foundation* to the signified," when in fact, there is nothing natural at all about the process in any sense — myth is pure artifice, a duplicitous system wherein the arbitrary and the historical are made to seem natural and inevitable (Barthes, 1972: 129-30). "What the world supplies to myth is an historical reality, defined...by the way in which men [sic] have produced or used it; and what myth gives in return is a *natural* image of this reality" (Barthes, 1972: 142). Myth, therefore, is a means for the production of *doxa*, because it is nothing less than the actual semiological process by which the arbitrary is transformed into the natural.

The effect of this naturalization process is to depoliticize what is political. It is to turn

what was once previously a *question* of politics into a *declarative statement* about an inevitable

reality. Whereas people might have once been able to recognize and then *question* the fabricated,

constructed nature of a particular social reality (i.e., "we humans have shaped the world to exist

as such...should we change any aspect of it?"), after this social reality is mythicized they are no

longer able to call it into question; they may only state the immutable "facts" of the situation

(i.e., "this is the way the world is, and there is nothing to be done about it"). As Barthes (1972:

143) writes:

> Myth does not deny things, on the contrary its function is to talk about them; simply, it
>
> purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification, it
>
> gives them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact. If I
>
> *state the fact* of French imperiality without explaining it, I am very near to finding that it
>
> is natural and *goes without saying*: I am reassured. In passing from history to nature,
>
> myth acts economically: it abolishes the complexity of human acts, it gives them the
>
> simplicity of essences, it does away with all dialectics, with any going back beyond what
>
> is immediately visible, it organizes a world which is without contradictions because it is
>
> without depth, a world wide open and wallowing in the evident, it establishes a blissful
>
> clarity: things appear to mean something by themselves.

Myth then, in effect, functions to *legitimize the status quo of a social order*. It suggest that the

status quo is natural, inevitable, and that it somehow occurred divorced from human actions. If

politics involves the questions: How has this come to pass? And for what reason(s)?, then myth

may only supply tautological answers: This has come to pass, because this has come to pass.

Myth makes the question of legitimacy an absurdity: for how can something that simply *is* be

66

legitimate or illegitimate? Now we can see how myth is a driving force behind the creation of doxa.

Doxa, as mentioned before, is not the result of any one ideology, or of any one myth. Rather, it is created through a process of negotiation and public argumentation, wherein different interest groups employ mythic speech in an attempt to naturalize their own political agenda. While none of these groups may be wholly dominant, the end result is still doxa: certain things have been depoliticized, while others have been (re)politicized; what once was a political question is now a natural, immutable fact, and what once used to be a fact of life is now a political question. Doxa is still produced no matter how messy the discursive process that lead to it was, and the political world will be shaped by it, one way or another. If one is to come to wield political power in society, one must do so on the basis of the society's doxa; or otherwise one must expose and shatter it, creating another anew.

Chapter 3:
The Ideograph as a Tool of Rhetorical Criticism

I: Between Ideology and Myth

In the last chapter, I discussed some aspects of the interactions between myth[24] and ideology, especially as far as they were both implicated in the construction of *doxa*. The distinction between myth and ideology has long been a messy one. Kenneth Burke, as long ago as 1947, sought to shed light on the subject in an article called "Ideology and Myth," originally proposing the following formula to distinguish the two: "Ideology is to myth as rhetoric is to poetry...Ideology, like rhetoric, gravitates to the side of ideas...and myth, like poetry gravitates to the side of the image" (Burke, 1947: 195). But he goes on to immediately complicate the matter, muddling the distinction, as "we can see the overlap between idea and image quickly enough, if we think, for instance, of the invitation to treat international affairs in terms of life-lines, soft underbellies, iron curtains, and power vacuums;" Burke asks his readers, "Are such expressions 'ideas' or 'images,' rhetoric or poetry? Are they ideological or mythic?" (Burke, 1947: 195).

This is not the end of the matter; he is not satisfied with leaving such questions completely open. He allows that ideology constitutes a more "practical" or modern understanding of the world and suggests that the development of ideology is not possible in societies without the epistemological conception of "logical" knowledge or the occurrence of

---

[24] Though I focused my discussion on Barthes' very specific and abnormal conception of myth as speech, I will now turn in this chapter to talk about myth in a more typical sense: that of classical mythology and of myths as stories. Of course, Barthes' contributions are still very much in the back of my mind — even classical myths, or Biblical myths work to naturalize a certain social order. Myth's basic function, after all, is to produce a narrative that explains why the world is the way it is — Barthes merely took this function and expanded it, enlarging the category of what we might consider to be a "myth" (Eliade, 1975).

certain politico-historical developments (e.g., the emergence of modern economies). But myth has been with humanity, presumably, long before history was ever recorded.[25] Myth deals with a far more mystical understanding of the world: "the 'mythic' past is a narrative terminology of essence" (Burke, 1947: 200). But the key element to Burke's understanding of myth and ideology is that myth necessarily precedes ideology, not only in terms of the historical development of different societies' knowledge, but also in that ideology *is an effect of myth*; myth is the foundation on which ideologies are constructed.

Burke (1947: 198), following Karl Mannheim's work, postulates that ideology is a system of ideas that is grounded in the political and social, and its function is to provide "a source of motives." But ideology is on a lower plane than myth, as it is derivative of myth. To step up to the plane of myth from the plane of ideology involves moving beyond purely political or social motives and, likewise, beginning to employ terms that are also no longer strictly political or social. It then follows that an "*ideological* purpose" must have "a grounding in *mythic* purpose," such that "political or social motives cannot be ultimate, since they must in turn be grounded in motives outside or beyond the political or social" (Burke, 1947: 199). In essence, "we may treat the mythic as the non-political ground of the political, not as antithetical to it, but as the 'pre-political' source out of which it is to be derived" (Burke, 1947: 201). This, I think, is similar to my argument in the previous chapter, that suggested the construction of *doxa* (which is in a sense the very thing that decides which motives may be employed in rhetoric) relies on a mythic basis that must be considered as *prior to* and as a *cause of* doxic relationships.

Regardless, this is not the end of the theoretical exegesis of the distinction between myth and ideology. Michael McGee (1980) attempts to wed the two together — albeit not in a strictly

---

[25] This is not to suggest that it is necessarily inevitable or "natural," as I discussed, following (Barthes, 1972), last chapter.

theoretical way a la Burke — in order to create an analytical framework for discussing myth and ideology *together*, as *related sources of motives*. While Burke operates mostly on the plane of theory, McGee, ultimately, is concerned with the plane of analysis, of practice and criticism.

McGee (1980) draws a distinction (though not an absolute one) between Marxist/materialist critics, who discuss ideology and power, and symbolist/idealist critics who address symbols, the power of words and language, and myths (McGee, 1980). The symbolist critics, who write in the tradition of Walter Lippmann and Kenneth Burke,[26] neglect the material or real contingencies of power and society: who has money, who has power, who has access to the means of production, among others. McGee (1980: 3) notes that "a symbolist who speaks of 'myth' is typically at great pains to argue for a value-free approach to the object of study, an approach in which one denies that 'myth' is a synonym for 'lie' and treats it as a falsehood of a peculiarly redemptive nature." Symbolists instead posit that people all subscribe to their own myths, and this is not necessarily a bad thing — at the very least the purpose of their criticism is not to indict myth for willfully misleading the public, but to explain, rather, why people believe what they believe. The symbolists do not construct a hierarchy of values that would dictate whether one belief is better or worse than another; instead they look into the structures of language itself to discover how beliefs come into being and how they are maintained.

Whereas the symbolists view myth as value-neutral, the Marxists view ideology as negative, as a "lie," as "trickery" (McGee, 1980) To them, ideology is the way that political power – whether that power is capital, the patriarchy, or some other elite hegemonic group – coerces, manipulates, or "tricks" the masses into falling in line with the status quo. McGee (1980: 2) writes that the "Neo-Marxians, with [their] focus on tricksters and the machinery of

---

[26] Though as we have seen, Burke's distinctions between myth and ideology are not black and white in any sense.

trickery, say that the essential question posed by the fact of society is one of locating precise

descriptions of the dialectical tension between a 'true' and a 'false' consciousness, between

reality and ideology." The Marxist is less interested in the linguistic means that the elite employs

to trick the public than they are in exposing that the public has been tricked in the first place.

They feel an obligation to liberate, so to speak, the individual from the ideology that surrounds

and limits that individual's thought, because the study of "'ideology...assumes that the exposure

of falsity is a moral act" (McGee, 1980: 3). Where the symbolist study of myth refuses to take

any moral stances — thinking of the influence of public opinion upon human behavior as a

"transcendence," rather than a "trick" — the express purpose of the Marxist study of ideology is

to separate immoral and pernicious "lies" from moral and liberatory "truths" (McGee, 1980: 2).

Ultimately, analysis of both of these theories reveals that they have different objectives

and are not simply "alternative and incompatible theoretical descriptions of the same

phenomenon" (McGee, 1980: 3). Instead, McGee (1980: 3) correctly identifies that one theory

does not contradict the other because they have different critical ends, "the Marxian asks how the

'givens' of a human environment impinge on the development of political consciousness; the

symbolist asks how the human symbol-using, reality-creating potential impinges on material

reality, ordering it normatively, 'mythically.'" McGee sees the merit in the work of both the

materialists and the symbolists and attempts to wed their theories in his concept of the

ideograph.

Myth and ideology, then, are not competing theories or alternatives to one another.

Rather, they are supplemental theories that both must be considered in order to describe the way

public consciousness is shaped. McGee's ideograph is a theoretical model that accounts for both

ideology and myth. Jasinski (2001: 308) notes that "for McGee, such a model must be predicated

on the assumption that, at least in the realm of politics, truth and falsity (and the possibilities for **power** or 'social control' that follow) always are illusions… or 'fictions' that are a 'product of persuasion.'" The focus on persuasion is key here for McGee — it is an epistemological investigation into how the public comes to believe in ideology, i.e., exactly how the public is *persuaded*. He goes on to write, "since the clearest access to persuasion (and hence to ideology) is through the discourse used to produce it, I will suggest that ideology in practice is a political language, preserved in documents, with the capacity to dictate decision and control public belief and behavior" (McGee, 1980: 4-5). Ideology, for McGee, is not just a theoretical abstraction that explains how people think and act in the world — it exists in a very material sense for him in documents as a political language. Therefore the critic may seek to excavate the ideology from those documents by turning a critical eye upon the very language in which they are written. It is in this language, this *political* language that the real, material traces of ideology can be found. And it is these traces of ideology, manifested materially in words in documents, that are what McGee calls *ideographs*. He formally defines the ideograph as:

> an ordinary-language term found in political discourse. It is a high-order abstraction representing collective commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal. It warrants the use of power, excuses behavior and belief which might otherwise be perceived as eccentric or antisocial, and guides behavior and belief into channels easily recognized by a community as acceptable and laudable (McGee, 1980: 15).

The importance of ideographs is that they are fundamentally warrants whose purpose is to justify public opinion and public behavior. Most members of a community will immediately recognize the significance of any individual ideograph, because it is a term that constitutes and refers to

72

their community's collective commitments. Thus ideographs are invoked to cement the permanence and reaffirm the importance of such commitments. Ideographs, then, often have a conservative role to play insofar as they legitimize, naturalize, and depoliticize the commitments that society has already made, especially considering the fact that such commitments are necessarily the results of a certain social order with a certain hierarchy of power relations. As McGee (2001: 380) writes, "ideographs are not revolution friendly. They support political, social, and cultural stability by constituting the lines outside of which politicians rarely color." Ideographs represent, as one word-terms, the status quo of a time, and are invoked in order to preserve this status quo. We may then understand them to be the building blocks of *doxa* as far as they represent and refer to arbitrary values/motives that a society holds essential, natural, and inevitable. A society's self-image and self-definition is reflected in its ideographs; these aspects weigh down the ideographs, and it is with this weight that ideographs stymie a society's ability to change itself. The society is then unable to free itself from the normalizing hold of its ideographs.

Now that I have established the general *purpose* of ideographs, I want to comment more specifically on the way that they function and what they represent or mean. They are "one term sums of an orientation...that will be used to symbolize the line of argument the meanest sort of individual *would* pursue...as a defense of a personal stake in and commitment to the society" (McGee, 1980: 7). Ideographs are "pregnant," loaded terms that convey and represent debatable themes to the public, yet they are perceived as self-evident or obvious. Their meanings are not really up for debate in any meaningful or self-aware way; one is not "permitted to question the fundamental logic of ideographs" (McGee, 1980: 7). This is not to say that their meanings are static. If this were so, ideographic criticism would hardly bring much to the table. Instead, the

73

character of ideographs is fundamentally a *dynamic* one. Their meanings shift over time and are changed by each of their usages and contextualizations in speech. They are, as Condit and Lucaites (1993: xiii) remind us, "abstractions" which "lack any rigidly defined meaning." Their function is to "impart value, justify decisions, motivate behavior, and debate policy initiatives" (Jasinski, 2001: 309). In short, articulation has the power to change the meaning of ideographs, as they are invoked as motives in relations to new topics and new public arguments, especially when invoked in new contexts and to new audiences.

For the rhetorical scholar, it is this study of the articulation of ideographs that is of paramount importance; when the meanings of ideographs shift, they change the way that the public is able to conceive and speak of their society. In a sense they are words that refer to unstated, enthymematic myths about which the members of a public are necessarily aware, because it is these shared myths themselves that constitute these members *as a public*. It is in this sense that Burke (1947) refers to myths as being pre-political — politics must be based on *something*, constructed on some foundation of belief. Ideographs (and the unstated, implied myths they signify) can be understood as this something: the already-existing, pre-political foundation upon which politics may be established. Ideographs are bequeathed to the public by a society, definitive of that society, and no one who is involved in that society can escape them; they are "material ideas which [one] must accept to 'belong'" (McGee, 1980: 9). One can attempt to invoke them in different ways and for different ends, but for one's audience to accept one's ideas, they *must* be invoked. Such omnipresent ideographs such as <equality> or <freedom> or <democracy> have been invoked in myriad ways by American rhetors. They have been used to defend and advance the causes of either side in America's most controversial

74

debates that concern the basic meaning of America, determining what exactly *is* an American value and what *is not*.

   If a rhetor— like a politician or a social critic, someone who is important, with some level of power, who wishes to change the direction of a society — is to enter into a society's discourse, they must enter on the grounds of that society's ideographs. Ideographs — like any other material reality, whether it is money, land, or political power — constitute and make up the rhetorical situation, and insofar as a rhetor creates discourse *in response* to a rhetorical situation, the rhetor must respond and deal with, as is appropriate, the ideographic aspect of the rhetorical situation (for more on the rhetorical situation see Bitzer, 1968). If the rhetor ignores the ideographic aspect of the rhetorical situation, they will have liquidated from their discourse the persuasiveness that comes along with manipulating the trends, histories, and collective understandings of a shared rhetorical culture, because ideographs constitute the basis for the shared rhetorical culture of a given society. As Condit and Lucaites (1993: xii-xiii) observe, "ideographs represent in condensed form the normative, collective commitments of the members of a public...to participate in a rhetorical culture one thus must pay allegiance to its ideographs, employing them in ways that audiences can judge to be reasonable." The symbolic power that ideographs wield over the public is certainly great, but at the same time, the public is that which granted the ideographs any amount of power in the first place. The public and ideographs therefore have a paradoxical, circular, and self-reinforcing relationship: ideographs are, on the one hand, created by a public, but on the other, define and constitute the very public which created them. There would be no ideographs without a public to express them, yet it is unthinkable to define a group of people as a public if said group does not have its own set of ideographs, representing and expressing their shared values and commitments. This set of

75

ideographs is the glue that binds the individual members together as a public in the first place. The process of public argumentation is then precisely the perpetual cycle of a public creating and adjusting ideographs which (re)-define the very nature of that public itself.

The understanding that a public or a society has of itself is the battleground upon which ideologies clash, and where political consciousness and thus social control may be shaped (Jasinski, 2001). To change the way a public thinks of itself is to change the way that the individual members of this public will act in political society, determining what institutions they will seek to preserve, alter, or abolish. Thus, to understand how public opinion is shaped, the rhetorical critic must operate on the level of the ideograph, because "ideographical slogans compromise the building blocks of ideology" and because "political rhetors and their audiences are used and constrained by this repertoire [of ideographs] even as they shape it to particular instrumental ends" (Cloud, 1998: 389). Thus, to study ideographs is to study not only the means of persuasion available to a particular rhetor in a particular society but also to study the way that specific rhetorical articulations change the very nature of those means themselves.

McGee (1980) urges critics to consider the concrete manifestations of ideographs, to better grasp not what they *should* mean, but the way they have been used in history. The "ideal" meaning[27] of an ideograph is irrelevant, as "the significance of ideographs is in their concrete history as usages, not in their alleged idea-content" (McGee, 1980: 9-10). It is not enough to merely identify ideographs in speech — criticism that exhausted itself at identification would be altogether trivial; analysis of the way ideographs function in speech in a certain instance, as well

---

[27] I mean by "ideal meaning" the abstract, metaphysical meaning of a word that exists prior to or outside of the way that it is (mis-)used in speech. This meaning has no place in ideographic criticism, as this type of criticism presupposes that words cannot have "pure," metaphysical meanings in the abstract. Definitions do not exist *a priori*; they must be derived from a word's history of usages. As McGee (1980: 10) writes, wrily, "no one has ever seen an 'equality' strutting up the driveway, so, if 'equality' exists at all, it has meaning through its specific applications."

as how that function changes over historical time is necessary for the study of ideographs to be insightful. Critical attention should be paid to the "vertical," historical structure of ideographs, analyzing how the "deep meanings" of ideographs "derive from knowledge of the way in which meanings have evolved over a period of time — awareness of the way an ideograph can be meaningful *now* is controlled in large part by what it meant *then*" (McGee, 1980: 11). This analysis of ideographs with respect to their "verticality" and their historicity is what McGee refers to as diachronic study.

But diachronic analysis is not all that McGee envisions for ideographic criticism, for this alone "leaves little but an exhaustive lexicon understood etymologically and diachronically — and no ideally precise explanation of how ideographs function *presently*" (McGee, 1980: 12). Synchronic study of ideographs that describes how they function in *practice* — as *forces* that do work and change (or preserve) reality — is also necessary. This would involve investigation into the "horizontal" aspect of ideographs wherein ideographs "clash with other ideographs" and "come to mean with reference to synchronic confrontations" (McGee, 1980: 13). This structure is understood to be horizontal, because ideology is presumed to be consonant with itself; that is, several ideographs that are representative of an ideology are "meant to be taken together, as a working unit" (McGee, 1980: 13). In trying to grapple with the ideological basis of American democracy, for instance, the ideographs <rule of law>[28], <freedom of speech>, and <trial by jury> must be considered together, rather than independently, for they function in relation with each other (and with other ideographs I have not mentioned) to justify the ideology of American democracy.

---

[28] Following Condit (1987), I will use <> to denote ideographs.

77

But perhaps what is most important to note is that — even on this synchronic plane of analysis — ideographs should not be strictly understood to have static, unchanging meanings or relationships to each other, because "when we engage ideological argument, when we cause ideographs to *do work* in explaining, justifying, or guiding policy in specific situations, the relationship of ideographs changes" (McGee, 1980: 13). This dynamic understanding of ideological value and meaning is essential if a critic is to be able to understand ideologies as complex, contradictory, polycentric, and multipolar, as "mongrel" creations, without losing the coherence and consonance that still lurks behind these contradictions (that exists *in spite of* these very contradictions) at the center of the ideology. I argue that focus on the ideograph allows the critic to have it both ways: to understand ideologies as complex, multifaceted, and dynamic while at the same time acknowledging that they still wield significant power in that they shape the debate around the (re-)development of societal structures. (As discussed in Chapter 1, scholarly debate around neoliberalism has often been concerned with whether neoliberalism can be understood as a coherent ideology in the first place, as it draws roots from many contradictory and disparate intellectual traditions and political practices; to deny its coherence is in some sense to deny its power, but ideographic critique allows for the critic to recognize both incoherence *and* power — especially the rhetorical power that can stem from incoherence, as what is incoherent cannot be challenged in a logical or reasonable manner. It is from this incoherence that ideologies and myths derive their resilience to external challenges). It is the clash of ideographs that has the potential to change the structure of their relationship "and hence 'the present' ideology — in this sense, an ideology is dynamic and a *force*, always resilient, always keeping itself in some consonance and unity, but not always the *same* consonance and unity" (McGee, 1980: 13-14). The synchronic study of ideographic clashing allows for a critical

78

methodology that describes how ideologies evolve, adapt, and change over time without making the analytical leap of claiming that change consigns an ideology to meaninglessness and unimportance. Ideographs change, ideologies change, and with it their power and structure are also altered, but not wholly evaporated or disappeared. Ultimately, Cloud (1998: 389) reminds critics that "the analysis of ideographs is less a critique of how immediately successful a rhetor's strategies are than an account of the ways in which political rhetors dip into, add to, and reshape the shared cultural stock of ideographs." That is, the final object of ideographic critique is not any rhetorical text in itself; rather the object of study is the structure and makeup (in the synchronic and diachronic senses) of the ideology on the basis of which that text is mobilized.

II: The Ideograph in Rhetorical Criticism

Some of the use of the ideograph in rhetorical criticism has consisted of the kind of ideographic critique that McGee (1980) proposed: a critique that seeks to understand how ideographs make up the ideological structure of a given society's discourse and precondition the limits of that society's discourse, functioning in a conservative manner, stymying political change, and preserving the status quo. To put it crudely, this kind of critique investigates the ways in which the public is "duped" or misled by rhetorical appeals to important ideographs. For example, Valenzano (2006) explores the way that George W. Bush employs the ideographic dialectic between <freedom> and <terror> to unify a number of discourse communities and win their support for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Stuckey and Ritter (2007: 647) similarly write about George W. Bush's usage of <human rights> "to connect his actions . . . to the foundational myths of American democracy" in order to provide "powerful warrants for his actions" despite the fact that his "actions… undermine the very practices he claims to be supporting." That is, Bush justifies going to war in Iraq because of the need to preserve the <human rights> of Iraqis, yet the paradoxical outcome of this seems to be the very violation of those <human rights> that the war was supposed to protect. As such, "we now find ourselves in a moment when <human rights> conjures up images of free speech zones, Abu Ghraib, prisoner abuses at Guantanamo Bay, torture by members of the American military, and...admissions...that the FBI is illegally spying on American citizens under the auspices of the Patriot Act" (Stuckey and Ritter, 2007: 647). Stuckey and Ritter, therefore show how leaders can play upon the foundational ideographs of a society in order to galvanize public support for actions that the public might otherwise oppose.

Likewise, scholars also investigate specific circumstances where ideographs function to normalize and depoliticize certain values, beliefs, and stereotypes. For instance, Dana Cloud (1998) writes about the way <family values> functioned as a scapegoat during the 1992 American Presidential election campaign to assign blame to black men and poor families for social issues. In particular, Cloud (1998: 411) addresses the way that <family values> is used to "[conceal] the reality of widespread economic inequality and structural racism in favor of personalistic explanations of hardship and failure." This concealment allows for questions of "social disputes" to become depoliticized by stripping them of their social significance. Where these "social disputes" might once have been addressed on a social level by the state, the rhetoric of <family values> turns what was formerly a social issue (like racism or poverty) into an individual one, foreclosing on the potential for "collective...political...action" to be undertaken (Cloud, 1998: 411). Instead, the public is left with a politics created by the "slogan" of <family values> that has naturalized the "privatization of social experience and responsibility," so that the state may abdicate the former obligations it made to its citizens (like eliminating poverty and legislating against racism, two main initiatives of the American government in the mid-20th century that petered out towards the end) (Cloud, 1998: 411). As seen in Chapter 1, the privatization of social responsibility is also a hallmark of neoliberalism and neoliberalization. Cloud's article, therefore, shows one of the ways that neoliberalism appropriated an ideograph in order to naturalize itself and become doxa.

Of course <family values> is not the only ideograph which neoliberalism has appropriated in order to naturalize itself. Stuckey and Ritter (2007: 661) also draw attention to George W. Bush's troubling pairing of <human rights> with "the neoliberal doctrines of economic 'rights,' free markets, and a consumer citizenship." As I discussed in Chapter 1,

neoliberal discourse, by claiming that the free market economic policies it advocates are an essential part of <human rights>, is able to prevent any political challenges to those policies *in advance* because arguing against the free market would involve arguing against <human rights>, and arguing against <human rights> is unacceptable in American discourse. As John Gray (1998: 108) writes, "the authority of [human] rights has been used to shield the workings of the free market from public scrutiny and political challenge. An ideology of rights has been used to confer legitimacy on a novel successor to American liberal capitalism:" neoliberalism. The neoliberal conception of <human rights> (perhaps even more dramatically than <family values>) shows the duplicitous manner in which the discourse of neoliberalism has been able to appropriate and redefine core societal ideographs, so that the central political commitments of the ideology remain out of the question, outside the domain of politics, and within the realm of doxa.

But not all critics understand ideographs purely as a force of conservatism.[29] Often, in fact, scholars have theorized that the meaning of ideographs are in fact the very object of contest in rhetorical debates between opposing political sides, because controlling the meaning of an ideograph allows a political group to redefine, reevaluate, and reorder public motives, values, and collective commitments. Moore (1997), for instance, writes about the issue of environmental tobacco smoke, analyzing the cigarette as a representational ideograph[30] that is a locus of

---

[29] I am not making the claim that any of the critics discussed above, with the exception of McGee perhaps, solely consider ideographs to be conservative forces. Indeed, Cloud (1997: 411) ends her article with a call to action: "we must challenge the privatizing force of the <family values> ideograph," in order to muster the political will to demand that the state address issues of systemic racism and poverty. Instead, what I point out is that these critics have concerned their analyses with instances of ideographs functioning conservatively. My point is that a critique of the conservative role of an ideograph is not the only kind of ideographic analysis that may be undertaken.

[30] That is, the image of a cigarette functioning as an ideograph, recalling Barthes' (1972) reminder that mythic speech may take on many different kinds of material forms — like language or image. Mythic speech, and likewise, ideographs, are not defined by their material, but by their signifying function. In this capacity, images may function as ideographs in the same way that words or phrases can.

contestation between pro-smoking and anti-smoking camps, with each side battling for control

over the meaning of the ideograph and thus control over the issue itself. But there is more at

stake than just the question of the cigarette — what is really at stake is what the cigarette *means*

— as "pro-cigarette interests define the cigarette as liberty threatened by life, whereas anti-

cigarette interests define the cigarette as life threatened by liberty" (Moore, 1997: 52). The

conflict over the cigarette ideograph is, on a deeper level, about which value ought to be more

important for society: the preservation of life at the expense of liberty, or the preservation of

liberty at the expense of life. Likewise, Stassen and Bates (2010) perform a quantitative analysis

of <marriage> to determine how it functions as an ideological reference point for either side of

culture war issues such as gay marriage, high divorce rates, and polygamy. Again, the conflict is

not about the meaning of the ideograph <marriage> as such, but it is about what the accepted

meaning of the ideograph represents about the public's collective commitments. In both the cases

of the cigarette and of marriage, control over the ideograph lends influence over society's values

in a broader sense: what is at stake in each case is the very basis of public opinion.

     This perspective of the ideograph as a point of contestation in political argument leads me

to a third kind of ideographic critique, which is the opposite of the first that I discussed (the

critique of ideographs that naturalize conservatism). This third kind of critique investigates the

capacity for ideographs to be contested, appropriated, and redefined, so that they play a positive

— even revolutionary — role in affecting social change and creating social justice. For instance,

there is the work of Celeste Condit and John Lucaites (1990, 1993), who discuss how the

meaning of the ideograph <equality> was changed by African-American rhetors over the course

of American history, in order to legitimize the case for the greater inclusion of black Americans

in society. They note that "Malcolm X and [Martin Luther King, Jr.] argued for continued

83

commitments to values enshrined in the American creed" and that both made use of the ideograph <equality> in order to articulate their vision of a future America that no longer discriminated against black Americans (Condit and Lucaites, 1990: 6). The aspect of ideographs that functions to ideologically precondition public discourse was not removed from King's or Malcolm X's rhetorical situation. As such, both of these rhetors were forced to adapt their rhetoric to the acceptable conditions of political debate of the time, and, necessarily, appropriated and reconstructed the meaning of <equality> in their speech, because "in the American experience, <equality> functions as a rhetoric of control" (Condit and Lucaites, 1990: 6). Equality is no simple word to understand," for it is bound up with "the highest ideals of America's collective being" (Condit and Lucaites, 1993: ix). To control the meaning of <equality> is to control, partially, the constitution of American public opinion.

This is where Condit and Lucaites go beyond McGee's (1980, 2001) understanding of the ideograph as a limiting factor for discourse. In fact, they argue that through "reconstructing" the meanings of ideographs, society itself may be changed. They posit that it was only because of the synchronic interplay between Malcolm X's and King's use of <equality> and other ideographs that the civil rights movement of the 1960s was able to achieve legitimacy, as these rhetorical interventions by Malcolm X and King "[reshaped] existing ideographs" and "[revivified] those ideographs central to the process of social change" (Condit and Lucaites, 1990: 6). Similarly, Condit (1987) argues that the political process of the integration of African-Americans into American society was made possible through the revision of the meaning of many important ideographs in American discourse (including <democracy>, <equality>, <discriminatory>, and <law>). She writes that "in the civil rights controversy...public argument, consisting of structures of ideographs, mythoi, and characterizations, led to a change in the American vocabulary"

(Condit, 1987: 16). This change in the American vocabulary of ideographs was what "mediated important changes in the public beliefs about race relations" that would enable the successes (although they were only partial successes) of the civil rights movement (Condit, 1987: 14). Condit and Lubricates are not alone with this kind of understanding, as Delgado (1995, 1999) is concerned with the ways ideographs were used to create new kinds of Chicano and Cuban identities and ideologies that, ultimately, established and empowered the will of those communities to take revolutionary political action. All of these studies, (Condit 1987; Condit and Lucaites, 1990, 1993; Delgado, 1995, 1999) understand the important role of social actors to intervene on the level of the ideograph, by engaging in public argument. The success of these actors in "winning" and appropriating the ideographs for themselves, allows for the potential for these actors to create a new political reality. In fact, these studies suggest — along the lines of the thesis that I will pursue in Chapter 4 — that "rhetoric is essentially and primarily a theory of social and political power that may help us to unite our understanding of social actors and material forces, and to undermine the potentially oppressive contradictions implicit in our ideological commitments" (Condit and Lucaites, 1990: 21). The practice of critical rhetoric itself, therefore, may yield "the basis for a critical understanding of the creative capacity for change" (Condit and Lucaites, 1990: 21).

With this in mind, all three kinds of the ideographic criticism I have discussed are necessary in order for social change to occur. In the first case, a critique of conservative ideologies allows for the realization of the ways in which the public has been manipulated into believing certain aspects of social reality are inevitable and natural — beyond the questions of politics — when they are, in reality, quite arbitrary and may be changed. In the second, ideographic criticism allows for a perspective that shows that — when multiple sides of a

85

political debate vie with each other for control over the meaning of an ideograph — there is much more than just the ideograph itself at stake: the ideograph is important inasmuch as it represents, in shorthand, the basic values and commitments of society. And in the third, ideographic criticism allows for an explanation for how social actors may intervene on the level of ideographs and, in doing so, win the power to redefine — symbolically and ideologically — their political reality, so that they might be able to use politics to change their material situation.

Chapter 4:
The Ideograph as a Source for Social Change

I: Neoliberal Reversals

In Chapter 1, I discussed the rise of neoliberalism and argued, following Touraine (2001), that its continued dominance of international policy and the public sphere is partially the result of the left's failure to develop a positive and meaningful alternative, another ideological program that could replace it. The left has positioned itself in opposition to any number of oppressive societal structures — racism, capitalism, sexism, homophobia, transmisogyny, etc. — but it has not yet developed alternative structures or, in Foucault's (2008) terms, alternative "governmentalities" that could replace the repressive and anti-democratic way that society today is structured and managed. The contemporary left's vision of the world is a fragmented and cracked one; by way of contrast, "the Right has provided one fluent vision of where the world is going, or has stopped, after another — Fukuyama, Brzezinski, Huntington, Yering, Luttwak, Friedman" (Anderson, 2000: 15). The right is confident and prepared to tell anyone who will listen in which direction(s) the world ought to be moving. The contemporary left, unfortunately, only knows which directions the world should avoid.

This situation is an ironic reversal of the crisis that played out for the neoliberal intelligentsia in the late 1940's and 50's: when it seemed that left was the side that was able to provide the most coherent vision of future political and societal development. The importance of developing a positive intellectual vision was not lost on the early neoliberal theorists; indeed we have seen how they made many calculated efforts to develop their ideology. Hayek (1949: 417) himself notes, in an article on "The Intellectuals and Socialism" that despite "a strong

belief...that the influence of the intellectuals on politics is negligible," intellectuals, over longer periods, in fact "have probably never exercised so great an influence as they do today in [democratic countries]. This power they wield by shaping public opinion." That Hayek was able to recognize this so early was a great boon for the neoliberal project. His understanding of the role of the intellectuals is almost a mirror of Gramsci's Marxist theory. Gramsci (1971: 10) knew that "one of the most important characteristics of any group that is developing towards dominance is its struggle to assimilate and to conquer 'ideologically' the traditional intellectuals, but this assimilation and conquest is made quicker and more efficacious the more the group in question succeeds in simultaneously elaborating its own organic intellectuals." A group that seeks power must develop its own movement of "organic intellectuals" that will contest and seek to convert the "traditional intellectuals" that offer alternative explanations. Hayek's (1949) article was written to contest the dominance of intellectual life by socialist thought, in order to stake out a role for liberal intellectuals in creating their *own* utopian vision that could stand up to the utopian vision of the socialists. Hayek's article was written with the explicit goal of elaborating the "organic intellectuals" that stood for neoliberalism. Both men knew that the "war of ideas" had to be fought in the intellectual life in order for any ideology to gain a foothold in the superstructure of society (to use Marxist terms); it is just that each man wanted the opposite ideology to win out in the end: Marxism for Gramsci and (neo)liberalism for Hayek.[31]

---

[31] Something that is interesting to note is that neoliberal theorists and Marxist ones alike agree on the role and place of intellectuals in society, understanding that it is the role of elites in society to shape public opinion. Whether we discuss Lippmann (1922), Gramsci (1971), or Hayek (1949), this is the case. Despite the political and ideological differences between these thinkers, we can learn the same lesson from all of them, and this lesson is one that the history of neoliberalism teaches as well. Peck (2008: 13), puts it like this: "Achieving dominance among the active intelligentsia was… an initial and necessary stage in the process of hegemonic succession." Therefore if movement is to be made against or beyond neoliberal hegemony, it will have to take place initially among an intellectual elite.

In his analysis of the rise of socialism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Hayek credits the success of socialism to the socialist intellectuals who embraced a utopian vision in order to persuade the public to adopt it as their program. Hayek (1949: 417) notes that the origins of socialism were not in any easy to understand, complete picture of utopian society, but were in "certain tendencies of abstract thought with which for a long time only intellectuals were familiar." Yet, by the time that socialism (or at least social democracy) had become the political order of the day, it was because its utopian vision had rewritten the possibilities of politics. Hayek, in a sense, was writing a thesis that is the opposite of the one that I am writing. He was dismayed at the fact that "the actual developments of society...were determined, not by a battle of conflicting ideals, but by the contrast between an existing state of affairs and that one ideal of a possible future society which the socialists alone held up before the public," such that in the political world of his time there was "only one direction in which we could move and the only question seemed to be how fast and how far the movement should proceed" (Hayek 1949: 428-9). Sound familiar?[32]

The situation today, as I have emphasized, is the reverse of the one that Hayek lamented in the middle of the twentieth century. Now it seems to be neoliberalism that is the "only one direction" in which society can move.[33] Regardless, the situation begs the question of the role of contemporary leftist intellectuals and the influence that they may exert on defining a new kind of public opinion and, consequently, a new kind of politics. The left of today should attempt to relearn a forgotten lesson about politics — a lesson Hayek himself once learned from the left of the early twentieth century: if one is to influence public opinion, one must develop a positive

---

[32] Compare this with, for example, the Ignacio Ramonet quote on page 7 of Chapter 1. The similarities are striking.

[33] Though of course stating it like this is quite crude, as by now I hope to have shown that neoliberalism is not any *one* thing in particular (certainly not a *pensèe unique*) but rather a constantly evolving and dynamic ideological force that is distinct despite any adaptations, alterations, or amendments that have been or might be made to it.

(maybe even a utopian) vision of the future of society and disseminate that vision, that ideal to the public, en masse.

II: A Challenge for the Left

If it is true that doxa, the "law" of public opinion, is produced through a process of public discourse and argumentation, and if it is also true that doxa is what delineates the realm of political possibility through semiological processes of naturalization and depoliticization, then it follows that political revolution — insofar as revolution implies transgressing or violating the previously-established social structures that define what is accepted as possible — must occur first on the ideological or the discursive plane before the revolution may be carried out on the material plane of existence. The creation of such an ideological shift is precisely the challenge that the left faces today. This begs the questions: How exactly is this to be done? How may the left intervene on the public realm by providing new discursive formations that shake-up and challenge the doxa of the everyday, neoliberal order?

III: The Reappropriation of Already Existing Ideographs

Whereas McGee (1980) and many of the critics that followed his work on the ideograph (Cloud, 1998; Condit, 1987; Condit and Lucaites, 1990, 1993; Delgado, 1999; Moore, 1997; Parry-Giles, 1995; Stassen and Bates, 2010; Stuckey and Ritter, 2007; Valenzano, 2006) employed the concept as an analytical tool to try and understand how ideology has been constructed and altered by rhetorical texts, *after the fact*, I propose that this is not the only way that the ideograph can be made of use to scholars: the ideograph may be employed as a tool to guide rhetorical invention, in addition to the role that it plays as an analytical tool in rhetorical criticism.

The ideograph, as originally theorized by McGee, emphasizes its role as a constricting force that is often the basis for social conditioning and social control. He writes that when people learn the "meaning of ideographs," they have become "predisposed to structured mass responses;" that is ideographs "constitute by our very use of them in political discourse an ideology that governs or 'dominates' our consciousness" (McGee, 1980: 15). This process happens just as a matter of fact of social existence. In Althusser's (1971) terms, the subject is *already* interpellated by the system of ideographs that form the structure of their society. The structure of ideology is such that it is inescapable: "the existence of ideology and the...interpellation of individuals as subjects are one and the same thing" (Althusser, 1971: 175). For this reason, McGee is more interested in a critique of ideographs as symbolic structures that preserve the status quo. After all, recall that his claim that "ideographs are not revolution friendly" (McGee, 2001: 380). Or the fact that "a degree of tolerance is usual, but people are expected to understand ideographs within a range of usage thought to be acceptable: The society will inflict penalties on those who use ideographs in heretical ways" (McGee, 1980: 15)

92

Perhaps this is the true of the ideographs that already exist and of the meanings which they presently hold. Perhaps, these current structures serve only to stymie the forces of social change. But I am unconvinced this is the only possible scenario. These structures are no doubt powerful, but they are in no sense permanent or inevitable; in fact Bourdieu (1977) would be the first to remind us that they are *fundamentally* arbitrary. Furthermore, in a historical sense, this process of change has already occurred: social actors *have already* intervened on the level of ideographs and, in doing so, have greatly shifted and changed the political realities of their time. And this process is presently occurring as well. Touraine (2001: 116) suggests that:

> we must resolutely reject all discourses that try to convince us that we are powerless. How can we go on listening to and speaking a language that contradicts what we feel and even what we do? How long are they going to go on telling us that we are subject to the absolute domination of the international economy, when we invent and defend ideals, discuss reforms and break the silence every day of our lives?

Likewise, we must reject McGee (1980; 2001) insofar as he suggests that we are limited and dominated by the ideographic systems that already exist. Ideographic shifts are much more than possible; they are in some sense even inevitable. It is really more of a question of which way they shift when they shift, than of whether they will shift at all.

For an example of this kind of ideographic shift, consider Condit and Lucaites (1993: 12) who show that black American discourse in the 1940's and 50's created "a new vision of Equality [that] demanded integration rather than separation" and that this new vision of equality led to it being used in "concrete and substantive" ways to demand "specific material goods, e.g., equal housing, equal schools, equal accommodations, equal health, and equal pay for equal work." Of course, these new usages did not automatically create an equal material situation for

93

black America, especially because "America's national white leadership was ahead of much of the white population, and as a result, whatever changes they could effect [sic] were arduous and slow to develop" (Condit and Lucaites, 1993: 12-13). But slow and arduous change is still change nonetheless: the 1960s American understanding of <equality> was dramatically different than the understanding of the 1770s, or even of the 1930s, for that matter. And it certainly was an improvement upon the situation. The social revolution will not occur in an instant. Ideographs, nor the ideologies which they comprise, will not change overnight, and even when they do change, this does not mean that the material structures of society will automatically change with them. *Brown vs. Board* may have legally eliminated the notion of "separate but equal" in 1954, but in fact it was just the starting point for the actual process of integration: the entire drama of the civil rights movement was soon to follow. Such an ideological starting point is what the left so desperately needs now if it seeks to pose a real alternative to neoliberalism's hegemony over the social world. "If we accept that the work done on itself by a society or a social movement...is slow, difficult, punctuated by crises and characterized by zones of obscurity," then we better get started on that work now, if we ever hope to create the change we seek (Touraine, 2001: 116).

It is with no small amount of irony that I note my commitment to the liberal value of amelioration, but what else can we practically hope for if not, at the bare minimum, the slow improvement of society's problems? Of course we can and should dream bigger; even Hayek knew the usefulness of the utopian ideal in changing the social world. But this does not mean that we should abandon our efforts to make social change if we never do achieve our utopian goals. In fact it means precisely the opposite: that there still remains more arduous and slow work to be done. And do it we must.

Likewise, it may seem odd that after many pages spent in an effort to "combat" neoliberalism, I seem to embrace part of the liberal, reformist ideal at its core. But what else could be expected from a subject such as myself if I have already-been interpellated by neoliberal society? How can I or anyone else, for that matter, practically expect to reject all of its values? They have already conditioned the very structure of the possible thoughts I may think. Nonetheless, as much as I want society to move beyond neoliberalism, I must also recognize that it is not an abstract force of pure evil.[34] Further, the nature of ideographs does not mean that when new meanings are developed the old meanings are erased from history. In fact, both the new meanings and the old ones are relevant, as McGee (1980: 14) shows: "no present ideology can be divorced from past commitments... And no diachronic ideology can be divorced from the 'here-and-now' if only because its entire *raison d'être* consists in justifying the form and direction of collective behavior." This means that, no matter how much "anti-" posturing against them one makes, ideological formations from the old society will inevitably bleed into the new. This does not have to be a purely bad thing. As Ferguson (2009: 182) points out, in the realm of practice (rather than the realm of ideology), "specific governmental devices and modes of reasoning that we have become used to associating with a very particular (and conservative) political agenda ('neoliberalism') may be...peeled away from that agenda, and put to very different uses." If there is anything to be learned from neoliberalism, it should be that no matter what the theoretical underpinnings of an ideology may be, the way it plays out in practice is likely to be different. Karl Polanyi (1944: 141) encapsulated this paradoxical insight in his famous aphorism about the limits of putting *laissez-faire* economics into practice: "*Laissez-faire* was planned; planning was not.*" No matter if someone has an ideological plan worked out

---

[34] This is why I prefer using Touraine's (2001) phrase of moving "beyond neoliberalism" rather than the more violent and oppositional metaphors of "combating" or "fighting neoliberalism."

perfectly on paper, the messiness of reality is sure to get into the way. This is also why Touraine (2001:108) makes the case for a type of intellectual who is neither dogmatic nor blindly dedicated to the pursuit of a single ideological interest, but rather is an intellectual who simultaneously "believe[s] in the possibility of action and inventiveness on the part of the dominated" but who is also unafraid to analyze and "mount a critique of their [the dominated's] actions and discourses." It is only through a process of self-criticism, reflection, and analysis that good ideas may be put into good practice. Foucault (1977), too advocates for this, writing: "do not use thought to ground a political practice in Truth; nor political action to discredit, as mere speculation, a line of thought. Use political practice as an intensifier of thought, and analysis as a multiplier of the forms and domains for the intervention of political action." Thus, for the left of today, the age-old dialectic between theory and praxis is as relevant as it ever was.

A similar argument to Ferguson's (2009), concerning how the same public policies may be used to different ends by different political agendas, may be applied to ideographs themselves: an ideograph may be peeled away from its old meaning and thrust towards a very different, new one. Kenneth Burke (1984: 328) calls this process the "Stealing Back and Forth of Symbols." He shows that originally the idea of "rights" was first considered in terms of the "divine right of kings," a doctrine that was a way for "secular interests," i.e., the king, to contest "the authority of the theocrats," i.e. the church. The church then was able to "[adopt] the doctrine as its own," as it made peace with and aligned its own interests with those of the monarchies. But when the bourgeoisie came to power, against the double dominion of monarch and church that was justified by the doctrine, "it did so in the name of 'rights.'" Of course, it was in the name of "rights" that the doctrine had originally been considered, and it was in the name of "rights" that it finally was deposed. Further, one of these rights that the bourgeoisie demanded was "freedom."

This bourgeois right to "freedom" was then stolen by Marx "for the proletariat." And so the cycle continues. But Burke's point in recounting the history of all this symbolic theft is that "the stealing back and forth of symbols is the approved method whereby the Outs avoid 'being driven into a corner.'" This is merely another way of stating the core of my thesis: those oppressed by the neoliberal domination of politics (the "Outs," as Burke would have them) may contest this dominance by intervening on the level of the ideograph in order to change the construction of public opinion, doxa and, consequently, the reality of their political situation.

To return to my earlier example, such a process of contestation is precisely what happened with the ideograph <equality> in the movement from *Plessy v. Ferguson* to *Brown v. Board*. Its meaning did not undergo a minor change; it quite literally became its opposite. Whereas in *Plessy*, "separate but equal" was found to be an acceptable usage, in *Brown*, such a usage became a contradiction in terms, as "the [Supreme] Court legally overturned the 'separate but equal' doctrine when it concluded that in matters of education separate was 'inherently unequal'" (Condit and Lucaites, 1993: 12). Of course, this ideological change was not really performed by the Supreme Court. Rather, the *Brown v. Board* decision was merely a legal reflection of a discursive shift that had already taken place, a discursive shift that was the *result of social actors who intervened on the level of the ideograph*. As Condit and Lucaites (1993: 148) observe, it was "African-Americans" who were the ones to "force a national transition from a commitment to a world in which 'separate' was 'equal,' to a world of integrated equalities." In fact, it was the very act of speech, whereby African-Americans *demanded* their rights that forced the hand of the Supreme Court. Again, it took a long period (from 1896-1954) of struggle, of public argumentation, of ideographic intervention, for this ideological change to take place, but nevertheless take place it did (Condit and Lucaites, 1993).

And this is not even to say that this ideological change resulted in a successful material change. Segregation is still very much an American reality, even sixty years after *Brown* ensured that it would no longer be the law of the land (Hannah-Jones, 2014; Mullins, 2013). But just because a social movement failed to achieve all of its goals — or because it achieved some of them but society regressed or turned in a different direction — does not mean that the social movement should end; or if it has ended be forgotten; or if it has been forgotten should not be resurrected, revitalized, and forged anew. The potential for success, the potential for the development of the new, the potential for meaningful change is always lurking quietly in the background of a supposedly stable social order; it is up to social movements and social actors, in their capacities to speak and to engage in the public sphere, to bring this potential to the forefront of society and realize it.[35] Again, we may turn to the history of neoliberalism to see this drama play itself out: liberalism had died, or so everyone thought, but through a combination of the right timing, persistent effort, and the positive development of a coherent vision of a new social order, neoliberalism was able to come to dominance and remake global society in its own image.

As intellectuals, we cannot be deluded by the siren-song of doxa; there is no reason to "believe that the triumph of evil is inevitable or that there is nothing more to history than internal crises and the hegemonic strategies of the dominant forces" (Touraine, 2001: 108). What seems to be natural, what seems to be inevitable, is nothing but arbitrariness dressed up in myth's clothing. History marches ever forward; what has been done may be undone; what has been lost may be recovered; what has been unmade may be remade.

---

[35] It is in this respect that Martin Luther King Jr. (2009) speaks of a social order that consists of "negative peace which is the absence of tension." He points out that the activists who were taking action in Birmingham were not "the creators of tension," rather they "merely [brought] to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive" so it can "be seen and dealt with." Likewise when social actors speak, they do so in order to expose the potential for justice, "the tension," that hides behind the façade of an unjust but stable social order.

As such, failure is no excuse for silence nor resignation.[36] In fact, silence and resignation are the only two things that *will* ensure permanent failure. What the great poet and theorist, Audre Lorde (2007), teaches is that we must, despite our fears of speaking, transform our silence into language and action. Such an act — after all we must recognize with Burke (1984: 336) that speech is fundamentally an *action*, imbued with power, that "the words of the poet are not puppets, but acts. They are a function of him, and he is a function of them. They are a function of society, and he is a function of society" — such an act, although it "always seems fraught with danger" is in reality an act of "self-revelation" (Lorde, 2007: 42). This is precisely what is at stake when the discourse of the dominated is thrust upon the ears of the public: nothing less than the potential for self-revelation and self-transformation, and with those, the potential for the arbitrariness of the everyday order to be revealed and the potential for society itself to be transformed. For the dominated to intervene on the level of the ideograph — for the dominated to invoke an ideograph in speech — is for the dominated to transform from a state of victimhood to a state of action: "to demand justice," for instance, "is to accuse those who have wronged a victim," and "a victim who uses the word 'justice' becomes an actor" (Touraine, 2001: 37). For those who have been silenced and excluded, through violence, through coercion, through fear, to speak is to reclaim one's power over oneself; to speak is to reclaim one's position in society; to speak is to demand to be heard; to speak is to revolt. Lorde (2007: 41-44) writes that "your silence will not protect you," that silence is just another one of the "endless ways in which we rob ourselves of ourselves and each other," and that "the weight of that silence will choke us" and "[immobilize] us." Therefore to break one's silence, to speak, is to act by engaging in a

---

[36] Beckett (1996: 80) understands the point of failure: to regroup, to analyze, to learn, to adapt, to transform, and to persist, in spite of it all: "Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better."

99

struggle against the forces of domination and repression. Silence — which is nothing but the acceptance of domination, and the absence of struggle — offers nothing.[37] Speech, action, and struggle offers everything, offers existence, offers humanity, as we recall Camus (1959: 123) who said that "the struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart [sic]."

---

[37] I am aware of the capacity for silence itself to be a signifier with its own signified content; there are cases where silence may speak more coherently than language, but a full discussion of this phenomenon is a thesis of its own (see for instance Kurzon, 1998). This is perhaps also a consequence of McKerrow's (1989) sixth principle of critical rhetorical praxis: "*Absence* is as important as *presence* in understanding and evaluating symbolic action." Regardless, my position against silence is not against the silence that communicates a signified content. There is a kind of silence which speaks, and there is also a second kind which is meaningless. I argue only against the second kind.

IV: Breaking the Silence: Ideographic Invention

This leads me to another way of understanding the ideograph as a force for social change. In the last section, I discussed the possibility of the dominated taking control of already-existing ideographs. To use Barthes' (1972) mythic terminology, this means that social actors who invoke already-existing ideographs make their intervention by taking a mythic form that already exists within a culture and inculcating it with a new mythic concept; the social actor appropriates the mythic forms of the social order which oppresses them and imbues them with new, revolutionary concepts that refer to an innovative and positive vision of society. This has been the situation in several of the cases I have already mentioned: when the bourgeoisie appropriated the ideograph of <rights> from the church and the king, they filled it with a new concept and therefore transformed its signification (i.e., no longer did it refer to the idea of the authority of the monarch or the priest; it now referred to the common humanity[38] of the bourgeois class); likewise when African-Americans appropriated the ideograph of <equality> from white Americans, they altered the mythic concept that stood behind the form (where it once referred to the concept of "equality in separateness," it now referred to the concept of "equality in togetherness") and forever transformed its signification.

But this is not the only way that a social actor may invoke an ideograph. There is a second way that is even more powerful, even more transformative, and even more revolutionary: to invent a *new* mythic form and imbue it with a concept that had previously been nameless, creating an utterly new signification. To invoke an ideograph in this way is to invoke the power of definition, the power of naming. It is one thing to change the meaning of an ideograph; it is another thing altogether to create a new ideograph to express a new meaning which, a moment

---

[38] Though at the time, it was probably understood not as the "common humanity" but as the "common manhood."

101

previously, was, *in the most literal sense unthinkable, inexpressible, incommunicable*. The creation of new ideographs is the creation of new language; it is an expansion of what Bourdieu (1977: 170) calls "the universe of discourse," and consequently is a reduction of the universe of discourse's "unnoticed, complementary" partner: "the universe of that which is undiscussed, unnamed, admitted without argument or certainty...the universe of the unthinkable." There is always a political dimension to this expansion (and this reduction), because it is a potential force for liberation. It allows for "those who are denied access to the instruments of the struggle for the definition of reality" to begin their struggle in earnest, to break their silence, to speak, and in speaking become actors, as "the boundary between the universe of… discourse and the universe of doxa [i.e., the universe of the unthinkable]...represents the dividing-line between the most radical form of misrecognition and the awakening of political consciousness" (Bourdieu, 1977: 170). The creation of language is therefore of the utmost importance in political struggle.

To forge new language is to begin to forge a new kind of public opinion, to break down the doxa of the old, and to establish a new political situation filled with the potential for revolutionary change. This is what Audre Lorde (2007: 37, emphasis mine) refers to when she writes that "poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of...existence. It forms the quality of light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, *first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action.*"[39] Language is prior to action[40]; action is only possible after the language that will define it has been called into being. Poetry

---

[39] Lorde's (2007: 37, emphasis mine) original formulation specifically says that "*for women*, then, poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of *our* existence." In the main text I excised the references to women in an attempt to universalize Lorde's argument. This is not because I disagree with the feminist principles that are behind Lorde's text — I very much stand with them — but it is because I think that the idea of poetry not being a luxury is true even outside of specifically feminist struggles. For *any* oppressed group (and definitely in the case when this group consists of women), poetry cannot be a luxury.

[40] For that matter, language *is* symbolic action, following (Burke, 1966).

therefore cannot be a luxury because political struggle is not a luxury; political struggle is a necessary part of the existence of the oppressed, for it is the only way for them to attempt to survive and to change the oppressive circumstances which dominate them.

The formation of new ideographs by the oppressed plays the same essential role in political struggle that poetry plays for Lorde. Poetry for her, is essential, because "it is through poetry that we give name to those ideas which are — until the poem — nameless and formless, about to be birthed but *already felt*" (Lorde, 2007: 36, emphasis mine). The mythic concepts *already* exist, trapped inside of a person, but because they exist outside of language, outside of the universe of discourse, they are without their mythic form; because they lack form, they lack the signifying power that exists only when form and concept meet and are dialectically transformed into their signification. Poetry — and like it — the creation of new ideographs gives name to the nameless and, in doing so, allows for the possibility of "tangible action."

A concrete example of this can be seen in a contemporary development in mainstream American discourse: the movement away from ideographs like <illegal immigrant> or <illegal alien> towards alternative, new formulations like <undocumented immigrant>, <undocumented student>, or <undocumented worker>. The Applied Research Center (now known as Race Forward: The Center for Racial Justice Innovation) began a campaign called "Drop the I-Word" in September 2010 to excise the word illegal from public discourse on immigration; their slogan (and the ideological message behind their campaign) was "no human being is illegal," and they argued that such usage of illegal is dehumanizing and degrading, leading to "the criminalization of a whole population" (Feliz, 2013). To be an "illegal immigrant" is to be denied one's right to participate in public discourse, dismissed at once because one is "illegal." But when those who were once known as "illegal immigrants" reclaimed the power to define themselves and their

political situation, they were able to assert their humanity, and in doing so, step forth into the public domain as social actors who would be heard.

This campaign lead to meaningful change to American doxa: mainstream publications had to adjust their practices; the law of public discourse had been altered. The *Associated Press* in 2013 updated its Stylebook by banning the term "illegal immigrant" as well as "the use of 'illegal' to describe a person" (Colford, 2013). "USA Today, LA Times, San Francisco Chronicle, and many other news outlets" followed suit, "affecting millions of readers daily nationwide," though the campaign continues to lobby major publications such as the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* that have not banned the term yet (Race Forward). This change in public discourse found its reflection in the political world, as President Obama began to make immigration reform more of a priority. In November 2014, he announced that he would pursue an executive action on immigration that would offer "temporary legal status to millions of illegal immigrants,[41] along with an indefinite reprieve from deportation" (Ehrenfruend, 2014). Of course as discussed in Chapter Two, the notion of a directly causal relationship between rhetoric and public action is problematic, but that does not mean that rhetoric has no role to play: an understanding of its influence remains (for more on this see Condit, 1987; McKerrow, 1989). Likewise, I do not claim that Race Forward's campaign is the direct cause of Obama's action, but there is a relationship at work here. The ideographic shift from "illegal" to "undocumented" (or other alternative formulations) prefigured a political shift in the status of this population. Once undocumented immigrants intervened by rejecting the ideograph that had been used to

---

[41] Of course, I note with irony that I quote from the *Washington Post* to describe Obama's action, and this is one of the newspapers that has not yet banned the term "illegal immigrant."

define them and substituted it with an ideograph of their own design, they became legitimate

social actors, and their political reality subsequently began to change.[42] [43]

---

[42] Though this change has been slow and unsteady, as there has been significant opposition to Obama's actions, and it is currently "tied up in federal court" (Jorgensen, 2015), it is still change. No matter that there has been opposition — the notion of political *struggle* implies that opposition will come. Opposition shows that there is a fight to be waged and that the idea of change is now being taken more seriously (by all actors on either side) than it ever was before.

[43] Another example of the creation of a new ideograph that would engender a new mythic concept and, accordingly, a new way to understand society is Occupy Wall Street's formulation of the "99%" and the 1%." It is beyond the scope of this thesis to fully sketch out the implications of this intervention, but I do think that it provided a new way for Americans to understand the economic realities of America under neoliberal policies, and so it felt worth noting, at the very least.

V: Rhetoric as Praxis: The Ideograph as a Source for Social Change

I hope to have shown in this chapter that the ideograph can be understood as much more than a mere tool of the scholar who is engaged in analysis of a political situation after the fact. This kind of analysis is doubtless necessary for political struggles (Foucault, 1977; Touraine, 2001), but it cannot be the limit of the work of scholars or activists. The ideograph, in addition to its analytic usefulness, should be understood — by those who would enter into public discourse on the behalf of the oppressed — as the very object of contestation, the very object of their struggle itself. A *conscious* attempt must be made to develop a new vocabulary of ideographs, as well as to take back and re-appropriate the ideographs that have been lost, in order to break free from the doxa of the current neoliberal order. It is only once this doxa has been shattered that political reality may be altered. It is only through contestation on the level of language itself that the politically unthinkable may be transformed into the politics of the day. As Sartre writes, "words wreak havoc...when they find a name for what had up to then been lived namelessly" (Sartre quoted in Bourdieu, 1977: 170). Or in the words of Lorde (2007: 38), "poetry coins the language to express and charter [the] revolutionary demand, the implementation of...freedom." The creation of the ideographs of social change engenders the capacity of the public to put that change into practice. If the left begins to recapture the ideographs that it lost to neoliberalism, if it begins to redefine itself through the creation of new ideographs, in order to express what up to then remained silent, then it will be able to create the new, positive vision of society that it lacks so desperately at present. It will be able to, once more, prepare itself to recreate the social world.

Conclusion

In one sense, theories of public opinion have advanced far beyond Lippmann's early (1922: 29) conception of "the pictures inside the heads of… human beings, the pictures of themselves, of others, of their needs, purposes, and relationship" that lead humans to take some sort of action in the world. But in another, contemporary theorists have never really departed from this basic elaboration; after all, most of what people understand about the world, they have never been able to experience first-hand. No matter how complicated or involved the theory of public opinion gets, it still involves, at its core, the images people have in their head of certain foreign realities that are external to them and the means by which people come to acquire those images.

In much of the world today, neoliberalism has had a large role to play in the construction of public opinion for many individuals, for it has elaborated a doxa that has already-interpellated these individuals as subjects, and consequently has shaped their understanding of the structure of society, determining what they consider to be part of the natural order of things and what they understand can be changed about the systems which condition the nature of their existence. But, as I hope to have shown in Chapter 1, there is little about neoliberalism that is strictly natural, inevitable, or totalizing. It is a messy and chaotic doctrine that was created by many different people, from many different places, in an alleged common effort to, first, theoretically revitalize the ideals of classical liberalism, and to, second, find a way (or many, many ways) to put this reborn, remade, and refigured ideal into practice (Peck, 2008). The results of this effort, I have argued, following (Harvey, 2005), have had a lot less to do with the utopian ideals — represented by ideographs like <freedom>, or <equality>, or <rights> that supposedly stand behind the doctrine — than they have had to do with a series of political developments that have

served, in a material sense, to restore to economic elites the powers to structure and manage society as they see fit and to accumulate capital and extract wealth from markets, people, and natural resources, in every corner of the world, no matter how remote.

No matter what kind of utopian picture of neoliberalism exists in the heads of the true believers, only a practical one exists for me, consisting of the material effects of neoliberalization: an increased gap between rich and poor, as an increasingly smaller minority is able to benefit by exploiting the work of an increasingly growing majority; international relationships that are managed in anti-democratic, elitist, and authoritarian fashions; a world which seems to be heading towards yet another crisis (whether financial, ecological, or political, who is to be sure?) created by an inefficient and wasteful structure that values short-term profits over long-term stability. Neoliberalism, in every last one of its countless variations, mutations, and adaptations, is nothing but a bankrupt ideology that has failed, time and time again, to deliver to the majority of people the freedoms it promised them; instead, it has turned this humble majority into a "vast reservoir of...disposable people bereft of social protections and supportive social structures" that can expect nothing from "neoliberalization except poverty, hunger, disease, and despair" (Harvey, 2005: 185). Neoliberalism has served to alienate the majority from their common humanity, turning them into lonely individuals who have become abstracted from the senses of solidarity and common purpose that might have otherwise developed had another ideology been dominant. It has robbed from them their labor, their security, their privacy, their dignity, and their awareness of a purpose in life greater than the arduous struggle to scrape together a meager existence.

But neoliberalism has not — it cannot, it *must* not — rob them of the will to resist. We have seen that neoliberalism must always exist among other ideals that are counter to it (Peck,

108

2010). That even if, for many or for most, it exists as doxa: undetected, hidden in plain sight, as invisible as air — there still exist others who recognize deeper truths: that it is arbitrary, that it cannot dominate totally, that it will not last forever. No matter the tremendous power that neoliberalism may wield, it cannot deny people their ability to join together as a collective, to demand their rights, to speak, and in speaking, become the social actors that can work to build and realize an entirely new, unforeseen vision of the world (Touraine, 2001).

We have seen how rhetoric has played a major role in the ongoing creation of neoliberalism: from the messy beginnings of the Colloque Walter Lippmann and the early Mont Pelerin Society, from Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek, to its contemporary realization in Chile, in New York City, by Ronald Reagan, by Bill Clinton, and Barack Obama (Harvey, 2005; Peck, 2008, 2010; Plehwe, 2009). Rhetoric has been a tool which neoliberalism has long exploited in order to convince the public that it is inevitable, that it is fated, and that it is the final destiny of our global organization. Through neoliberalism's appropriation of various ideographs, it has been able to "manufacture consent" for its policies, insofar as it has played upon and adjusted the ideological structure of society in a way that convinced people of two, alternative fictions: that it is a productive, beneficial way to manage social life, or if not quite that, that it is the only alternative and that there is nowhere else to turn. But there is nothing to stop the same rhetorical strategies that neoliberalism employed to ascend to its current position from being used against it. Any skilled rhetor may employ ideographs in their arguments in an attempt to shatter the neoliberal doxa and to forever alter the possibilities that politics may offer.

For those of us who wish to contest the dominance of neoliberalism, this fact alone allows for a small germ of hope to survive within. Rhetoric is not a static and rigid thing; it is rather an ever-evolving discursive process, subject to moments of intervention, contestation, and

109

transformation by the actions of concerned individuals or groups when they rise from a state of silence to a state of speech, when they step from the anonymity of their private lives onto the public stage (Condit and Lucaites, 1993; Lorde, 2007; Touraine, 2001). In fact, "the very phenomenon of 'change' itself is the function of an active sociorhetorical process" (Condit and Lucaites, 1993: x). As such, we can recognize that the greatest potential for change lies inside those people who feel deep within that something is amiss, that something has gone wrong, that, in the course of history, society has erred and gone off track, but who are unsure of how to put this feeling into words, unsure of how to express what they understand, what they know for certain to be true. I argue that these people must somehow find the words, must somehow take back or create anew the ideographs that can express what up till then had been inexpressible. In moving from silence to speech, social actors may voice their most ambitious vision of political possibility, of societal transformation, of justice, of change in the most positive sense.

An understanding of rhetoric's role in creating political reality foments an understanding that, at any point, the potential for change and liberation that has been obscured by the doxa of the everyday order may be unearthed by a good person, speaking well. There is no doubt in my mind that when neoliberalism has finally run its course, it will have been because of such an event. Therefore, we must make haste; to speak — not against the follies of neoliberalism, but in favor of the society of our most audacious dreams — to speak is to begin once more the cycle of revolutionary change.

References

About Us. *Commentary Magazine*. Available at: https://www.commentarymagazine.com/about/.

Drop the I-Word Campaign. *Race Forward*. Available at:
   https://www.raceforward.org/practice/tools/drop-i-word-campaign.

Aalbers MB. (2013) Neoliberalism is Dead … Long Live Neoliberalism. *International Journal
   of Urban and Regional Research* 37: 1083-1090.

Alexander M. (2012) *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness,* New
   York, N.Y: New Press.

Althusser L. (1971) Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an
   Investigation). *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays.* New York: Monthly Review
   Press, 127-189.

Anderson P. (2000) Renewals. *New Left Review* 1: 1-20.

Barnett C. (2005) The Consolations of 'Neoliberalism'. *Geoforum* 36: 7-12.

Barthes R. (1972) *Mythologies,* New York: Noonday Press.

Beckett S. (1996) *Nohow on: three novels,* Emeryville, CA; New York: Grove Press.

Bernays EL and Miller MC. (2005) *Propaganda,* Brooklyn, N.Y: Ig Publishing.

Berry C. (2011) *Globalisation and Ideology in Britain: Neoliberalism, Free Trade and the
   Global Economy,* New York; Manchester: Manchester University Press Manchester.

Bitzer LF. (1968) The Rhetorical Situation. *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 1: 1-14.

Block D, Gray J and Holborow M. (2012) *Neoliberalism and Applied Linguistics,* New York,
   NY; Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Bourdieu P. (1977) *Outline of a Theory of Practice,* New York; Cambridge: Cambridge

111

University Press.

Bourdieu P. (1998) *Acts of Resistance: Against the Tyranny of the Market,* New York: New Press.

Brown DC. (2003) *Globalization and America since 1945,* Wilmington, Del: Scholarly Resources.

Burke K. (1947) Ideology and Myth. *Accent* 7: 195-205.

Burke K. (1966) *Language as symbolic action; essays on life, literature, and method,* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Burke K. (1984) *Attitudes Toward History,* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Campbell KK and Jamieson KH. (2008) *Presidents Creating the Presidency: Deeds Done in Words,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Camus A. (1959) *The Myth of Sisyphus: and Other Essays,* New York: Vintage Books.

Castree N. (2010) Neoliberalism and the Biophysical Environment 1: What 'Neoliberalism' is, and What Difference Nature Makes to it. *Geography Compass* 4: 1725-1733.

Chaput C. (2010) Rhetorical Circulation in Late Capitalism: Neoliberalism and the Overdetermination of Affective Energy. *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 43: 1-25.

Clarke J. (2004) Dissolving the Public Realm? The Logics and Limits of Neo-liberalism. *Journal of Social Policy* 33: 27-48.

Cloud D. (1998) The Rhetoric of <Family Values>: Scapegoating, Utopia, and the Privatization of Social Responsibility. *Western Journal of Communication* 62: 387.

Colford P. (2013) 'Illegal immigrant' No More. *The Definitive Source.* The Associated Press.

Condit CM. (1987) Democracy and Civil Rights: The Universalizing Influence of Public Argumentation. *Communication Monographs* 54: 1.

Condit CM. (1989) The Rhetorical Limits of Polysemy. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 6: 103-122.

Condit CM and Lucaites JL. (1990) Reconstructing 'Equality': Culturetypal and Counter-Cultural Rhetorics in the Martyred Black Vision. *Communication Monographs* 57: 5.

Condit CM and Lucaites JL. (1993) *Crafting Equality: America's Anglo-African Word,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Davis AY. (2003) *Are Prisons Obsolete?,* New York: Seven Stories Press.

Delgado F. (1999) The Rhetoric of Fidel Castro: Ideographs in the Service of Revolutionaries. *Howard Journal of Communications* 10: 1-14.

Delgado FP. (1995) Chicano movement rhetoric: an ideographic interpretation. *Communication Quarterly* 43: 446-454.

Denord F. (2009) French Neoliberalism and Its Divisions: From the Colloque Walter Lippmann to the Fifth Republic. In: Mirowski P and Plehwe D (eds) *The road from Mont Pèlerin: the Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective* Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 45-67.

Ehrenfreund M. (2014) Your Complete Guide to Obama's Immigration Executive Action. *Wonkblog.* The Washington Post.

Eliade M. (1975) *Myth and reality,* New York: Harper & Row.

Feliz L. (2013) No Human Being Is Illegal. *StudentNation.* The Nation.

Ferguson J. (2010) The Uses of Neoliberalism. *Antipode* 41: 166-184.

Flew T. (2012) Michel Foucault's The Birth of Biopolitics and Contemporary Neo-liberalism Debates. *Thesis Eleven* 108: 44-65.

Flew T. (2014) Six Theories of Neoliberalism. *Thesis Eleven* 122: 49-71.

113

Foucault M. (1972) *The Archaeology of Knowledge,* New York: Pantheon Books.

Foucault M. (1977) Preface. In: Deleuze G and Guattari F (eds) *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia.* New York: Viking Press, xiii-xvi.

Foucault M, Senellart M and Collège de France. (2008) *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-79,* Basingstoke England; New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Friedman M. (1965) The Economy: We Are All Keynesians Now. *Time.*

Friedman M and Friedman RD. (1982) *Capitalism and Freedom,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Fukuyama F. (1992) *The End of History and the Last Man,* New York; Toronto: Free Press.

Gamble A. (2001) Neo-Liberalism. *Capital and Class*: 127-134.

Gilson D and Perot C. (2011) It's the Inequality, Stupid. *Mother Jones.*

Gramsci A, Hoare Q and Nowell-Smith G. (1971) *Selections from the prison notebooks of Antonio Gramsci,* New York: International Publishers.

Gray J. (1995) *Liberalism,* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Gray J. (1998) *False Dawn: the Delusions of Global Capitalism,* New York: New Press.

Hannah-Jones N. (2014) Segregation Now... *The Atlantic.*

Harvey D. (2007) *A Brief History of Neoliberalism,* New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hayek F. (1944) *The Road to Serfdom,* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Hayek F. (1949) The Intellectuals and Socialism. *The University of Chicago Law Review* 16: 417-433.

Herman ES and Chomsky N. (2002) *Manufacturing Consent: the Political Economy of the Mass Media,* New York: Pantheon Books.

Hobsbawm E. (1998) The Death Of Neo-Liberalism. *Marxism Today*: 4-8.

114

Hofstadter R. (1965) *The Paranoid Style in American Politics, and Other Essays,* New York: Knopf.

Jacoby R. (1999) *The End of Utopia: Politics and Culture in an Age of Apathy,* New York, NY: Basic Books.

Jasinski J. (2001) *Sourcebook on Rhetoric: Key Concepts in Contemporary Rhetorical Studies,* Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications.

Jessop B. (2000) The Crisis of the National Spatio-Temporal Fix and the Tendential Ecological Dominance of Globalizing Capitalism. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 24: 323-360.

Jorgensen J. (2015) Council Gearing Up to Implement Immigration Executive Order, Despite Court Challenges. *Observer.* Observer Media.

Keynes JM. (1936) *The general theory of employment, interest and money,* New York: Harcourt, Brace.

King Jr. ML. (1963) Letter from a Birmingham Jail. Available at: http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html.

Klein N. (2000) *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies,* Toronto: Knopf Canada.

Klein N. (2007) *The Shock Doctrine: the Rise of Disaster Capitalism,* New York: Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt.

Kurzon D. (1998) *Discourse of Silence,* Amsterdam; Philadelphia: J. Benjamins.

Langer S. (1949) On Cassirer's Theory of Language and Myth. In: Schilpp PA (ed) *The philosophy of Ernst Cassirer.* Evanston, Ill: Library of Living Philosophers, 381-400.

Leonard S S. (1971) Nixon's Program -'I Am Now a Keynesian'. *New York Times (1923-Current file).* New York, N.Y., 1.

115

Lippmann W. (1922) *Public Opinion,* New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company.

Lorde A. (2007) *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches,* Berkley: Crossing Press.

Marx K. (2002) Theses on Feuerbach. Available at:

      https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/

McGee M. (1980) The "Ideograph": A Link Between Rhetoric and Ideology. *Quarterly Journal*

      of Speech 66: 1-16.

McGee M. (2001) Ideograph. In: Sloane TO (ed) *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric.* New York; Oxford:

      Oxford University Press, 378-381.

McGee MC. (1983) Public Knowledge and Ideological Argumentation. *Communication*

      Monographs 50: 47-65.

McKerrow RE. (1989) Critical rhetoric: Theory and Praxis. *Communication Monographs* 56: 91-

      111.

Meeropol M. (1998) *Surrender: How the Clinton Administration Completed the Reagan*

      Revolution, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Mont Pelerin Society (1947) *Statement of Aims*. *Mont Pelerin Society*. Available at:

      https://www.montpelerin.org/montpelerin/mpsGoals.html.

Moore M. (1997) The Cigarette as Representational Ideograph in the Debate over Environmental

      Tobacco Smoke. *Communication Monographs* 64: 47-64.

Mullins D. (2013) Six Decades after Brown Ruling, US Schools Still Segregated. *Aljazeera*

      America. Available at: http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2013/9/25/56-years-after-

      littlerockusschoolssegregatedbyraceandclass.html

Nef J and Robles W. (2000) Globalization, Neoliberalism, and the State of Underdevelopment in

      the New Periphery. *Journal of Developing Societies (Brill Academic Publishers)* 16: 27.

116

Parry-Giles T. (1995) Ideology and Poetics in Public Issue Construction: Thatcherism, Civil Liberties, and "Terrorism" in Northern Ireland. *Communication Quarterly* 43: 182.

Peck J. (2004) Geography and Public Policy: Constructions of Neoliberalism. *Progress in Human Geography* 28: 392-405.

Peck J. (2008) Remaking Laissez-faire. *Progress in Human Geography* 32: 3-43.

Peck J and Tickell A. (2002) Neoliberalizing Space. *Antipode* 34: 380-404.

Peck J and Tickell A. (2003) Making Global rules: Globalization or Neoliberalization? In: Yeung HW-C (ed) *Remaking the global economy: economic-geographical perspectives.* London: SAGE, 163-181.

Peters M. (2001) *Poststructuralism, Marxism, and Neoliberalism: Between Theory and Politics,* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Plehwe D. (2009) Introduction. In: Mirowski P and Plehwe D (eds) *The road from Mont Pèlerin: the Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective*

Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1-44.

Pollin R. (2003) *Contours of Descent: U.S. Economic Fractures and the Landscape of Global Austerity,* New York; London: Verso.

Ramonet I. (1995) La pensée unique. *Le Monde Diplomatique* January, 1.

Reagan R. (1981) *Inaugural Address*. Available at: http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=43130.

Rowland RC and Jones JM. (2007) Recasting the American Dream and American Politics: Barack Obama's Keynote Address to the 2004 Democratic National Convention. *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 93: 425-448.

Sawyer M and Arestis P. (2004) Neoliberalism and the Third Way. In: Saad-Filho AJ, Deborah

(ed) *Neoliberalism : A Critical Reader.* London, GBR: Pluto Press, 177-183.

Singer R. (2010) Neoliberal Style, the American Re-Generation, and Ecological Jeremiad in
Thomas Friedman's "Code Green". *Environmental Communication* 4: 135-151.

Soederberg S. (2014) *Debtfare States and the Poverty Industry: Money, Discipline and the
Surplus Population*.

Stassen H and Bates B. (2010) Constructing Marriage: Exploring Marriage as an Ideograph.
Qualitative Research Reports in Communication 11: 1-5.

Stuckey M and Ritter J. (2007) George Bush, <Human Rights>, and American Democracy.
Presidential Studies Quarterly 37: 646-666.

Taibbi M. (2014) *The Divide: American Injustice in the Age of the Wealth Gap,* New York:
Spiegel & Grau.

Touraine A. (2001) *Beyond Neoliberalism,* Malden, MA; Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Valenzano JM, III. (2006) Freedom and Terror: President George W. Bush's Ideograph Use
During His First Term. Ann Arbor: Georgia State University, 287-287 p.

Vivian B. (2006) Neoliberal Epideictic: Rhetorical Form and Commemorative Politics on
September 11, 2002. *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 92: 1-26.

Weiler M. (1984) The Rhetoric of Neo-Liberalism. *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70: 362-378.