



**L-Università
ta' Malta**

Department of Philosophy

Faculty of Arts

Neoliberalism and the Production of New Forms of Being

François Charles Zammit

47682M

Principal Supervisor: Prof. Jean Paul De Lucca

Co-Supervisor: Prof. Dario Gentili

A thesis submitted in part fulfilment
of the requirements of the University of Malta
for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Philosophy

UREC Form No. 9569_25082021 (submitted for records)

May 2025



L-Università
ta' Malta

University of Malta Library – Electronic Thesis & Dissertations (ETD) Repository

The copyright of this thesis/dissertation belongs to the author. The author's rights in respect of this work are as defined by the Copyright Act (Chapter 415) of the Laws of Malta or as modified by any successive legislation.

Users may access this full-text thesis/dissertation and can make use of the information contained in accordance with the Copyright Act provided that the author must be properly acknowledged. Further distribution or reproduction in any format is prohibited without the prior permission of the copyright holder.

Acknowledgements

This long journey and this work would not have been possible without the help and support of so many people. This thesis results from the care and friendship of the community of people with whom I share my life.

I thank my principal supervisor, Prof. Jean Paul De Lucca, and co-supervisor Prof. Dario Gentili, who have always been there for me. They offered advice, support, and guidance throughout the process, from its inception until the end. I could always rely on them, and they helped with the thesis and provided opportunities for my professional and personal growth.

This whole project could not have happened without the love and patience of my fiancée and partner, Sharon Bezzina. She shared the losses and victories with me and always showed me that this dream could come true. Sharon is my biggest fan and my ultimate support structure. When things got hard, she made sure I got through.

I managed to juggle life, work, and research because of all the people there to back me and take care of things. I thank my parents, brothers, and sister-in-law for their help and encouragement, and the photos and videos of my niece, who always makes me smile and cheers me up. I know this means as much to my parents as it does to me. Gratitude goes out to my partner's family, the Bezzina. My father-in-law, mother-in-law, brothers, and sister-in-law, as well as their spouses and families, were there throughout the journey to help and support, encouraging me to keep at it.

The Department of Philosophy at the University of Malta was my alma mater and a place I could call home. Coffee and conferences apart, it provided me with opportunities to learn and progress. As a doctoral student, I was entrusted with the opportunity and responsibility of lecturing and given platforms to showcase my work. For this reason, I also want to thank the editors of the edition of *Analecta Romana Instituti Danici*, titled, *Religion and Economy: Historical, Contemporary, and Philosophical Perspectives* and the special edition of *Melita Theologica*, titled, *At the Crossroads of Philosophy and Theology*. These two publications will feature papers I authored that contain parts of my research and work from this thesis, namely from chapter two. The first paper is titled "Hayek's Market Order as Hidden God and Leviathan," and the second is titled "The Secularised Theology of the Market."

Finally, I want to thank my place of work, MATSEC, and the University of Malta for providing me with the necessary resources and accommodation to help me achieve this goal. Course fees were waived, and I was provided with study leave, allowing me to find a balance between my work and my studies. I therefore take the opportunity to thank Mr Dario Pirotta, my director, who was supportive and understanding, allowing me not to miss out on any opportunities or deadlines.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	i
Table of Contents.....	ii
Abstract.....	iv
General Introduction	1
Chapter 1: Conceptualising Neoliberalism.....	9
1.1 Defining Neoliberalism.....	9
1.2 Tracing Neoliberalism.....	11
1.2.1 Neoliberalism and Authoritarianism	15
1.3 The Neoliberal Faith	30
1.3.1 Economic Theology	31
1.3.2 The Law of the Free Market.....	36
1.3.4 Commodification	38
1.3.5 Money.....	39
Chapter 2: The Theological Dimension of Neoliberalism	45
2.1 Introduction.....	45
2.2 Theological Dimension.....	46
2.3 Market Order as Spontaneous Order.....	49
2.4 The Market Order replacing the Political Order	54
2.5 Providential Design	57
2.6 The Problem of Evil.....	59
2.7 Epistemological Gap.....	62
2.8 Deus Absconditus and Providence	64
2.9 Leviathan.....	68
2.10 Negative Political Theology	72
2.11 Conclusion	78
Chapter 3: Neoliberalism and Moral Discourse	82
3.1 Introduction.....	82
3.2 Economic Responsibility.....	84

3.3 Debt and Guilt	87
3.4 Moral Economy	95
3.5 Conclusion	98
Chapter 4: Neoliberal Government	100
4.1 Introduction.....	100
4.2 Oikonomia.....	102
4.3 Opus Dei	106
4.4 Homo Oeconomicus.....	108
4.5 Human Capital	116
4.6 Governmentality	127
4.7 Pastoral Power and the Providential Machine	133
4.8 Neoliberal Apparatus	138
4.9 Conclusion	146
Chapter 5: Pastoral Technologies.....	148
5.1 Introduction.....	148
5.2 The Californian Ideology.....	153
5.3 The Road to Salvation.....	157
5.4 Pastoral Power	161
5.5 Cybernetics	164
5.6 Cybernetics as Government	166
5.7 Pastoral Technologies	169
5.8 Neoliberal Forms of Being	176
5.9 The Neoliberal Cyborg.....	179
5.10 Conclusion	183
General Conclusion	185
Avenues for Future Research	193
Final remarks	194
Bibliography.....	197

Abstract

Neoliberalism is identified as the dominant paradigm in contemporary Western politics. The victory over Communism and the Soviet Union is attributed to this political vision that endorses the free market and hyper-capitalism as its main strengths. The political leaders who are viewed as the antithesis and enemies of Communism are staunch supporters and enforcers of the neoliberal worldview. Personages like Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan have brought neoliberalism into every household, rendering it the only viable alternative. This process achieved its full potential when even left-wing political pundits adopted neoliberalism as their political and economic strategy. Irrespective of the political spectrum, the main principles of the neoliberal model are advanced and utilised as the blueprint for their policymaking and for setting their agenda. Thus, progressive leaders like Barack Obama or right-wing leaders like Donald J. Trump both fall under the tent of neoliberalism. Irrespective of their social views, they both endorse a business-first approach, prioritising the economy over other considerations. This leads to the emergence of economic theology as the primary governmental paradigm, superseding the political.

Therefore, this fully encompassing reality has led me to ask, “How does neoliberal economic theology produce neoliberalised forms of life?” This inquiry emerges from the realisation that contemporary society and life are shaped and defined by neoliberal principles that have become the essence of our zeitgeist. Every individual has been transformed into a neoliberal subject whose purpose is to advance the economy and follow the dictates of the market. Human relations are reduced to trade and competitive relations, and the sense of self is founded on our position in the competitive order and the human capital we have attained. Thus, under neoliberalism, new forms of life are created.

These considerations lead to the claim that neoliberalism has the same reality-forming quality found in religions and their theological framework. The market is a fundamental principle upon which all else is founded, effectively making it a theological or essentialist truth. This is most pronounced in Friedrich August Hayek, who declares the market as a spontaneous order not of human design and outside of human knowledge and control. Under this metaphysical guise, reality is reframed according to the workings of this principium.

New technologies, like other institutions, are designed to mirror and promulgate the principles of the market because they aim to reflect reality. With Hayek, the market is nature, and its mechanisms are natural laws. This intellectual scheme produces its understanding of life, thus producing forms of life that abide by these laws. This thesis proposes a reading of neoliberalism

as a worldview constituted of a secularised theology that produces a normative discourse that categorises humans and their actions. These discourses and conceptual schemas are imposed on the world via forms of dispositif and techniques aided by new technological developments. The conjunction of all these creates forms of power, namely pastoral power, which has jurisdiction and authority over life, leading towards producing neoliberal categories and forms of life. This claim is developed by closely reading Hayek's theories, presenting these as a monotheistic secularised theology. With slogans like "There is no alternative" and "The market knows best," no space is left for social and political visions that do not believe in this new theology.

General Introduction

Political activists, theorists, and critics ascribe a diversity of qualities, characteristics, and phenomena to neoliberalism. This loose definition makes it challenging to discuss neoliberalism in a coherent and cogent manner. There is also the risk of confounding what neoliberalism truly is with perceptions of what it is. This leads to the difficulty that the term risks being mired in uncertainty, transforming it into a meaningless concept and an empty signifier.¹ This is further exacerbated by the lack of uniformity in the theoretical standpoints proposed by its advocates. Therefore, the initial aim of this research is to identify the core principles defining neoliberalism.

The common characteristics identified in this thesis are the following: neoliberalism prioritises the economy over other considerations, implying that politics serves the economy instead of the opposite; freedom is redefined as economic freedom; individual rights are reframed as property rights, and the free market is the primary governing institution. This set of principles justifies the adoption and implementation of processes of deregulation and privatisation, and an opposition to forms of distributive justice. State regulation and the redistribution of wealth via taxation and the welfare state are considered a breach of individual freedom and property rights.

Irrespective of the differences in the theoretical or practical positioning of the various figures of neoliberal thinking, they all maintain the abovementioned principles. These tenets stem from the foremost position that unifies all neoliberal thinking, which is the dominance of the market. This thesis will explore this domineering paradigm and examine it as a form of theological and metaphysical posturing that serves as the foundation for neoliberal policymaking.

In light of these considerations, this research will be based on the neoliberal theories of Friedrich August Hayek. This key figure will provide the lynchpin for the claims and hypotheses developed in this work. This is based on careful considerations extrapolated from an in-depth analysis of Hayek's writing and theories. Foremost among these considerations is his formulation of the market as a *catallaxy*, which positions the market as an entity beyond human knowledge and control. Unlike the exponents of Ordoliberalism, Hayek did not want the state to direct economic life or take control of the market, even to maintain competition and the free market economy.^{2 3}

¹ Thomas Biebricher, *The Political Theory of Neoliberalism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018), 11.

² Sean Irving, "Limiting democracy and framing the economy: Hayek, Schmitt and Ordoliberalism", *History of European Ideas*, Vol.44, No.1, 113-127 (UK: Routledge, 2018), 123.

³ Thomas F. Remington, "Ordoliberalism Revisited", *Changing Societies & Personalities*, Vol. 6, No. 1, (2022), 15.

Hayek's conceptualisation of the market as a cosmology provides a way to understand the socio-economic phenomena we have experienced throughout the last decades, including the financial crises and the capture of policymaking by a market logic. Although after the 2008 and 2012 financial crises, many have decried the ills of the neoliberal model and its resulting inequalities and austerity, more than a decade later, the market economy and the neoliberalisation of public policy are still dominant. This can only be explained if the free market and its values are considered part of the nature of the world and humans themselves. Additionally, from a Hayekian perspective *Homo oeconomicus* is not a free minded, liberated, rational being but an economic agent who responds to market forces. This implies that humans are inherently part of a cosmos which they cannot evade or change, and that the ebbs and fluctuations of the system are merely part of its means to consolidate and reorganise itself and achieve homeostasis.

Quinn Slobodian argues that Hayek's evolutionary theories and his establishment of the market and competitive order as part of nature have formed the basis of contemporary neoliberalism, claiming that,⁴ "the appeal to nature was a central part of the neoliberal solution to a problem they faced in the decades after the Cold War."⁵ Thus, Hayek's cosmology is identified as a political rationality with his market logic explicitly imposed upon all spheres of life.⁶

Advancing from this theoretical groundwork, this research approaches neoliberal thought as an economic theology, placing it at a nexus between economic thought, political practice, and theological theory. Economic theology is central and provides the necessary conceptual structures and tools to explain neoliberalism in its heterogeneous iterations.

Giorgio Agamben provides this thesis with the necessary conceptual framework and terminology. Although Agamben does not address neoliberalism, focusing on capitalism instead, his work serves as a solid structure to build an analysis and critique of neoliberalism. This research explores and utilises Agamben's economic theological discussion and biopolitics to conceptualise and comprehend the phenomena surrounding neoliberalism. This thesis utilises Agamben's terminology to conceptualize neoliberalism as a religion with a theological structure.

Economic theology as a discourse also provides the tools to conceptualise the market order as a cosmology and part of the nature of things. The persistence and dominance of the market order, irrespective of its challenges and downturns, is only plausible and comprehensible if the market

⁴ Quinn Slobodian, *Hayek's Bastards: The Neoliberal Roots of the Populist Right*, (UK: Allen Lane, 2025).

⁵ Slobodian, *Hayek's Bastards*, 9.

⁶ Wendy, Brown. "American Nightmare: Neoliberalism, Neoconservatism, and De-Democratization", *Political Theory*, Vol. 34, No.6, (December, 2006), 693.

is conceived of as a providential plan. Under these auspices, the negative phenomena are merely steps designed towards achieving a general, benevolent outcome.

A theological discourse is a totalising view of the world; it provides for a conceptualisation of every aspect of reality within the terms and parameters that it establishes. This holistic view of reality redefines humans in new terms and ontological qualities, transforming them into economic entities whose lives must be lived according to the natural order of things, the market order. This leads to the creation and imposition of new value systems that reestablish new qualitative categories of human life.

In this manner, the market order is also a normative order that everyone must abide by. In this normative order, techniques and technologies of power are instituted to produce forms of regulation and government of the population. Hence, the theological and normative nature of the neoliberal order of things produces new iterations of pastoral power. Pastoral power and providential design are congruent because they both provide salvation to their participants, even if this comes at a hefty price.

The reformulation of the market as a normative order produces the conflation of economic and moral categories. This creates the possibility of redefining life in terms of capital. Life is established as a resource and reconceptualised in economic terms; thus, life is interpreted in the context of scarcity, enterprise, investment, return, and profitability. This economic discourse is applied to non-human and human life, leading to the commodification of life, effectively turning life forms into economic objects.

As a result of this premise, human life and the process of self-enterprise become a means of qualifying the value of one's life and thus reinforcing the notion of human capital. The quantification of this human capital determines the value of an individual, an organisation, or a state. This value establishes their position and potential in the competitive order. In Hayek's *catallaxy* and its evolutionary processes, competition is the key determinant of innovation and progress. This implies that all humans, as members of the market system, also exist in an ecosystem of constant competition.

Globally, states and organisations use their powers to establish apparatuses that promote and implement neoliberal policies. This transforms the state from a social body into a factory that produces resources, products, and capital, including human capital. Politics is de facto subservient to economics, creating a *realpolitik* in which economic needs dictate the policies and political decisions, instead of the contrary.

This research will attempt to determine how the neoliberal homo oeconomicus supplants classical ontological categories like zoon politikon. Furthermore, it will evaluate how the currency of human capital determines the differentiation between the diverse neoliberal forms of qualified life, showing how the competitive order established by the market shapes human life and its possibilities.

These contexts will be evaluated vis-à-vis the new realities that have arisen with the development of new digital technologies and the emergence of a cyberlibertarian ideology, which has come to dominate the new political arena. These are exemplified by prominent figures like Peter Thiel, who state that politics and democracy are incompatible with freedom and that only technology and the free market can provide true freedom.⁷ This position has become mainstream and achieved notoriety.

The main research question of this work is, “How does neoliberal economic theology produce neoliberalised forms of life?”

This thesis aims to evaluate the theological dimension of neoliberalism and show how this leads to the development of discourse and apparatuses that produce neoliberal subjectivity and forms of life. Therefore, the central argument of this work is that establishing a secularised theological discourse justifies the techniques and production of neoliberal life.

The structure of the thesis reflects this logic, with each chapter exploring a key aspect of its overall argument.

Chapter One offers a theoretical and genealogical exposition of neoliberalism as a concept and theoretical framework. It identifies the tenets of neoliberalism and illustrates their implications on a social and political level. This chapter outlines the neoliberal opposition towards mass democracy and the political drive to establish an autonomous market by implementing policies of reducing state intervention and the privatisation of national assets.

The first chapter also establishes the faith-driven nature of neoliberal theory by showing that its core principles act as articles of faith based on trust and blind faith as opposed to certainty and empirical factuality. Here, the free market and its elements are shown to be analogous to forms of religious thinking.

⁷ Peter Thiel, “Education of a Libertarian”, *Cato Unbound, A Journal of Debate*, April, 13, 2009, <https://www.cato-unbound.org/2009/04/13/peter-thiel/education-libertarian>.

Chapter Two reiterates and further expands on the theological dimension of neoliberalism by identifying and delving into the theological discourse that underscores neoliberal economic and political discourse. In this chapter, Hayek's formulation of the market as a spontaneous order is explored and re-evaluated as a secularised form of providential design. This chapter shows how Hayek's conception of the market is founded on theological notions and relies on the existence of a hidden God who acts through His invisible hand.

This chapter also argues that Hayek's disposition towards the idea of an unknowable market is a secularised conceptualisation of a *deus absconditus* that serves as the foundation for a form of negative political theology. This emphasises the distinction made by Hayek and Lipmann between a planned economy and the market as a spontaneous order.

A theological conceptual framework establishes a value system based on its worldview, leading to Chapter Three highlighting the infiltration of religious value judgments into neoliberal economic discourse, creating a new value system and moralistic outlook. In this guise, moral responsibility is equivalent to financial responsibility, with notions of guilt linked to economic status. Hence, notions of debt and sin are blended, producing a discourse of personal responsibility and liability.

The theological framework and the resulting normative systems produce forms of government of life. Neoliberalism relies on the role of the economy as management of the household, *oikonomia*, to implement its policies and impose them on everyone. In this section, Agamben's notions of *oikonomia* and *Opus Dei* are explored and applied in the context of neoliberal theory and policymaking. Chapter Four examines the role of the economy as a form of management and government of life. This chapter evaluates the techniques used to establish human life as a form of neoliberal life.

Chapter Five contextualises the premises and arguments presented in the previous chapters in the reality of a digitally mediated world. This chapter aims to show how Hayek's theory of cybernetics is materialised through the spread and application of new technologies. These technologies serve as data collection and are utilised to programme human lives according to the values and norms of the market order. Michel Foucault's work on pastoral power is recontextualised in the light of new technologies, showing how these are used as a means of neoliberal subjectification. Through pastoral power, human life is redefined in terms of market principles such as efficiency and productivity, and the role of these technologies is to produce self-monitoring capacities that allow every individual to control and regulate themselves according to these principles.

After carefully considering all these aspects, this research argues that neoliberalism's success is attributable to its design as a plan of salvation. This is made possible by the providential design of the market as a spontaneous order, which is supported by forms of guidance and self-regulation via pastoral power. A narrative of self-enterprise and individual success emerges, developing an eschatological account of salvation and damnation. Those who succeed achieve the good life, and those who fail at the game of the market are condemned to live a precarious existence.

Nowadays, commentators like Jennifer M. Harris⁸ or Johannes Späth⁹ argue that contemporary politics, most notably under the current Trump administration, has moved away from neoliberalism and a global free market. This has led to authors declaring the emergence of a new 'post-neoliberal' period in history, resulting from the emergence of trading blocs, changes in trade policies such as the introduction of tariffs, and stronger borders. These policies have shown an increase in state intervention and diminishing trust in the markets. This is interpreted as the emergence of a new political paradigm and narrative.¹⁰

Although these declarations run counter to the claims made by this research, especially the market interventionism displayed by various governments, with the most notable being the United States administration, I still maintain that neoliberalism remains the dominant paradigm and that policymakers are still working under its influence and dogmas. I also maintain that the policies and proposals emerging from the Trump administration confirm the transition from political to economic thinking, thus making economic theology the dominant paradigm of government.

Irrespective of the attitudes and policies adopted concerning the global market, a neoliberal perspective still shapes and maintains socio-economic policies. This is most evident in the dismantling and removal of public funding for social and welfare initiatives, which the American and British administrations are both enacting. These decisions mirror Hayek's thinking, who refers to social justice as a mirage, arguing that "the whole conception of social or distributive justice is empty and meaningless."¹¹ He argues that a market economy and social justice are

⁸ Jennifer M. Harris, "The Post-Neoliberal Imperative, Contesting the Next Economic Paradigm", *Foreign Affairs*, May/June issue (2025).

⁹ Johannes, Späth. *Trend Report 10: The End of an Era, The Decline of Neoliberalism and the Emerging Interregnum* (Vienna, Austrian Institute for International Affairs, 2025).

¹⁰ Harris, "The Post-Neoliberal Imperative".

¹¹ Friedrich August, Hayek. *Economic Freedom*. (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 388.

incompatible concepts; no one can or should determine “who gets what” in a market of unknown circumstances and outcomes.¹²

These newly enacted policies are informed by a normative view that every individual is responsible and accountable for their decisions, and that it is not the state's role to intervene to help. Therefore, the aim is to reinstate “the justice of individual action,” which was replaced by social justice, which is deemed discriminatory because it must “assure benefits to particular people or groups.”¹³ It is the responsibility of the individual, not of society, to improve their life conditions, and any state intervention is considered an infringement on individual freedom and a form of coercion.¹⁴ Any form of preferential treatment “on the pretext of a pretended principle of social justice” is illegitimate.¹⁵

Furthermore, for Hayek, the government is not obligated to satisfy the needs or desires of individuals or groups threatened by market changes or competitive forces.¹⁶ Therefore, the decisions made by contemporary governments are considered and marketed as cost-cutting exercises to increase efficiency and accountability, which increases competitiveness. This vision dominates contemporary politics and has been aptly represented by the image of the chainsaw wielded by figures like Javier Milei and Elon Musk. This chainsaw represents the drive towards reducing the role and functions of the state; a smaller state is the prerogative of neoliberalism.

Imposing tariffs and trade restrictions does not challenge the notion of the free market per se. If anything, these measures further confirm the existence and dominance of the competitive order as the primary driver of policymaking. The Trump administration enacted tariffs and restrictions to readjust the system. These are in response to the perception that other players, like China, are not playing by the free market rules. Therefore, these new policies are not challenging the free market economy but aim to strengthen it and ensure its mechanisms are abided by.

More critically, the discourse and narrative adopted by the Trump administration confirm the claim made in this research that economic theology has come to dominate the present political vision. Geopolitical considerations are not determined by transcendental principles but by immanent ones. Donald J. Trump approaches international relations as a commercial or business deal, implying that the values informing his decisions and policies are economic. Economic theology naturalises the market and competitive order to such a degree that it not only permeates

¹² Hayek, *Economic Freedom*, 388.

¹³ Hayek, *Economic Freedom*, 388.

¹⁴ Hayek, *Economic Freedom*, 388.

¹⁵ Hayek, *Economic Freedom*, 388.

¹⁶ Hayek, *Economic Freedom*, 389-340.

every person's life but also becomes the dominant paradigm guiding international relations. Trump's proposal to annex Greenland is not based on political values, but on economic values. This is also evident in the approach taken by Trump to provide Ukraine with military aid in exchange for access to Ukraine's natural resources. This implies that alliances are not formed out of shared values or shared political visions, but are reduced to economic transactions.

This political scenario does not challenge a neoliberal worldview but further accentuates how the market and competitive order have taken over all other political values and considerations. Additionally, Trump's anti-democratic stances and decisions do not invalidate his adherence to a neoliberal vision. As discussed in the first chapter, authoritarianism and neoliberalism coexist and are compatible, further showing that the claims of this thesis are relevant to current political developments.

Chapter 1: Conceptualising Neoliberalism

1.1 Defining Neoliberalism

Contemporary political and social thinkers identify neoliberalism as a prime mover and shaker in the globalised world. Authors like William Davies¹ and Adam Kotsko² argue that neoliberalism is the economic and political paradigm that has come to dominate western politics for the past four decades. Although the origins of neoliberal thought are traced to the 1920s and continuously developed into the 1970s, it is only in the early 1980s with the elections of Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom and Ronald Reagan in the United States of America, as leaders of their respective nations, that there was a full transition towards a neoliberal system of governance.³ Kotsko argues that this surge was a reaction to the breakdown of the post-war Fordist economic system that promised a shared prosperity through high wages and good working conditions for workers and employees. The Fordist economic model relied on the positive working conditions to be the very catalyst for flow and circulation of capital.⁴

The election of political proponents of neoliberal policies was a reaction to the economic downturn of the mid-1970s. Neoliberal politics and measures were viewed as a viable response to tackle the economic crisis. Trade unions and other leftist groups advocated for a Keynesian approach that required state intervention or a socialist approach through investment in the welfare state. However, politicians like Thatcher and Reagan wanted to employ a radicalised capitalist economic model. Their approach was to be the antithesis of the ‘failing’ socialist models. This development and the rise of a neoliberal political class turned the disparate theories which were arbitrarily labelled as neoliberal⁵ and made them into an identifiable set of political values.

From a theoretical perspective neoliberal thought ranges from forms of “anarcho-liberalism”, arguing for a complete laissez-faire, and the abolishment of all government [to] “classical liberalism”, demanding a government with functions exceeding those of the so-called “night-

¹ William Davies, “The New Neoliberalism”, *New Left Review* 101, (Sept/Oct 2016), 121-134.

² Adam Kotsko, *Neoliberalism's Demons. On the Political Theology of Late Capital*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018), 5.

³ William Davies, *The Limits of Neoliberalism, Authority, Sovereignty and the Logic of Competition*, (London: Sage Publications, 2017) 4-5.

Kotsko, *Neoliberalism's Demons*, 5.

Davies, “The New Neoliberalism”, 124-126.

⁴ Kotsko, *Neoliberalism's Demons*, 5.

⁵ Davies, *The Limits of Neoliberalism*, 5.

watchman state.”⁶ However, although there is such diversity from a political standpoint, there are common guiding values and common policies that can be broadly identified as neoliberal:

1. Neoliberalism is not based or founded on political or social values but on economic vision. As Davies states, it is “an attempt to replace political judgment with economic evaluation”⁷ and David Harvey defines it as “a theory of political economic practices.”⁸ Neoliberal administrations are committed to “the explicitness and transparency of quantitative, economic indicators, of which the market price system is the model.”⁹
2. The guiding principle of neoliberalism is freedom; however, this freedom is interpreted in terms of the free market. Harvey states that, in neoliberal circles, “human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutionalised framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade.”¹⁰ Wendy Brown reiterates that neoliberalism is about “enacting an ensemble of economic policies in accord with its root principle of affirming free markets.”¹¹
3. To fully implement the free market model, neoliberal programs employ two strategies: deregulation and privatisation: “State intervention in markets must be kept to a bare minimum,”¹² the state must eliminate all forms of price controls, protectionism, or tariffs. Furthermore, the state is to create, “markets where none had previously existed, as in the privatisation of education and other public services.”¹³ Additionally, Brown argues that neoliberal administrations increase the possibility of new markets and new flows of income through “privatised and outsourced public goods, ranging from education, parks, postal services, roads, and social welfare to prisons and militaries.”¹⁴
4. To enact the fundamental principles of individual freedom and strong property rights, the state is expected to relinquish its social duties and social roles. The maximisation of individual freedom implies that everyone is expected to manage and administer their own selves in such a way that “we are encouraged to think of our reputation as a “brand,” for

⁶ Anna-Maria Blomgren, *Nyliberal politisk filosofi. En kritisk analys av Milton Friedman, Robert Nozick och F. A. Hayek*, (Nora: Bokförlaget Nya Doxa, 1997), quoted in Dag Einar Thorsen and Amund Lie, *What is Neoliberalism?* (Oslo: University of Oslo), 12.

⁷ Davies, *The Limits of Neoliberalism*, 5.

⁸ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007), 2.

⁹ Davies, *The Limits of Neoliberalism*, 6.

¹⁰ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 2.

¹¹ Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos. Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (Brooklyn, New York: Zone Books, 2015), 28.

¹² Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 2.

¹³ Kotsko, *Neoliberalism's Demons*, 5.

¹⁴ Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 28.

instance, or our social contracts as fodder for “networking”;¹⁵ irrespective of the negative consequences that this can have for some. Strong property rights imply that the state has no right to redistribute wealth through taxation and this means “an end of wealth redistribution as an economic or social-political policy.”¹⁶ This leads to a general “withdrawal of the state from many areas of social provision.”¹⁷

Over the years, a multiplicity of events and decisions have been attributed to neoliberalism, but these are the main elements that can be found in the policies and practices that have dominated the political and social discourse of the last decades. A fundamental strength of neoliberalism is its plurality. This allows it to survive in the context of different conditions and to avert the effects of repeated crises.

1.2 Tracing Neoliberalism

The major challenge of understanding neoliberal thought is a pervasive inability to ground it within a concrete framework. Although neoliberal policies are prevalent globally, these do not follow a set blueprint that is easily identifiable and therefore, as William Davies suggests, “it is frequently suggested that the term ‘neoliberalism’ refers to too many heterogeneous or contradictory policy dynamics, and is therefore useless.”¹⁸ This state of affairs makes the ability to offer an objective and critical analysis of neoliberalism’s precepts and structures problematic.

Neoliberal thought has taken many iterations and nuances, making the use of the term heavily reliant on the subjective use of those who use or refer to it. Kotsko argues that ‘Neoliberalism loves to hide [and that] one can never assume that the educated public is already acquainted with it.’¹⁹ Similarly, Brown, states that ‘neoliberalism has no fixed or settled coordinates’ [and is] ‘a loose and shifting signifier.’²⁰ Furthermore, Davies argues that ‘the internal inconsistency of the concept may encapsulate something real about the system it purports to capture.’²¹ Within these terms, neoliberalism takes the form of some occult, quasi-mystical force that can only be perceived through its effects but not as a concrete and tangible entity.

Authors and critics find themselves in a precarious situation whereby they can only direct their critiques towards perceivable phenomena and consequences without having the ability to

¹⁵ Kotsko, *Neoliberalism’s Demons*, 6.

¹⁶ Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 28.

¹⁷ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 3.

¹⁸ Davies, “The New Neoliberalism”, 123.

¹⁹ Kotsko, *Neoliberalism’s Demons*, 11.

²⁰ Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 20.

²¹ Davies, “The New Neoliberalism,” 123.

identify the source or root cause leading to these. What this scenario creates is the quasi-impossibility for the critique of the underlying system of thought; effectually reducing the possibility of critique to one restricted towards individual policies and not towards the structures that create and sustain them.

Deriving his arguments and terminology from Jacques Derrida, Mark Fisher argues that neoliberalism (or late capitalism²²) is a ghost that haunts the world we live in. According to him, “think of hauntology as *the agency of the virtual*, with the spectre understood not as anything supernatural, but as that which acts without (physically) existing.”²³

In developing further Derrida’s position, Fisher argues that everything that exists obtains some kind of individual form based on a series of absences that surround it, in the same way that – as Derrida argues – the term *différance* gains its meaning not just from its individual qualities but from its difference from other terms.²⁴ In *Neoliberalism and its Prospects*, Milton Friedman uses the same ploy. In proposing neoliberalism as a new economic model, accompanied by a political agenda (or lack of), he argues that neoliberalism is different “from both 19th century individualism and collectivism” and “would accept the nineteenth century liberal emphasis on the fundamental importance of the individual” and achieving this through “the goal of the competitive order.”²⁵ In its own way, the competitive order defined by Friedman is in itself a form of absences as opposed to positive entities. Similarly, Davies in his analysis of Hayek, argues that what neoliberalism proposes is an impersonal and anonymous mechanism, the market, which is directed by unconscious social forces.²⁶

Neoliberalism has a haunting quality to it, not only because of its pervasiveness but through its very own nature. As Fisher claims, “the late capitalist world, governed by the abstractions of

²² David Graeber defines late capitalism as ‘the new technological phase of capitalism’ which marks the rise of the post-industrial (post-Fordist) model. He derives this definition from the work of Ernest Mandel and Frederic Jameson. (David Graeber, “Of Flying Cars and the Declining Rate of Profit”, *The Baffler*, March, 2012, <https://thebaffler.com/salvos/of-flying-cars-and-the-declining-rate-of-profit>) Frances Fox Piven identifies neoliberalism with the hyper-capitalism dominating the current post-industrial economic paradigm. Therefore, neoliberalism may be also be identified with the concept of late capitalism. (Frances Fox Piven, “*Neoliberalism and The Welfare State*,” *Journal of International and Comparative Social Policy*, Vol. 31 no.1 (2015) 2-9)

²³ Mark Fisher, *Ghost of My Life. Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures* (Hampshire, UK: Zero Books, 2014), 18. Italics used in the original.

²⁴ Fisher, *Ghost of My Life. Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures*, 17-18.

²⁵ Milton Friedman, *Neoliberalism and its Prospect* (USA: Farmand, 1951), 3.

²⁶ William Davies, *The Limits of Neoliberalism. Authority, Sovereignty and the Logic of Competition*. (London: Sage Publications, 2016), 3-5.

finance, is very clearly a world in which virtualities are effective,”²⁷ and therefore the efficacy and potency of neoliberalism lies in its spectral nature.

A disembodied entity not only can pervade every space, but can also morph into varying shapes and forms thus allowing it to evolve and mutate so as to exist in the most disparate ecosystems. In evolutionary terms, neoliberalism was more successful than other systems because it succeeds to adapt well to the different conditions that it has encountered. As Brown argues, “Sweden with the legitimacy of welfarism, in South Africa with a post-Apartheid expectation of democratising and redistributive state, in China with Confucianism, post-Maoism, and capitalism, in the United States with a strange brew of long-established antistatism and new managerialism.”²⁸ In the same vein Harvey reiterates that, “Almost all states, from those newly minted after the collapse of the Soviet Union to old-style social democracies and welfare states,..., have embraced, sometimes voluntarily and in other instances in response to coercive pressures, some version of the neoliberal theory and adjusted at least some policies and practices accordingly.”²⁹ Therefore, neoliberalism should be read as the dominant paradigm that has emerged in a post-Fordist, post-Cold War world era. The possible ‘End of History’³⁰, is not marked by the success of liberal democracies over authoritarian regimes but by all political systems adopting neoliberal structures to replace all other socio-economic models.

Francis Fukuyama’s 1989 essay, *The End of History?* augured for a post-ideological world that would relish in the freedoms purported by the triumph of liberal democracy over totalitarian systems of government. Fukuyama adopts a Hegelian conceptualisation of history and argues that the events leading to the demise of the Soviet Union showed the historical realisation of the teleological progress towards achieving human freedom, which he equates with western liberal democracy. Fukuyama argues that this transition towards a universal adoption of liberal democratic systems is evident because even Communist China had been increasingly freeing up its markets since 1978.³¹

Fisher interprets this historical trajectory leading to the dominance of neoliberalism as the only viable system as a form of hauntology. He argues that this culmination of events has led to the loss of alternative forms of social imagination and created an inability to conceive of the world and its social realities outside of the realities or strictures of late capitalism. He argues that “it meant the acceptance of a situation...where politics was reduced to the administration of an

²⁷ Fisher, *Ghost of My Life. Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures*, 18.

²⁸ Brown, *Undoing the Demos. Neoliberalism’s Stealth Revolution*, 20.

²⁹ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 3.

³⁰ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (England: Penguin Books, 2012).

³¹ Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*

already established (capitalist) system.”³² Fisher further reiterates that Fukuyama’s ‘end of history’ is an affirmation of the closure of possibilities and potentialities of alternative futures.³³ The Hegelian nature of Fukuyama’s thought only allows for the emergence of one established future which is directed and controlled by late capitalism’s mode of thinking.

Fukuyama’s critics contend that in his claim the dominant political paradigm is not liberal democracy but liberalised market economies. Marika Rose³⁴ and Kotsko³⁵ both state that Fukuyama’s thesis is not a defence of liberal democracy but of neoliberalism. Joseph E. Stiglitz maintains that Fukuyama is a proponent of a “destiny of liberal democracy and market economies,” that, “reinforced the neoliberal economic doctrine that has prevailed for the last 40 years.”³⁶

In response, Fukuyama reiterates that this critique towards him is erroneous because it is based on a misinterpretation of his central claim. He argues that his work is an exploration of notions of modernisation and development and that ‘end’ is not an indication of a ‘termination’ but of an ‘objective’. His aim was to explore whether Marx’s or Hegel’s interpretation of progress was most adept at explaining the future possibilities of the world. Based on his analysis, he concluded that Hegel’s version of development, “a liberal state linked to a market economy, was the more plausible outcome.”³⁷ Fukuyama dismisses that he asserted that the market economy was the manifest destiny of the new world order.

Although Neil Smith accepts Fukuyama’s renouncement of his initial position, he maintains that Fukuyama’s assessment had “set the ideological mood for the last decades of the twentieth century.”³⁸ Similarly, Fisher argues that “The future is always experienced as a haunting: as a virtuality that already impinges on the present, conditioning expectations,”³⁹ therefore implying that Fukuyama’s end of history haunts the present through its projection of a future to come.

³² Mark Fisher, “What is Hauntology?”, *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 66, No.1 (California: University of California Press, 2012), 16.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Marika Rose, “After the Eschaton: *The Prince of This World* Book Event”, *An und für sich*, April 27, 2017, <https://itself.blog/2017/04/27/after-the-eschaton-the-prince-of-this-world-book-event>.

³⁵ Kotsko, *Neoliberalism’s Demons*, 97

³⁶ Joseph E. Stiglitz, “The End of Neoliberalism and the Rebirth of History” *Social Europe*, November 26, 2019, <https://www.socialeurope.eu/the-end-of-neoliberalism-and-the-rebirth-of-history>.

³⁷ Francis Fukuyama, *Identity, Contemporary Identity Politics and the Struggle for Recognition*, (London: Profile Books, 2018), xii.

³⁸ Neil Smith, “The Revolutionary Imperative”, *Antipode Vol.41 No. S1*, (New York: City University of New York, 2009), 51.

³⁹ Fisher, *What is Hauntology?*, 16.

What ultimately transpires from the debate on Fukuyama's essay is the fear that individual freedom, conceptualised in terms of political and social freedoms and the possibilities that they offer, is reconfigured and reduced to entrepreneurial freedom and consumer choice. Inasmuch what this creates is the possibility that civil rights are no longer the predominance of a democratic system of governance, but merely the possibility of free enterprise, which is unimpeded or unhindered by the state, even though this may eventually lead to further social inequalities. Rainer Mausfeld articulated this in 2015 when he argued that, "the fathers of neoliberalism...regard democracy only insofar as 'permissible' as the economy is protected from any implications from democratic decision making processes."⁴⁰ He also reiterates that what this leads to is towards the enactment not of a democracy that gives power to the people but the creation of a "spectator democracy"⁴¹. Furthermore, Lars Cornelissen, in his analysis of the debates organised by the Mont Pelerin Society⁴², argues that the members of this thinktank had serious misgivings about the role of democracy and the implementation of a free economy and over the years have tried to offer a way of reconciling the two. What resulted is that the only possibility for these to coexist is to have a democratic process with limited influence on policy making and arguing for "the imposition of constitutional limits on popular power; a proposal that often amounted to an attempt radically to circumscribe citizens' influence on the legislature."⁴³ What this uncovers is an inherent discord between democratic values and democratic processes and neoliberal political thought. This form of thinking leads towards the position that the successful implementation of neoliberal structures may happen through the exclusion of effective democracy.

1.2.1 Neoliberalism and Authoritarianism

This position is not only found in the theories of neoliberal thinkers, but also in their support of undemocratic regimes like Pinochet's regime in Chile (1973-1990). Economists and political thinkers like Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman have espoused the notion that a liberalised

⁴⁰ Rainer Mausfeld, translated by Daniel Wollschläger, "Why do the lambs remain silent? On democracy, psychology, and the ruling elite's methods for managing public opinion as well as public indignation." (22, June, 2015):5. <https://www.uni-kiel.de/psychologie/mausfeld>.

⁴¹ Mausfeld, "Why do the lambs remain silent?", 5.

⁴² The Mont Pelerin Society describes itself as "A group of economists, historians, philosophers, and other students of public affairs from Europe and the United States met at Mont Pelerin, Switzerland, from April 1st to 10th, 1947" who want to find solutions to the "danger in the expansion of government, not least in state welfare, in the power of trade unions and business monopoly, and in the continuing threat and reality of inflation." Info from their official website; <https://www.montpelerin.org/> (accessed 16/02/2020).

⁴³ Lars Cornelissen, "How can the people be restricted?": the Mont Pèlerin Society and the problem of democracy, 1947–1998," (2017) *History of European Ideas*, 43:5, 522.

market with a competitive order is more important than a democratic system that enacts and supports the civil rights of its citizens. In his 1981 interview with *El Mercurio*, Hayek articulates his thoughts on how dictatorial regimes are preferable to democratic systems of governance if these allow the installation of a liberalised market economy. He refers to this system as a ‘commissarial dictatorship’, which implies “that a strong state was needed to promote economic freedom and markets, and to neutralise the pathologies of democracy.”⁴⁴ In a similar vein later adopted by Fukuyama, the goal of winning against totalitarian ideologies is not to install democratic structures, but to enact free economy globally: “Democracy (a merely procedural rule) is ‘not an end in itself’ and ought not to rank ‘on a par with liberty.’”⁴⁵ Furthermore, Hayek states that the end goal of a political project is not the achievement of democracy and equality per se but the attainment of individual freedom and a liberalised market economy. This is arguably the basic premise that permeates the arguments and discussions that are presented in his work, *The Road to Serfdom*, where he argues that,

If “capitalism” means here a competitive system based on free disposal over private property, it is far more important to realise that only within this system is democracy possible. When it becomes dominated by a collectivist creed, democracy will inevitably destroy itself.⁴⁶

Therefore, to Hayek, a regime like the Chilean junta that enacts and implements liberal economic policies is more liberal than a democratically elected government that enacts programmes directing the economy towards the support of social justice or welfare programmes. Hayek’s interest in the Chilean project increased over the years, leading him to visit the country several times.⁴⁷ During his visits, he met Pinochet and members of the junta and was also made honorary chairman of the premarket organisation, the Centre of Public Studies of Chile.⁴⁸ In 1982, he even wrote to Margaret Thatcher to follow in Chile’s footsteps and adopt the same policies.⁴⁹

As Hayek further explains, he would “prefer to sacrifice democracy temporarily, I repeat temporarily, rather than have to do without liberty, even if only for a while.”⁵⁰ As Dario Gentili also points out, Hayek’s support of Pinochet’s regime stems from Chile being the first state to adopt

⁴⁴ Mitchell Dean, “Rethinking Neoliberalism,” *Journal of Sociology*, 50(2), (2014): 155.

⁴⁵ Andrew Farrant, Edward McPhail & Sebastian Berger, “Preventing the “Abuses” of Democracy: Hayek, the “Military Usurper” and Transitional Dictatorship in Chile?” *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 71(3), (2012), 122.

⁴⁶ Friedrich August Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 73.

⁴⁷ Sebastian Edwards, *The Chile Project: The Story of the Chicago Boys and the Downfall of Neoliberalism*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023), 35.

⁴⁸ Edwards, *The Chile Project*, 35.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Farrant, McPhail & Berger, *Preventing the “Abuses” of Democracy*, 122.

neoliberal policies as its political programme, and because of his declared preference for a liberal dictatorship instead of a democratic government that does not embrace liberal values⁵¹. As noted by Naomi Klein, “Friedman advised Pinochet to impose a rapid-fire transformation of the economy – tax cuts, freed trade, privatised services, cuts to social spending and deregulation.” This was later redefined as the “Chicago School” revolution⁵², where figures like Hayek and Friedman held tenure. Hayek reiterates that democracy and liberalism should not be equated, and that they can exist in opposition to each other; a democratic government can be totalitarian in its policies, whereas an authoritarian state can be liberal in its ideals.⁵³ He further argues that “The difference is best seen if we consider their opposites: the opposite of liberalism is totalitarianism, while the opposite of democracy is authoritarianism.”⁵⁴ It is therefore on this basis that Hayek has shown his support for authoritarian regimes under certain circumstances.

Authors like William E. Scheuerman have gone so far as to claim that Hayek’s theories have been shaped by Carl Schmitt’s political programme and his theorising for the legitimacy of a dictatorial system of government⁵⁵. However, Sean Irving, disagrees with this assessment and argues that Hayek’s position was not an adoption of Schmitt’s ideas but a further rejection of Schmitt’s decisionism and economic interventionism⁵⁶ and that his adoption of an “honourable’ dictator would act against the power of trade unions and socialists and establish a new limited form of democracy.”⁵⁷

It must be stated that Hayek criticises Schmitt for being “the leading Nazi theoretician of totalitarianism, and, in fact, the essence of the definition of totalitarianism⁵⁸”, which Hayek himself defines as the subjugation of the freedom of individuals and the removal of autonomous

⁵¹ Dario Gentili, *Crisi come arte di governo*, (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2018), 85.

⁵² Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine, The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (Great Britain: Penguin Books, 2008), 7.

⁵³ Friedrich August Hayek, *Studies in Philosophy, Politics and Economics*, quoted in F.R. Cristi, “Hayek and Schmitt on the Rule of Law” *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue canadienne de science politique*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Sep., 1984), 532. Friedrich August Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 73-74.

⁵⁴ Friedrich August Hayek, *Studies in Philosophy, Politics and Economics*, quoted in F.R. Cristi, “Hayek and Schmitt on the Rule of Law” *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue canadienne de science politique*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Sep., 1984), 532.

⁵⁵ William E. Scheuerman, *The End of Law: Carl Schmitt in the Twenty-First Century* (London, UK: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2019). In this book he dedicates a whole chapter to an analysis of the link between Hayek’s work and that of Schmitt claiming, ‘The Unholy Alliance of Carl Schmitt and Friedrich A. Hayek’.

⁵⁶ Sean Irving “Limiting democracy and framing the economy: Hayek, Schmitt and Ordoliberalism”, *History of European Ideas*, Vol.44, No.1, 113-127 (UK: Routledge, 2018), 115.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, 192.

spheres for the individual.⁵⁹ The compatibility of some of the conclusions of the two thinkers is not the result of Hayek's adoption of Schmitt's ideas, but the result of a comparable apprehension towards the consequences of the establishment of an unlimited democracy.

Hayek and Schmitt are both critical of the effects resulting from the dominance of unlimited or mass democracy. In their work they argue that unlimited democracy has the tendency and aim of removing the boundaries that maintain the distribution and separation of powers that ensure the proper functioning of the state and its institutions. Hayek and Schmitt, both argue that allowing all spheres of human activity to become subject to the masses will, only leads to the creation of a totalitarian state, what Schmitt calls, "the total state"⁶⁰ and Hayek refers to as "dictatorship of the proletariat".⁶¹ It is in the light of this that both authors also criticise and oppose socialism and left-wing political ideologies who strive for the institution of welfare systems and the redistribution of resources and political power for the benefit of the whole.

Schmitt states that modern political discourse removed the distinction between the state and civil society, thus creating a process whereby all decisions are taken in the interest of society instead of in the interest of the state. He argues that this has happened because the figure of a central authority separated from society has been removed through the adoption of democratic governments instead of sovereign authorities like monarchs. Thus, there may be instances in which decisions are taken and policies adopted driven by the electorate, or to assuage the interests of the people, which in the short or long run can harm the state.

When the decision-making process moves from the state to society, there is effectively a transfer of authority from one to the other, to such a degree that society becomes the ruler, and the state is nullified. F.R. Cristi argues that Schmitt terms this as a "new state", "a total state" which may be interpreted as a "totalitarian state". Cristi further states that "It is against this totalitarian state, and against the neutralized liberal democratic state that precedes it, that Schmitt advocates the total depoliticization of civil society concentration of political power in an authoritarian state."⁶² For Schmitt, the salvation of the state lies within the creation of an authority whose sovereignty does not lie within the confines of the popular vote and can therefore rule and administer as best suited to the state and its needs, not to the perceived needs of society.

⁵⁹ Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, 60.

⁶⁰ F.R. Cristi, "Hayek and Schmitt on the Rule of Law" *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue canadienne de science politique*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Canadian Political Science Association: Canada, 1984), 526.

⁶¹ Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, 74.

⁶² Cristi, *Hayek and Schmitt on the Rule of Law*, 527.

Hayek draws a similar conclusion, arguing that mass democracy can take the form of a totalitarian system because all decisions are made for the good of the majority, leading to policies that infringe the freedom and property rights of individuals to benefit the collective. He argues that “A true ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’, even if democratic in form, if it undertook centrally to direct the economic system, would probably destroy personal freedom as completely as any autocracy has ever done.”⁶³ For Hayek, mass democracy is a form of collectivism that is antithetical to the principles of liberalism and individual freedom, thus making it a form of totalitarian thought. He reiterates that laws should be in place to ensure that the economic sphere remains independent from politics which in the case of democracy is not driven by the good of the individual or the state, but by the good of the electorate. Thus, welfare systems and initiatives make the economy subservient to the needs of the majority, even if this implies the malfunctioning and dismemberment of that very economic system. For Hayek, this should never be allowed because this is an attack on the fundamental freedoms of individuals and creates a road to serfdom, whereby the individual must sacrifice himself and his labour for the collective. To this degree, he argues that “the individual would more than ever become a mere means, to be used by the authority in the service of such abstractions as the “social welfare” or the “good of the community”.”⁶⁴ Thus the support that Hayek shows towards authoritarian regimes is the result of his opposition to the possibility of the individual becoming the victim of the totalitarian powers of the masses.

Hayek supports the possibility of authoritarian regimes or transitional dictators, who use their political power to enact, institute and enforce a legal system that places the economic sphere, which also includes the freedom of the individual to enjoy and dispose as they will of their private property, outside of the legislative or decisionism of the government. This is the kind of regime that he refers to as commissarial dictatorship.

In his analysis of the historical development of dictatorship, Schmitt identifies the figure of the commissarial dictatorship, which heralds back to the Roman Republic.⁶⁵ During a time of crisis the Senate had the authority to install a chosen official to the role of dictator. This position was time-barred and was directly linked to the curtailing and resolving of a specific crisis, making this position a temporary one that was only utilised during exceptional times. Thus, Schmitt makes reference to this concept in terms of the possibility of having this role as a means of protecting

⁶³ Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, 74.

⁶⁴ Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, 100.

⁶⁵ Carl Schmitt, *Dictatorship* (Oxford, UK: Polity Press, 2013).

the constitution during times of civil strife or constitutional crisis. Thus, the role of the commissarial dictator is to restore order in times of revolution and disorder.

Werner Bonefeld⁶⁶ argues that Hayek adopts this notion of dictatorship as a means of ensuring that order and the market economy are protected.

A dictatorship that imposes limits on itself, and that thereby facilitates market freedom by curtailing democratic aspiration on a liberal basis, and that thus deregulates entrenched class relations in an attempt to achieve the ‘complete eradication of all orderlessness from markets and the elimination of private power from the economy’, is a dictatorship that ‘should be no cause for alarm’.⁶⁷

As Gentili⁶⁸ states, Hayek’s neoliberalism is based on the principle that there exists an evolutionary force that is guided by market order which he refers to as ‘cosmos’. Thus, for Hayek, the role of the state is to ensure that this market order and the evolutionary forces present in individual freedom to act is maintained at all costs. As previously mentioned, collectivist ideologies, notion of common good or notions of communitarian social justice are considered as forms of infringement on individual freedom and an affront and attack on the ‘cosmos’.⁶⁹ Therefore, for Hayek, the suspension or dissolution of democracy, and its replacement with a dictatorship is more than justified if this allows for the curtailing of the aspirations of the masses and the intrusion of society, or its political representatives, in the workings and mechanisms of the market economy.

Mitchell Dean argues that the political programmes promoted by Hayek and Friedman are reminiscent of the political theories developed during the 1930s and 1940s.⁷⁰ As antecedents of contemporary neoliberal thought, Dean quotes authors like Alexander von Rustow⁷¹ and Schmitt who declared, ‘Free Economy – Strong State’ and ‘Strong state and sound economy’⁷²

⁶⁶ Werner Bonefeld, “Democracy and Dictatorship: Means and Ends of the State” in *Critique*, Vol.34, No.3, 237-252 (Routledge, 2006), 243.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Gentili, *Crisi come arte di governo*, 81-82.

⁶⁹ The concepts of market order, individual freedom and cosmos will be further explored and developed in other parts of this chapter.

⁷⁰ Dean, “Rethinking Neoliberalism”, 157

⁷¹ Although the term neoliberalism is closely associated with Friedman, it was Rustow, in 1938, who first coined the term.

⁷² Dean, “Rethinking Neoliberalism,” 154-155.

respectively. Dean⁷³, Landa⁷⁴, Hartwich⁷⁵ and Kotsko⁷⁶ among others, argue that the relationship of neoliberal thought to strong statesmanship can be found in the works of these German political thinkers who all vouched for a strong state to ensure stability and eliminate the uncertainties and tribulations that result from democratic rule and the demands of civil society.

In neoliberal thinking, there is ample possibility for the emergence and the necessity for the presence of a strong state. Both Gentili and Bonefeld argue that neoliberalism demands for a strong state as a means of controlling and opposing other social forces that are critical of its institutions and the market economy.⁷⁷ Gentili illustrates his argument by showing how the reaction towards the rise of new forms of populism was received with renewed demands for a strong authoritarian state and the presence of a strong charismatic leader.⁷⁸ Similarly, Bonefeld argues that neoliberalism requires for a strong interventionist state that enforces the free market and a liberalised economy, especially when there are popular calls for economic and social reforms.⁷⁹

Benjamin Noys⁸⁰ also identifies contemporary authors, like Nick Land, as adopting Hayek's or Fukuyama's position. These authors argue that the future of capitalism is to be found in the progress and developments of authoritarian regimes like the Chinese state, "The State-directed excesses of China, in its uncompromising developmental drive, become a *utopian* element."⁸¹ David Priestland argues that "China's hybrid of merchant and sage-technocrat is therefore unique."⁸² He argues that political power is controlled by the Communist Party, which has a monopoly on government appointments, policies and economic targets; however it has moved away from centralised governance and over the years has introduced a competitive model that is applied not only to private enterprises but also among the various districts and regions. Thus, the regional authorities are also part of a competitive order in which they outdo each other in pushing for economic growth and attracting foreign investment. Priestland states that "Wall Street banks

⁷³ Dean, "Rethinking Neoliberalism".

⁷⁴ Ishay Landa, *The Apprentice's Sorcerer, Liberal Tradition and Fascism* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012).

⁷⁵ Oliver Hartwich, *Neoliberalism: The Genesis of a Political Swearword* (New South Wales: The Centre for Independent Studies Limited, 2009).

⁷⁶ Kotsko, *Neoliberalism's Demons*.

⁷⁷ Gentili, *Crisi come arte di governo*, 84-85. Bonefeld, *Democracy and Dictatorship: Means and Ends of the State*, 242.

⁷⁸ Gentili, *Crisi come arte di governo*, 85 & 93.

⁷⁹ Bonefeld, *Democracy and Dictatorship: Means and Ends of the State*, 242.

⁸⁰ Benjamin Noys, *Malign Velocities, Accelerationism and Capitalism* (Winchester, UK and Washington, USA: Zero Books, 2014), 55-58.

⁸¹ Noys, *Malign Velocities, Accelerationism and Capitalism*, 57.

⁸² David Priestland, *Merchant, Soldier, Sage. A New History of Power* (London, UK: Penguin Books, 2013), 212.

were crucial in advising the Chinese on how to make their companies internationally competitive.”⁸³ China has implemented and successfully embodies the achievement of the competitive order that Friedman promoted in his formulation of the neoliberal agenda.

China uses the competitive order as a state apparatus both internally, in the way it runs the state making districts compete with each other for development projects or for attracting industry, and externally through its international relations, international investments and Chinese corporations competing on the international market. “

China has lent much of its surplus (via international banks) to underpaid Western consumers so they can buy Chinese exports, contributing to the dangerous build-up of Western debt. The Chinese Communists, therefore, were crucial allies of the Davos Man’s efforts to sustain the unequal, debt-fuelled capitalism of the neo-liberal era.⁸⁴

Branko Milanovic, refers to the Chinese model as ‘Political Capitalism’ which he defines as a state led form of capitalism whose intent is to maximise economic output and use economic growth to increase its role on the international political and economic arena⁸⁵. In December 2020, Agamben even declared that everything indicates that the Chinese-style of capitalism will come out the strongest and most successful. He argues that this form of capitalism unites the most inhumane aspects of capitalism with the most vicious style of state control by bringing together the alienation that exists between humans and unprecedented forms of social control.⁸⁶

In his writing, Agamben also uncovers the relationship between neoliberalism and nationalism. Whereas neoliberalism is mostly associated with the dissolution of borders and the rise of globalisation, its reliance on competition as a prime mover has flared a new sense of nationalism within the states that are fielded on this competitive field. Agamben also makes reference to the trade wars and trade disputes between the western bloc and the Asian bloc⁸⁷, which is exemplified by the newly imposed trade tariffs and the rhetoric used by the Trump administration over the years. However, this form of nationalism has been used very effectively by China to place itself on the international market economy. As Harvey discusses, “In China, the appeal to nationalist sentiment in the struggle to procure the state’s position in the global economy is

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Priestland, *Merchant, Soldier, Sage. A New History of Power*, 215.

⁸⁵ Branko Milanovic, “The Clash of Capitalisms. The Real Fight for the Global Economy’s Future.” *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 99, no.1 (January-February, 2020), 10-37.

⁸⁶ Giorgio Agamben, “Capitalismo comunista” in *Una Voce, Rubrica di Giorgio Agamben*, December, 15, 2020. <https://www.quodlibet.it/giorgio-agamben-capitalismo-comunista>.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

overt.”⁸⁸ This terse alliance between neoliberal economies and nationalistic sentiments, also uncovers how neoliberal administrations will use all forms of expedient to access a better position in the global market. After all, the only institution that is recognised as legitimate by the neoliberal system is the competitive market, making competitiveness the only legitimate measure for assessing the state.

Whereas some western thinkers are critical of this style of governance, others have adopted this authoritarian model of government based on competition and corporatism as their own political philosophy. The group who refers to themselves as Neoreaction, headlined by authors like Curtis Yarvin (who blogs and writes as Mencius Moldbug) or Nick Land. Furthermore, Neoreaction⁸⁹ reference Hayek’s work as one of the major influences towards the development of their thought and political objectives⁹⁰. Yarvin espouses an authoritarian understanding of the neoliberal programme, inasmuch that he states that democracy has failed as a system of governance⁹¹ and that states should be governed by an elite group of technocrats in a corporate style administration. Yarvin termed his style of political administration as ‘neocameralism’, whereby a select group of shareholders would replace the general public and they would wield the power to elect the leader of the state, who would in turn run the state like a CEO⁹². The structures that make neoliberalism successful as a system should be adopted by the state as a form of governance if it wants to be successful in the global market of politics and the economy. This corporate style of governance would instil stability and development in the state which would in turn allow the state to focus on succeeding against its adversaries and competitors, other states. As formulated by Yarvin:

To a neocameralist, a state is a business which owns a country. A state should be managed, like any other large business, by dividing logical ownership into negotiable shares, each of which yields a precise fraction of the state’s profit. (A well-run state is very profitable.) Each share has one vote, and the shareholders elect a board, which hires and fires managers.

⁸⁸ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 85.

⁸⁹ Also known as NRx or The Dark Enlightenment.

⁹⁰ Rosie Gray, “Behind the Internet’s Anti-Democracy Movement”, *The Atlantic*, February, 10, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/02/behind-the-internets-dark-anti-democracy-movement/516243/>.

⁹¹ Gray, *Behind the Internet’s Anti-Democracy Movement*. Ben Sixsmith, “Is this Mencius Moldbug’s moment?

The neoreactionary blogger has resurfaced with a new essay”, *The Spectator, USA*, September, 28, 2019, <https://spectator.us/mencius-moldbug-moment/>.

⁹² Sixsmith, *Is this Mencius Moldbug’s moment?*

This business's customers are its residents. A profitably-managed neocameralist state will, like any business, serve its customers efficiently and effectively. Misgovernment equals mismanagement.⁹³

In a series of essays, Yarvin justifies his critique of democracy by presenting arguments that highlight the role of civil society as a force of agitation that leads towards weakened governance and ineffective policy-making⁹⁴. To Yarvin, through its appropriation of institutions, civil society has the ability to make and force the implementation of all the wrong decisions without being accountable for their consequences. To him, the only solution is a strong, possibly repressive, state that ensures that civil society and its adherents- academia, the media, philanthropists and activists- are relegated from the political power to intervene against commerce, stability or security in defence of civil liberties and rights.

In his essay, *The Education of a Libertarian*, Peter Thiel argues that democracy and freedom are incompatible⁹⁵. As a libertarian, he identifies with the principles of 'authentic human freedom as a precondition for the highest good. I stand against confiscatory taxes, totalitarian collectives,⁹⁶ thus implying that for him the most important value in any society is freedom and that the state has no right to impose restrictions on this freedom. However, for him, the goal is that "the machinery of freedom... makes the world safe for capitalism."⁹⁷ Thiel's position is a reframing of Hayek's critique of social democracy, who argues that it "has in effect become democratism rather than liberalism and, demanding unlimited powers of the majority, has become essentially anti-liberal."⁹⁸ What this view illustrates is an argument towards defending economic freedom but critical political and civil freedom. Hayek, associates this latter kind of freedom to the "false" individualism represented by authors like Rousseau which according to Hayek, "this rationalistic individualism always tends to develop into the opposite of individualism, namely, socialism or collectivism."⁹⁹ These positions outline the principle of neoliberal political thought whereby the economy and the free market become the dominant task of the state to such a degree that the

⁹³ Nick Land, quoting Mencius Moldbug, "The Dark Enlightenment", *The Dark Enlightenment*, 2013, <https://www.thedarkenlightenment.com/the-dark-enlightenment-by-nick-land/>.

⁹⁴ Curtis Yarvin, "The Clear Pill, Part 1 of 5: The Four-Stroke Regime", *The American Mind*, September, 27, 2019, <https://americanmind.org/essays/the-clear-pill-part-1-of-5-the-four-stroke-regime/>.

⁹⁵ Peter Thiel, "Education of a Libertarian", *Cato Unbound, A Journal of Debate*, April, 13, 2009, <https://www.cato-unbound.org/2009/04/13/peter-thiel/education-libertarian>.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Hayek, *The Principles of a Liberal Social Order*, 1966

⁹⁹ Friedrich August Hayek, *Individualism and Economic Order* (Chicago, Illinois, US: Chicago University Press, 1948), 4.

guiding principle of governance should be economic growth and interests, while all other social aspects become subservient to the economic role of the state.

Karl Polanyi, in his book *The Great Transformation*, argues that the free market was never achieved through its natural emergence or out of the free will of the people but was the result of policies and laws enforced by the state onto the people. Free market economy was achieved through “not only an outburst of legislation repealing restrictive regulations, but also an enormous increase in the administrative functions of the state, which was now being endowed with a central bureaucracy.”¹⁰⁰ Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval, also identify the movements mentioned by Polanyi, removal of legal protections for social groups and the enactment of centralised bureaucracies to ensure that everyone is competitive¹⁰¹. In their work, they show that prominent figures like Herbert Spencer used all his political influence to push for the repeal of laws that protected the most vulnerable in society. He claimed that no one, including children should be precluded from the labour market and that the redistribution of goods and benefits was tantamount to coercion and a disincentive for people to contribute to society.¹⁰² The arguments formulated by Spencer have been predominant in all neoliberal thought and can also be found in other authors like Hayek and Friedman.

Dardot and Laval also pointedly show how the neoliberal state does not only relinquish itself of social responsibilities linked to welfare and social justice, but it plays the role of enforcer in terms of ensuring that the imposition and implementation of the free market on all aspects of life: “Neoliberal interventionism...first of all aims to create competitive situations supposed to benefit the ‘fittest’ and strongest, and to adapt individuals to competition.”¹⁰³ They also illustrate how the central paradigm of enforcing competitiveness among everyone, led the Thatcher administration towards centralising its administration and redistributing public services into independent agencies that were expected to adopt a private enterprise mentality by competing with each other, achieving the assigned targets and to actively respond to consumer needs. Over time this managerialism has become the predominant paradigm of public administration and is employed on a global scale both by national and supranational public institutions.¹⁰⁴ This mode of governance has placed public administration in a double bind, it is both the perpetrator and the

¹⁰⁰ Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation, The political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1944), 139.

¹⁰¹ Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval, *The New Way of the World: On Neoliberal Society* (London and New York: Verso, 2017)

¹⁰² Dardot and Laval, *The New Way of the World*, 28-30.

¹⁰³ Dardot and Laval, *The New Way of the World*, 229.

¹⁰⁴ See, Dardot and Laval, *The New Way of the World*, 229-231.

victim of the free market economy. This state of affairs reveals how the implementation of the free market is not a natural movement but the result of the continuous interventionism of the state; therefore, illustrating the relationship between liberal economics and the need for a strong state.

With reference to Polanyi's work, Kotsko adheres to the argument that the establishment of the self-regulating market and the enactment of market structures, were not the result of a spontaneous social or cultural change, but the forceful imposition upon communities by successive governments. This trajectory became even more prominent in the post-Fordist age and the primary concern of political institutions became more and more economic, either out of a disinterest in the social needs of their populations or due to the belief that social issues would be resolved through the success of the economy. As Kotsko argues,

governments became obsessed with fiscal solvency and monetary stability to the near exclusion of all other concerns, for instance, or of how powerful international financial institutions took on a de facto governance role that allowed them to dictate terms to all but the most powerful states.¹⁰⁵

Kotsko further reiterates how the introduction of neoliberal economic structures, both in the West and in other parts of the world has always been accompanied by state-led social changes, through legislation or policymaking, that eradicate pre-existing social norms and structures that may threaten the establishment and flourishing of a neoliberal economy¹⁰⁶. Davies reiterates that nowadays neoliberal states may claim the authority and the legitimacy of their policies and laws, only if they are imbued with economic claims and rationalities, which are justified by economic experts, thus making political authority subservient to economic authority in its need for legitimacy¹⁰⁷.

Agamben posits that political power needs to be understood in terms of two distinct but intertwined concepts: constitution and government.¹⁰⁸ Constitution represents the legitimacy and authority of the sovereign, whereas government represents the executive power, the governing of the state. In a certain sense it may be argued that capitalist economy becomes the sovereign force, the constitution, and the government is the executive power, therefore it is capitalist economy that gives the legitimacy to the enactment of laws and it is the role of the government to manage these laws for the benefit of the sovereign, capitalistic economy. However, Agamben also argues that in western political thought these two elements are often

¹⁰⁵ Kotsko, *Neoliberalism's Deomons*, 74.

¹⁰⁶ Kotsko, *Neoliberalism's Deomons*, 74-76.

¹⁰⁷ Davies, *The Limits of Neoliberalism*, 8.

¹⁰⁸ Agamben, Giorgio, "Introductory Note on the Concept of Democracy," in *Democracy In What State?*, edited by Amy Allen (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 1-5.

coupled together¹⁰⁹, and this explains how in contemporary politics there exists the possibility of having economic interests offering legitimacy to enacted laws and these lobbies also having seats of government, either directly or through proxies, and therefore executing and managing the state through these laws, thus effectively creating a form of totalitarian political structure.

This aspect of the neoliberal system and its foundation in the political thought of authors like Rustow and Schmitt emphasises an underlying totalitarian dimension that at face value seems antithetical to its core mission as an oppositional force to totalitarian ideologies like communism and fascism. However, this facet of neoliberal thought and structures is so predominant that Sheldon Wolin has termed it as ‘Inverted Totalitarianism’¹¹⁰. With reference to post-9/11 US governance, he argues that government and state institutions have become subordinate to economic and corporate interests. Wolin argues that representative institutions have moved towards representing these interest groups instead of the electorate. Through the threat of economic downturn and the risk of unemployment civil interests and rights have been rendered defenceless against the power of corporate lobbies. Even independent institutions like the courts are hijacked and act in the interest of these economic forces. Wolin, refers to this form of governance as an inverted totalitarianism, because unlike other totalitarian systems whereby all other power interests are subordinate to the political regime, in the USA the political regime is subordinate to corporate power, thus “it is corporate power, as the representative of the dynamic of capitalism and of the ever-expanding power made available by the integration of science and technology with the structure of capitalism, that produces the totalizing drive.”¹¹¹

Wolin’s argument is further reinforced by the outcome of the 2008 international financial crisis, which was a direct result of the unlimited and unhindered behaviour of the financial institutions, who were more interested in quick returns on their investments than ensuring a sustainable modus operandi. Private banks and investment bankers created a highly indebted and high-risk economic model that imploded. Although, there were reactions against these profiteering enterprises and general resistance towards the system that allowed it to happen, the neoliberal system has persisted and still enjoys widespread political support. Priestland argues that, since the 1970s, financiers and corporate lobbies have succeeded in penetrating most institutions, cultural and political, to such a degree that they can not only defend their position but to also

¹⁰⁹ Agamben, “Introductory Note on the Concept of Democracy,” 5.

¹¹⁰ Sheldon Wolin, “Inverted Totalitarianism, How the Bush regime is effecting the transformation to a fascist-like state”, *The Nation*, May, 1, 2003, <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/inverted-totalitarianism/>.

¹¹¹ Wolin, *Inverted Totalitarianism*.

influence and hedge the outcomes in their favour¹¹². Staying true to the notion of an inverted totalitarianism, financial lobbies and interest groups, “spent decades penetrating the political arena – especially in the United States, where money is so central to the political process – and his commitments to low taxes, privatisation and deficit reduction have become ideologically dominant.”¹¹³ Furthermore, Milanovic argues that, “in a modern democracy, the rich use their political contributions and the funding of or direct ownership of think tanks and media outlets to purchase economic policies that benefit them.”¹¹⁴

One may identify some key elements that are identifiable in the various forms of neoliberal thought; politically it promotes a limited but strong state whose role is to primarily create the necessary conditions for the success and growth of the free market; economically it pushes for the adoption of a liberalised and privatised system that disallows the intrusion and management of state players and civil society interests and socially it allows for the space for the amelioration of diverse social groups, as long as these adhere and abide to the hegemonic structures of the market economy. From a cultural position, neoliberalism takes a position of power through its control of the media and the cultural forces leading to two distinct but mutually related phenomena; culture must promote the core values of neoliberal thought, individual enterprise and subservience to economic needs which also leads to the commodification of culture, whereby culture becomes a product for consumption, that can be monetised and follows the same market rules as any other product. Furthermore, even technology is also reduced to an economic product that follows the same strictures as any other phenomena, it is either a means of production, both for material and immaterial products, or else it is a commodified product open for consumption.

The existence of these tenets lead towards the possibility of neoliberal systems to adapt and mould the socio-political environment of all social groups that live within these systems, and in turn to also mould the very nature and behaviour of those who have to thrive in this context. It may therefore be argued that neoliberal thought is more than merely an economic theory but constitutes a dominant system that has the ability to influence every aspect of human life (and even the natural world) through its totalising power and control. As Polanyi states, “every part of the globe, all its inhabitants and yet unborn generations, physical persons as well as huge fictitious bodies called corporations, were comprised in it.”¹¹⁵ He further emphasises the

¹¹² Priestland, *Merchant, Soldier*, Sage. *A New History of Power*, 246

¹¹³ Priestland, *Merchant, Soldier*, Sage. *A New History of Power*, 246

¹¹⁴ Milanovic, *The Clash of Capitalisms*, 16

¹¹⁵ Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 130.

totalising force of the market economy by showing how the essence and defining characteristics of the world were changed to suit this new model, with humanity becoming labour and nature becoming land, and both being made available for a price which are subject to the laws of supply and demand.¹¹⁶ Polanyi further argues that, “leaving the fate of soil and people to the market would be tantamount to annihilating them.”¹¹⁷

One may infer from these observations on neoliberal thought that there is an aporia which is intrinsic to the very system that they promote. In a certain sense they validate the possibility of having systems of governance that remove freedoms in the name of freedom, and more acutely they remove freedoms to impose freedom. This should not be read as a form of Newspeak, but as an intrinsic dimension of neoliberal thought. Although neoliberalism may take various guises and forms, making it ubiquitous to our age, in and of itself it fails to disavow itself of fundamental principles that lead it towards existing in the throes of inner contradictions that have become part of its core beliefs. Thus, in this very sense, neoliberal thought may be interpreted as the post-ideological ideology, an amorphous system that disdains the strictures of ideology however grasping at a set of core beliefs that redefine the reality that it inhabits and thrives in.

The need to redefine reality is inherent to neoliberal thought making it comparable to totalitarian forms of political thought. Although it may not portray itself in the same light and proposes a different self-image from that of totalitarian regimes, it still betrays several aspects which are not only similar but equivalent to what may be found in totalitarian political thought.

This premise may be further envisaged and reinforced by exploring and evaluating neoliberal and totalitarian thought through different forms of analysis or critique; historical, ideological and discursive. Put together these aspects can lead towards uncovering the structural relations between totalitarian political thought and neoliberal thought; and through these one may identify the biopolitical and political ontological nature of neoliberalism.

Hannah Arendt, in her work *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, argues that totalitarian systems purport to be the manifestation of the very sources of authority that govern the world and should be used as guiding force towards the improvement of humanity. Arendt states that “totalitarian rule...is more obedient to these suprahuman forces than any government ever was before, and that far from wielding its power in the interest of one man, it is quite prepared to sacrifice everybody’s vital immediate interests to the execution of what it assumes to be the law of History

¹¹⁶ Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 130-131.

¹¹⁷ Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 131.

or the law of Nature.”¹¹⁸ She further reiterates that, “Totalitarian policy claims to transform the human species into an active unfailing carrier of a law to which human beings otherwise would only passively and reluctantly be subjected.”¹¹⁹

What Arendt is alluding to is the manner in which totalitarian regimes justify their power, institutions and rule, by claiming legitimacy through a source of authority that is universal, absolute and beyond human. Totalitarian powers justify their position through political theology. They claim justification and validation in terms of their role as purveyors of the will of a higher power that has granted them authority. They act as representatives and enablers of an order of things that stems beyond human society. Neoliberal thought and policies make the same political claims identified by Arendt in her examination of totalitarianism: a suprahuman source of authority, the perpetration of law of nature and the function to change humanity. Furthermore, these characteristics give rise to a religious type of discourse which is also adopted by neoliberal narratives and theoretical frameworks.

1.3 The Neoliberal Faith

Neoliberal thinkers often justify their arguments by entrenching them in a system of thought whose premises are dogmatic and followed with a religious zeal. As mentioned before, neoliberalism vindicates its policies and actions using transcendental and absolutist claims about the laws that govern the cosmos. Thus, although neoliberalism is a secular system, it entails and makes use of a theological form of thinking, which makes neoliberal thought a form of political theology.

Like other types of theological systems, neoliberalism inherently believes in a principle or law that governs the cosmos and life itself, and that this very principle must be replicated in human affairs and institutions. This supreme law is identified as the law of the market and the competitive order. The competitive market is the principle that governs nature and humanity, and therefore should be followed and not replaced. Economic laws, like the law of supply and demand, explain the very fabric of reality, and these cannot be changed or defied, in the same way that Newton’s laws of motion cannot be rejected or defied.

The competitive market as fundamental law implies that every activity or object is determined by this law and its very existence is directed by it. The process of commodification implies that everything is potentially part of the market and has a place and status within this market. Through

¹¹⁸ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (UK: Penguin Classics, 2017), 606.

¹¹⁹ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 607.

commodification everything can be exchanged for the right price that is equivalent to its exchange value which is dictated by the laws of the free market.

However, for the market and exchange value to be sustained it requires some form of apparatus¹²⁰ that enforces these rules. This role is played by money whose role is to serve as numerical measurement of the exchange value and furthermore to act as a form of obligation that binds all stakeholders.

This section will be arguing that economic thinking is a form of theological thinking and that neoliberalism as a theological system is founded on three dogmatic principles:

1. The Law of the Free Market is the fundamental mechanism that determines how the world functions.
2. Commodification is the manifestation of the Laws of the Free Market. The value of activities, objects or beings is determined by the mechanisms of supply and demand. Commodification also shows that everything is inherently part of the market.
3. Money as currency, is the apparatus that allows commodification and the free market to function and be implemented.

1.3.1 Economic Theology

In his endeavour to recognise the authority of the state as a sovereign power, Schmitt argues that “all significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularised theological concepts.”¹²¹ He formulates the notion of political theology to argue that sovereignty must be expressed and conceptualised in theological terms, and in doing so the sovereign is recognised as the representation of God’s authority over the population. In his commentary on Schmitt, Saul Newman argues that, for Schmitt, sovereignty is “a sacred concept, made all the more sacred in the time of secularism.” Furthermore, “the sovereign is the redeemer and saviour of the people in a time of nihilism and political neutralisation, which is why at the same time it demands absolute obedience and sacrifice.”¹²²

Concurrently, Agamben argues that one can also extend this theological dimension to the economy. He claims that Schmitt’s politico-theological theory “extend[s] its validity well beyond

¹²⁰ Agamben uses the term ‘apparatus’ to refer to the Foucauldian concept of ‘dispositif’. In his analysis Agamben defines ‘apparatus’, as “a pure activity of governance devoid of any foundation in being.” Giorgio Agamben, “What is an Apparatus?” in *What is an Apparatus?* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 11.

¹²¹ Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 36.

¹²² Saul Newman, *Political Theology: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019), 2.

the boundaries of public law, extending up to the fundamental concept of the economy and the very idea of the reproductive life of human societies.”¹²³ Furthermore, Newman also states that economic theology “shares with political theology a claim to the sacred, to an absolute order of truth, to being an indispensable condition of our existence.”¹²⁴ Even more pertinent is the role of salvation and redemption with which contemporary economics is imbued, most notably during times of crisis. One may argue that genealogical investigation of *oikonomia* presented in *The Kingdom and the Glory*, is also an exploration into the history of salvation and how the two notions are often conceptually intertwined.

In recognising and investigating the theological dimension of economic thought, it may be surmised that economic discourse is not restricted to economic phenomena but is fully comprehensive of all aspects of human life. In his work, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, Agamben claims that Christian theology leads towards the development of two distinct but related political paradigms, political theology and economic theology. According to his position, all aspects of human life are therefore subjected to political institutions that are derived either from one or the other of these two paradigms. “Political philosophy and the modern theory of sovereignty derive from the first paradigm; modern biopolitics up to the current triumph of economy and government over every other aspect of social life derive from the second paradigm.”¹²⁵ Political theology has mandate over the *polis*, the state, whereas economic theology refers to the *oikos*, the household. The first paradigm is about the administration of the public sphere, whilst the second is about governance over the private sphere.

In his analysis of the process of transforming economic theory into fundamental laws of nature, Emanuele Alloa identifies the key difference between political theology and economic theology. He argues that this is formulated in terms of the difference between their processes. According to Alloa, political theology focuses on the problematisation of secularisation, and therefore on the issue of the relation to transcendence, whereas economic theology focuses on the process of naturalisation, thus focusing on the relation to immanence.¹²⁶ The concept presented here is that economic theology attempts to transform economic discourse in terms of natural

¹²³ Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa & Matteo Mandarini. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2011), 3.

¹²⁴ Newman, *Political Theology*, 131.

¹²⁵ Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 1.

¹²⁶ Transcendence refers to the concept of the divine as working outside of the material world. Immanence refers to the concept of divinity as working within and through the material world.

processes, to show that just like nature is God's creation, economic forces like the competitive order are also His creation.¹²⁷

Robert H. Nelson, like Graeber, also asserts that the Enlightenment and the development of the scientific method, ushered in a scientific paradigm which was not only applicable to the physical world but also to the social world, thus economics became the new science of how to save mankind from starvation and deprivation. According to Nelson, economists became the 'new priesthood' who with their new discoveries and knowledge "could be seen as part of God's grand design for the world."¹²⁸ This sacred self-representation is the result of economics as a theology of immanence, or how God works through the material world to achieve his plan of salvation. This implies that all parts of the material world, are cogs in this Deus ex Machina, leading towards making every human individual a subject and object of this plan. As Newman argues, neoliberalism "as a theology of immanence, works more at the level of individual behaviours and practices than at the formal ideological level."¹²⁹

In *Capitalism as Religion*, Walter Benjamin also recognises that "capitalism serves essentially to allay the same anxieties, torments, and disturbances to which the so-called religions offered answers."¹³⁰ His reading of capitalism confirms the Schmittian dimension of the sovereign as saviour and redeemer. By extension it may be argued that it is this form of thought that leads neoliberal thinkers towards arguing for a strong limited state that is governed by economic forces, because to them the roles of saviour and supreme authority are taken up by the free market and the role of the state is to execute the decisions of the free market. Benjamin even states that, "The Christianity of the Reformation period did not favour the growth of capitalism; instead it transformed itself into capitalism."¹³¹ This implies that the theological concepts intrinsic to Christianity were transformed into becoming the concepts informing and validating capitalist and later neoliberal thought.

In his analysis of economic theology as a concept, Dean identifies the Greek word *oikonomia* as the point of origin for the theoretical framework of economic theology.¹³² The use of etymology as

¹²⁷ Emanuele Alloa, 'Suum Cuique, Capitalismo, Cibernetica, Teologia' in *Teologie e Politica, Genealogie e Attualità*, ed. Elettra Stimili (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2019), 88.

¹²⁸ Robert H. Nelson, *Economics as Religion, from Samuelson to Chicago and Beyond* (University Park, USA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014), 228-229.

¹²⁹ Newman, *Political Theology*, 135.

¹³⁰ Walter Benjamin, "Capitalism as Religion," in *Walter Benjamin, Selected Writings, Volume 1, 1913-1926* ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, translated by Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, England: Harvard University Press, 1996), 288.

¹³¹ Benjamin, *Capitalism as Religion*, 290.

¹³² Mitchell Dean, *What is Economic Theology? A New Governmental-Political Paradigm?*, *Theory, Culture & Society* 1-24 (2018), 2.

the initial step towards an analysis of economic thought is found authors like Agamben¹³³, Foucault¹³⁴ and Petrosino¹³⁵ who, making a direct reference to Aristotle, define *oikonomia* as the management or administration of the household. The word itself is a composite of the Greek terms, *oikos*, meaning household and *nomos*, which means amongst other things, to administer, to manage or to govern.

In his reflection on the term, Silvano Petrosino places an emphasis on the notion of *nomos*, whereby he argues that the concept of administration or management should be read as a form of division or splitting. By referencing the work of the French linguist Émile Benveniste, Petrosino states that *nomos* is about the legally bound and legally justified division of resources. Petrosino further argues that this division of resources is required because of the finite and limited nature of these resources and the finite nature of human life. He therefore states that humanity's awareness of its own limits and mortality, as opposed to God's infinity and eternity, forces humans to devise and use legal and rational instruments to organise life itself. Thus, Petrosino argues that what differentiates humans from animals is the ability to calculate, measure and invest. Furthermore, by quoting Benveniste, Petrosino ascertains the economic act does not only pertain to material resources but is extended to human relations and relations with the divinity and the spiritual.¹³⁶

Similarly, in Foucault's work, the notion of *oikonomia* is most pertinent not in the material sphere but in the spiritual sphere. In his 1978 lectures, he delves into the origin and development of the pastoral as a social institution in Christian society. With reference to Gregory Nazianzen and the Greek Fathers of the Church, Foucault delineates a thread between the notion of management of the house as defined by Aristotle and the more potent and encompassing notion of the economy of the souls. Foucault's focus is therefore on the concept of *oikonomia psuchōn*, which he translates as 'economy of souls' or as 'government of souls'.¹³⁷ In this context, Foucault redefines *oikonomia* as a form of institutional force, what he terms as conduct.

Foucault argues that conduct of souls, functions on two levels, conducting as a form of instructing or commanding or conducting as a form of self-conduct, or how should one behave.¹³⁸

¹³³ Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 18-19.

¹³⁴ Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-1978*. (New York: Palgrave, 2007), 192-193, 217.

¹³⁵ Silvano Petrosino, *Elogio dell'uomo economico* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 2013), 25 & 32.

¹³⁶ Petrosino, *Elogio dell'uomo economico*, 24-30.

¹³⁷ Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population. Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-1978* (New York: Picador, 2007), 192.

¹³⁸ Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 193.

Therefore, in his reading, economy of the souls is defined as a form of *dispositif*, a means of control of human behaviour and actions. This implies that, for Foucault, economy is not about the administration of material resources but about the administration and control of humanity. Like in Petrosino, for Foucault the economy is an effective apparatus and force because it administers material life through its administration of the divine or spiritual life.

The 'pastoral system of obedience' is a practice and promise of salvation. Pastoral power can be defined as the *dispositif* that makes people obey through the promise of salvation. Thus, in these terms, neoliberalism may also be read as a form of pastoral system with its promises of saving the economy, safeguarding the interest of the individual and protecting the liberties of the individual from state power. Moreover, neoliberal thought, like the pastoral system, is focused on conduct of souls. As Peter Fleming argues in his evaluation of neoliberal thought, "When scholars at the Chicago School of Economics were building their abstract models, *homo economicus* was intended to be a general principle for life. Every aspect of modern existence could be calculated on cost/benefit basis."¹³⁹ On one hand, there are the technocrats and the managers who conduct human endeavour towards maximum efficiency towards production and the maximisation of profit, and on the other the individual has to conduct themselves in the appropriate manner if they want to succeed in life.

In *The Kingdom and the Glory*, Agamben argues that "Foucault identifies the origins of governmental techniques in the Christian pastorate,"¹⁴⁰ and that therefore a genealogy of *oikonomia* is a genealogy of government and its techniques. For Agamben, economic discourse, as formulated by Adam Smith, is a form of theological discourse based on providence. He argues that providence is the way that transcendence manifests itself as a form of immanence, but more crucially it is a manifestation of cosmic order as also conceived by the Stoics.¹⁴¹ From this point of departure, then Agamben argues that governance of the world should be understood as "the correlation between the general law and the contingent level of the second causes."¹⁴² This implies that the techniques of governmentality, the *dispositifs* used by the powers to be to govern life should be interpreted as instruments of imposing the transcendental order onto the seemingly chaotic nature of physical reality, thus effectively making them forms of providence.

¹³⁹ Peter Fleming, *The Death of Homo Economicus. Work, Debt and the Myth of Endless Accumulation*. (London: Pluto Press, 2017), 128.

¹⁴⁰ Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 110.

¹⁴¹ Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 283.

¹⁴² Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 123.

1.3.2 The Law of the Free Market

Newman¹⁴³ and Graeber¹⁴⁴ argue that Adam Smith's formulation of the invisible hand metaphor in his theory of the market economy, is none other than the reproduction of the notion of God using his power to guide and control human behaviour. Graeber argues that just like Newton established the laws of physics that govern the universe and introduced the notion of God as watchmaker, Smith wanted to establish the laws that have been designed by God towards achieving divine providence for his creations. Therefore, the economic forces of the market are sovereign because they are part of the fundamental laws of the universe which have been designed by God Himself, making capitalism God's creation and part of His plan of salvation for humanity.

To further sustain this argument, Agamben traces a genealogy of theological discourse based around the symbolism of the invisible hand of God. In *The Kingdom and the Glory*, Agamben states that, "According to Augustine, God governs and administers the world, from the great to the small things, with an occult hand sign,"¹⁴⁵ and in "Salvian's treatise on the government of the world, empires and provinces, but also the smallest details of private homes".¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, the image of the invisible hand is also found in Thomas Aquinas, Luther and in Bossuet. Thus, showing that the very concept of the invisible hand is not a naturalistic concept but a theological concept.

In Hayek, the market is also representative of the fundamental laws that govern the universe, however as highlighted by Gentili, the governing force is not God but mathematics. Gentili argues that for Hayek the market is dominated by mathematical algorithms which cannot be dominated or controlled by any single individual.¹⁴⁷ These algorithms effectively replace the figure of God, and they determine the prospects and possibilities of those who participate in economic activities. The cosmic order of the market, like all mathematical models, is objective, universal, and indifferent to those that are subjected to its dictates. As Gentili emphasises, the mathematical paradigm of how the market functions drives people to believe in its reliability.¹⁴⁸

In his work on governance Gentili refers to Hayek's concept of the market as a form of 'spontaneous order' which entails 'self-organising structures' that should not be intruded upon

¹⁴³ Newman, *Political Theology*, 133.

¹⁴⁴ Graeber, *Debt*, 44.

¹⁴⁵ Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 284.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Gentili, *Crisi come arte di governo*, 105-109.

¹⁴⁸ Gentili, *Crisi come arte di governo*, 108.

by other social or political forces. He reiterates how in Hayek; the concept of market order is represented by the term 'catallactics' which is used to replace the term 'economy' in the work of Von Mises and Hayek. Catallactics goes beyond the act of exchange or trade, but it is about the reconciliation and bringing together of all individual interests in the community, thus making catallaxy a system of governance that allows for the manifestation of the spontaneous order of the cosmos.¹⁴⁹

The critical point of Hayek's cosmology is the essential and transcendental nature of the spontaneous order he refers to in his work. For Hayek, this order takes primacy over all other interests and should never be subjugated to the needs or interests of individual parties or members of society.

If the benefits we receive from the spontaneous order of the market are the results of such changes, and will be maintained only if the changes are allowed to continue. But every change of this kind will hurt some organized interests; and the preservation of the market order will therefore depend on those interests not being allowed to prevent what they dislike.¹⁵⁰

Hayek argues that the market follows 'impersonal mechanisms' that drive the changes that are needed for the system to function and adapt as required.¹⁵¹ This conceptualisation of the economy follows an evolutionary *modus operandi*, whereby the market has inbuilt within its own structures, systems of adaptation that allow it to survive and thrive as required by the changing nature of the world. Therefore, it is this universal law that should dictate governmentality, policies and political agendas should not intrude in the natural order of things which are schematised by the inbuilt mechanisms of the market order. Thus, if society wants to succeed and flourish it must ensure that the market order dictates the course of human action and not the opposite.

For human society to thrive and progress, it requires providence. The cosmos is designed towards producing beneficial results through the power of providence. For providence to succeed the objective mechanisms of the world need to be allowed to function and not tampered with. Thus, providence can only manifest itself if society and its members allow themselves to be governed by these mechanisms.

William E. Connolly, in his examination of Christian Evangelical movements and neoliberalism in the United States, identifies providence as an implicit characteristic of contemporary capitalist

¹⁴⁹ Gentili, *Crisi come arte di governo*, 85-87.

¹⁵⁰ Friedrich August Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty, Volume 3. The Political Order of a Free People*, (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 94.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

economic theories. In his evaluation of Albert Hirschmann's work, Connolly shows how these economic theories claim that interference with the market is self-defeating because they run counter to the powers of self-equilibrium which are intrinsic to it.¹⁵² In the same vein as Hayek's defence of market non-interventionism, "the providence of the market is defended by asserting how *futile* it is to compensate for the inequalities it generates, sometimes by arguing how intervention invariably produces *perverse* effects."¹⁵³ Connolly also quotes George Gilder, whose economic theories define "consumer movements, state actions to cushion insecurity, powerful unions and environmental politics"¹⁵⁴ as being contrarian to the positive forces inherent to the free market. For Gilder, the unpredictability of the market forces is the space that allows freedom, entrepreneurial creativity, and God's providence to manifest themselves. The luck and game of chance associated with the financial world is not a reflection of chaos but a manifestation of the "underlying transcendent order of the universe".¹⁵⁵

1.3.4 Commodification

In formulating the second feature of capitalism as a cult, Benjamin states that "There are no "weekdays." There is no day that is not a feast day."¹⁵⁶ Clemens-Carl Härle interprets Benjamin as articulating that in capitalism the distinction between daily routines and the cult, sacred and profane, regularity and exception are eliminated leading towards the everyday becoming sacralised and assimilated by the cult.¹⁵⁷ The process of sacralisation is therefore interpreted as the process of commodification as identified and formulated by Marx and Engels who state that "These labourers, who must sell themselves piecemeal, are a commodity, like every other article of commerce, and are consequently exposed to all the vicissitudes of competition, to all the fluctuations of the market."¹⁵⁸ Through commodification, every activity, event or human phenomenon can be reimagined and transformed into an object of trade and exchange. This transformation allows for the creation of the exchange value of these objects of exchange, and the exchange value is in turn determined by the market in which they are traded. Capitalism creates a process through which the exchange value becomes more dominant and critical than the use value, thus fulfilling Benjamin's argument that every day becomes a feast day, implying

¹⁵² William E. Connolly, *Capitalism and Christianity, American Style*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008), 139.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Connolly, *Capitalism and Christianity, American Style*, 141.

¹⁵⁵ Connolly, *Capitalism and Christianity, American Style*, 140.

¹⁵⁶ Benjamin, *Capitalism as Religion*, 288.

¹⁵⁷ Clemens-Carl Härle, 'Religione Senza Religione' in *Il Culto del Capitale, Walter Benjamin: Capitalismo e Religione*, ed. Dario Gentili, Mauro Ponzi e Elettra Stimilli (Macerata, Quodlibet, 2014), 90

¹⁵⁸ Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*...

that the value of time and labour is not the result of their function and need, but the result of the demand. As is the case with the sacred, exchange value is an imagined value, as opposed to a real value or use value.

Agamben further argues that in a capitalist system, exchange value is dominant over all other values and that it has an absolute power over all other institutions or social forces like art, culture, cultural identities, or ways of life. In his work *Profanations*, Agamben also interprets Benjamin's essay on capitalism and argues that the power of exchange value should be read as a power of profanation and sacralisation. He states that capitalism holds simultaneously a dual transformation: profanation, through which everything, including human life, can be transformed into pure means of exchange, as also stated by Marx and Engels, and sacralisation (or re-sacralisation), whereby objects are endowed with a new value through the very process of commodification¹⁵⁹. As Sergei Prozorov comments, "capitalism does not simply profane the sacred or sacralise the profane but rather sacralises its own profanation".¹⁶⁰ Through the process of commodification, capitalism like religion has the ability through ritual and sacrifice to place objects and activities either in the realm of the sacred or the realm of the profane, and similarly to religion and its rituals to change the placement of these objects.

However, Agamben argues that capitalism as a religion pushes "to the extreme a tendency already present in Christianity [and] generalises in every domain the structure of separation that defines religion."¹⁶¹ He further reiterates that this pervasive and ubiquitous separation found in capitalism exists because, "In the commodity, separation inheres in the very form of the object, which splits into use-value and exchange-value and is transformed into an ungraspable fetish. The same is true for everything that is done, produced, or experienced – even the human body, even sexuality, even language."¹⁶² This implies that everything that exists, or created, is not only part of God's grand design and but also part of the free market, with its values and obligations.

1.3.5 Money

The United States of America banknotes have inscriptions announcing two articles of faith. On one face is inscribed the phrase 'In God We Trust' and on the other 'This note is legal tender for all debts, public and private.'

¹⁵⁹ Giorgio Agamben, "In Praise of Profanation," in *Profanations* (New York: Zone Books, 2007), 73-94.

¹⁶⁰ Sergei Prozorov, *Agamben and Politics, A Critical Introduction*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 45.

¹⁶¹ Agamben, *In Praise of Profanation*, 81.

¹⁶² Agamben, *In Praise of Profanation*, 81.

In *Capitalism as Religion*, Benjamin compares the images and ornamental design of banknotes to “the images of the saints of various religions.”¹⁶³ The function of sacred art serves as a means of conveying and representing religious belief and faith in that belief system; similarly, banknotes serve the same function. Sacred imagery embodies a material connection to the transcendent and banknotes embody a material connection to the transcendent nature of exchange and trade. Sacred imagery represents trust in the powers of the spiritual world, explaining the attribution of miraculous powers to these images, and forms of money represent trust in the fulfilment of an exchange between parties. As David Graeber argues, “the value of a unit of currency is not the measure of the value of an object, but the measure of one’s trust in other human beings.”¹⁶⁴ Similarly, Yuval Noah Harari states that, “Trust is the raw material from which all types of money are minted.” Further reiterating that money is not merely “a system of mutual trust” but “*is the most universal and most efficient system of mutual trust ever devised.*(sic.)”¹⁶⁵ In his history of money, Niall Ferguson reiterates that “money is a matter of belief, even faith...It is trust inscribed.”¹⁶⁶ Ferguson states that the very essence of money in its many forms is a manifestation of trust and believe, further arguing that the etymological root of credit is the Latin word *credo*. Money represents the “belief in the person paying us; belief in the person issuing the money he uses or the institution that honours his cheques or transfers.”¹⁶⁷ The development of technologies allowing for transfer of money in an immaterial and digitised form are the strongest evidence to the very essence of money; trustworthiness, and faith.

The banknote fulfils its role as a form of contractual obligation because it has been provided with legitimacy by a recognised authority. Herein lies the relation between currency and authority, currency can only be considered as functional if it is trustworthy, and it is considered trustworthy if it is acknowledged by a recognised authority. Disparate forms of currency are accepted as legitimate “because our king believes in them and demands them in taxes, and because our priest believes in them and demands them in tithes.”¹⁶⁸ In the case of the US Dollar banknote, the trust exists because it is valued as trustworthy through the authority of the state, through its institution, the Federal Reserve Bank and the effigy of national symbols and figures. However, the key element is legitimisation from a higher authority, God. By stating that ‘In God We Trust’, the users of the banknote are recognising the legality and validity of the currency because it is

¹⁶³ Benjamin, “Capitalism as Religion”, 290.

¹⁶⁴ David Graeber, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*, (Brooklyn and London: Melville house, 2011), 47.

¹⁶⁵ Yuval Noah Harari, *Money* (London: Vintage, 2018), 11.

¹⁶⁶ Niall Ferguson, *The Ascent of Money. A Financial History of the World*, (UK: Penguin Random House, 2019), 30-31.

¹⁶⁷ Ferguson, *The Ascent of Money*, 30-31.

¹⁶⁸ Harari, *Money*, 13.

acknowledged by God's authority. The dollar is accepted as legitimate payment by the parties involved in the transaction because of their trust in God and trust in the US secretary of the treasury.¹⁶⁹ Those who utilise the banknote are bound by a contractual relationship of debt to each other which is not only recognised and sealed by the state but also by God. Thus, currency becomes a symbol of sovereign power because it "acts as his (God's) acknowledged representative on earth."¹⁷⁰ This implies that not only the state is legitimised by God but also the activity for which currency is used, commerce.

Commerce is based on exchange of goods and services which is regulated by the state (or a similar governing authority in the case of smaller communities), in a controlled market, or by the laws of supply and demand, in a free market. However, in both instances commercial activity is bound to the use of a form of credit system that keeps record or acknowledges who owes what to whom. The role of money is not simply to make trade easier because it removes the hurdles inherent to a barter system but to create a measurable system of credit that can be understood by those who are participating in the commercial activity. As stated by Graeber:

What is the difference between a mere obligation, a sense that one ought to behave in a certain way, or even that one owes something to someone, and a *debt*, properly speaking? The answer is simple: money. The difference between a debt and an obligation is that a debt can be precisely quantified. This requires money.¹⁷¹

Similarly, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels also argue that money is a form of quantification that is tangible and easily calculated, unlike social obligations. They argue that the rise of capitalism redefined social relations and reduced them to money relations. Social ties are created and defined through the exchange of money, and these relations are calculated in terms of profit or loss, which can be quantified and accounted for. "The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his "natural superiors," and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous "cash payment"."¹⁷² Money substituted all other forms of obligation that existed in non-capitalist social structures and every member of the community is redefined in terms of the exchange value of their services.

¹⁶⁹ Harari, *Money*, 13.

¹⁷⁰ Carl Schmitt, translated by George Schwab, *Political Theology, Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), 10.

¹⁷¹ Graeber, *Debt*, 21. Italics used in the original.

¹⁷² Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, (London: Arcturus Publishing Ltd, 2018), 36.

Peter Fleming, like Marx and Engels, states that money “becomes the only way of relating to each other under extreme capitalism.... Everything has a price and that fact is revealed with persistent and piercing clarity.”¹⁷³ Fleming poignantly claims that money is “a human artefact”, which has defined people’s lives not only in terms of its availability, but more crucially in its ‘absence’.¹⁷⁴ One’s lack of financial resources limits access to possibilities, opportunities and more critically, basic needs.

Geoffrey Ingham argues that money is a vital social technology that provides “the link between the present and possible futures”, making it “much more than the economists’ medium of exchange.”¹⁷⁵ In agreement with other authors he also states that money is used as a means of recording and planning and without money, “it would be impossible to create and maintain large-scale societies.”¹⁷⁶ Ingham further reiterates his argument by stating that money is the operating system of the world.¹⁷⁷

Money as a credit system is also acknowledged by Agamben who argues that, as suggested by Joseph Schumpeter, ‘all money is only credit’ and that forms of money (except in the case of those made from precious metals) are ‘instruments of credit’ which therefore defined as ‘fiduciary currency’.¹⁷⁸ Fiduciary currency has a value which is fixed by the state through law and has no exchange equivalence in silver or gold. Thus, as stated by Agamben, after the removal of the Gold Standard by the Nixon administration in 1971, “all value which is not purely self-referential was removed from money.”¹⁷⁹ What Agamben uncovers in his writing is that the removal of the Gold Standard should be read as an act of the absolute authority of the state over the people. He argues that in one fell swoop the state removed the “patrimony in gold owned by the users of that currency” and that through the new system the state forced those who participated in the market to “use their debt as a form of money.”¹⁸⁰ Here, Agamben is positing the argument that money is to be considered as another expression of the sovereign power of the state over the people and their activities. It also shows that the value of money is one of recording credit and this is legitimised through recognition by the sovereign. Thus, money is a

¹⁷³ Fleming, *The Death of Homo Economicus*, 16.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Geoffrey Ingham, *Money. Ideology, History, Politics* (UK: Polity Press, 2020), 3.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Giorgio Agamben, “Il Capitalismo Come Religione,” in *Creazione e Anarchia, L’opera nell’eta` della religione capitalista* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 2018), 115- 117. Original in Italian.

¹⁷⁹ Agamben, *Il Capitalismo Come Religione*, 116. Original in Italian.

¹⁸⁰ Agamben, *Il Capitalismo Come Religione*, 116. Original in Italian.

materialisation of trust in the users and the authority that recognises it, the sovereign, who for Schmitt is identified with God's role as the highest lawgiver.

Georg Simmel states that, "The value of money is based on a guarantee represented by the central political power, which eventually replaces the significance of the metal."¹⁸¹ Simmel argues that money exists and functions as a form of credit and this is successful because it is based on trust, which he describes as a 'social-psychological quasi-religious faith'. Credit is defined by Harari as "a new system based on trust in the future...It's founded on the assumption that our future resources are sure to be more abundant than our present resources."¹⁸²

Simmel explains that money as credit may only be understood in terms of 'religious faith' and he compares the trust placed in the credit system or those participating in the exchange to, "When someone says that he believes in God, this does not merely express an imperfect stage of knowledge about God, but a state of mind which has nothing to do with knowledge, which is both less and more than knowledge."¹⁸³ Therefore, a community that adopts a market economy, which as Agamben states, uses their debt as a form of money, is comparable to a community that believes and worships God and His will to provide a better future. In the same manner that believers have trust in God and have an obligation towards Him, the exchange of credit is also based on relations of trust and obligation.

The relation of trust and obligation that is formed between creditor and debtor, is comparable to the relation created through the covenant between God and His people. The covenant made between the Israelites and God illustrates a relation based on trust and obligation, the trust taking the form of a promise and the obligation formulated in terms of punishment against those who breach the promise.

Melinda Cooper, in her commentary on Simmel, identifies these characteristics in the context of credit exchange. She argues that the essence of fiduciary currency is its embodiment of a promise to the creditor and an obligation by the debtor, which is enforced through the threat of violence¹⁸⁴. In these terms, official currency becomes a state-sanctioned contract that places the state as guarantor of the exchange, through its dual role of upholding the value of the credit, trust, and its role as enforcer, obligation, through its sovereign power as lawgiver and its monopoly on violence.

¹⁸¹ Georg Simmel, *Philosophy of Money*, 3rd edition (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 184.

¹⁸² Harari, *Money*, 27.

¹⁸³ Simmel, *Philosophy of Money*, 178.

¹⁸⁴ Melinda Cooper, *Life as Surplus, Biotechnology and Capitalism in the Neoliberal Era*. (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2008), 157.

This same modus operandi is found in the economic relations governing nation states as illustrated by the austerity measures imposed on Greece as part of the bailout package brokered with the EU and the IMF. When Greece defaulted on the payment of its loans, it was given help in the form of further credit by the EU and the IMF. However, the bailout packages were accompanied by severe obligations in the form of austerity measures and EU financial supervision. Over the years, this has led to spending cuts on social welfare, civil servants' salaries, infrastructure, and pensions.¹⁸⁵

Economic relations are defined in terms of relations of obligation sanctioned and enforced by a higher authority. In this context, economic relations take a new moral dimension which allows for the construction of a politico-economic discourse which is transformed into moral discourse. Persons who do not fulfil their economic obligations or potential are re-categorised as morally deficient.

¹⁸⁵ Greece has had to resort to three bailouts following the international financial crisis of 2007-2008. These bailouts, 2010, 2012 and 2015, came in the form of loans from the EU, Germany being the main contributor, and the IMF. By 2018 the Greece was owing these two institutions €290 billion with repayments being projected to continue till 2060. Information taken from, Council for Foreign Relations, *Greece's Debt*, accessed 29th February 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/greeces-debt-crisis-timeline>.

Chapter 2: The Theological Dimension of Neoliberalism

2.1 Introduction

The first chapter identifies theoretical studies that portray the capitalist system as a form of religious system. Benjamin's essay and Agamben's response formulate capitalism as a religion through a process of sacralisation, through which the market and its institutions are considered and treated as sacred objects.

As a result, authors have started to view neoliberalism as 'a kind of neo-Benjaminian religion of capital,'¹ whose believers are marked by their inability to redeem their debt and guilt² and who go through a process of subjectification that transforms them into sacrificial victims for the sake of the system.³

Furthermore, the first chapter also formulates the dogmatic truths that form the basis of neoliberal thinking as a form of theological or religious thinking. These dogmas are; the free market determines how the world functions, commodification is the manifestation of the laws of the free market, and money as currency, is the means of exchange that allows commodification and the free market to function.

This argument is supported by the authors Philip Goodchild⁴ and Eugene McCarragher⁵ who compare the process of sacralisation of the market to the worship of Mammon, a biblical term used by Jesus to refer to the worship of wealth and money instead of God. Thus, for Goodchild and McCarragher there is a transition from God's divine authority to Mammon's authority which is represented by money and the market. In this context, McCarragher describes Hayek and his followers as devotees of the metaphysics of the market as a cosmos or spontaneous order.⁶

Similarly, Luca Mavelli traces the religious nature of neoliberalism to its 'market fundamentalism' whereby he argues that there is an affinity between religious belief and belief in the market.⁷ Mavelli states that this belief in the market is based on the unknowability of the market as

¹ Arthur Bradley, Symposium on Elettra Stimilli's Debt and Guilt: A Political Philosophy – Introduction, *Political Theology* 2023, Vol. 24, NO. 4, 401–404 (Routledge:2023), 402.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Philip Goodchild, *Exposing Mammon: Devotion to Money in a Market Society*. Wiley Periodicals and Dialog 47-57 (Wiley:2013).

⁵ Eugene McCarragher, *The Enchantments of Mammon: How Capitalism became the Religion of Modernity*. (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, 2019).

⁶ McCarragher, *The Enchantments of Mammon*, 597.

⁷ Luca Mavelli, *Neoliberalism as Religion: Sacralization of the Market and Post-truth Politics*. *International Political Sociology* 14, 57-76 (2020), 60.

established by Hayek and through the process of commodification that eliminates the separation between the sacred and the profane.⁸

Following this perspective this research argues that neoliberalism reinforces the religious discourse of capitalism by providing a form of religious zealotry akin to religious extremism. This chapter will explore how through these foundations, neoliberal thinking justifies the primacy of the economy over all other considerations such as justice or inequality.

This chapter argues that neoliberal intelligentsia use religious and theological thinking to explain and support their concept of the market order and how this is to be reflected in the political order. Although authors like Hayek avoid the use of theological terminology, they still rely on a theological conceptual framework. In this chapter, I engage with an existing body of literature that offers a providential reading of Hayek to outline that the providential aspect of Hayek's market order is an essential pillar of his theoretical framework.

I present the argument that Hayek's market order is a form of Leviathan, a secularised version of God endowed with absolute power which demands absolute obedience. Hayek's catallaxy is a natural Leviathan as opposed to Hobbes' artificial structure and notwithstanding this distinction the political and theological implications are the same for both authors. The Leviathan has authority over everyone and requires the submission of all parties to its processes and outcomes irrespective of whether it is a sovereign power as in Hobbes' case or an economic power as in Hayek.

Furthermore, Hayek's concept of the market order represents a providential system designed by nature. As a naturally emerged system, the market order compensates for the weaknesses and knowledge gaps inherent in human nature and the human mind. By coordinating human actions, the market order facilitates the achievement of beneficial outcomes. Since it aligns with human nature, it is in the best interest of individuals to willingly submit to the market order and adjust to its processes, this ensures the best possible outcomes for The Great Society. I therefore conclude that catallaxy is a secular God not unlike Hobbes' Leviathan.

2.2 Theological Dimension

In a piece discussing the role of religion and the market, Stimilli argues that we require this analysis to develop insights into the contemporary neoliberal economics and the current

⁸ Mavelli, *Neoliberalism as Religion*, 72.

zeitgeist.⁹ She mentions how fundamental concepts such as market confidence and credit are based on a ‘type of ‘faith’(that) rests at the heart of global economic domination’ of the neoliberal financial system.¹⁰

It is only through these acts of faith that value is created and extracted to allow the market to function and to expand.¹¹ Following on from Agamben and Esposito, the article further identifies the dual paradigms of political theology and economic theology and how these reflect the existing relationship or conflict between the political and the economic.¹² In this evaluation Stimilli identifies two roles played by economic theology as a governing paradigm. Firstly, economic theology provides an explanation and conceptual framework of how the market functions and behaves in terms of notions like providential design and the invisible hand. Secondly, economic theology provides an analysis of the modes of government over human life utilised by neoliberalism, or governmentality.¹³

This thesis recognises both functions of economic theology and is therefore structured accordingly. This chapter focuses on the theological foundations of the meta-concepts that form the basis of free market thinking as a spontaneous order. In a following chapter, this thesis will analyse and evaluate neoliberal economic theology as a form of governmentality. The chapter on governmentality will focus on the role of pastoral power in designing and implementing neoliberal subjectification.

Neoliberal governmentality is only possible through the replacement of sovereign power with economic power. This transition removes authority over life from the sovereign or the state and places it under the control of the market. This development can be explained if we engage with the ‘metaphysical’ dimension of neoliberal thinking from which market fundamentalism is established. Economic theology provides the concepts and discourse that allows the economy to extricate itself from the authority of politics and to replace it as the dominant paradigm.

Dotan Leshem traces this transition back to the early Christianity of the fourth century whereby ‘a new realm of life, the society of believers’ came to be.¹⁴ This new sphere of life, which is

⁹ Elettra Stimilli, Religion and The Spontaneous Order of The Market: Law, Freedom, and Power Over Lives. *European Journal of Social Theory*, Volume 22(3), 399-415. (Sage Publishers: 2019), 400.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Stimilli, Religion and The Spontaneous Order of The Market, 401-412.

¹³ Stimilli, Religion and The Spontaneous Order of The Market, 410.

¹⁴ Dotan Leshem, *The Origins of Neoliberalism, Modeling the Economy from Jesus to Foucault*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 156.

separate from the polis, is 'neither private nor public' but part of a context, the ecclesia, that is separate from the political.¹⁵

According to Leshem, the space inhabited by the believers is where the Holy Spirit governed, or 'the economy of the Holy Spirit is dispensed'¹⁶ thus placing it outside the realm of political institutions. Within this society or space, the ecclesia, the divine in humans, is administered by the divine economy leading to their salvation.¹⁷

Furthermore, with these developments during the fourth century a new way of organising life is developed. Knowledge is outside of the material world and part of the divine world thus making it unknowable to reason, *gnosis*. The economy, or divine organisation exceeds the boundaries of the law, with canon law suspended when the needs of the economy of salvation require it to, and more crucially, politics becomes subservient to the needs of the economy.¹⁸

This system of thought sets the precedent for the development of the market order as a paradigm of government envisaged by Hayek. For Hayek, the market as a spontaneous order is unknowable as a whole and those who participate in it can only expect to receive limited knowledge and their role is to respond to its signals.

In the same manner that canon law is suspended for the needs of salvation, in Hayek, law as *nomos*, conduct, is about protecting the market and individuals' liberties from law as commands, *thesis*.¹⁹ Thesis has no jurisdiction on the market which is a spontaneous order. Additionally, in making the distinction between *nomos* and *thesis*, and *catallaxy* and *economy*, Hayek shows that the market order supersedes the political and that the political system must protect and maintain the market as an independent and free entity that is governed by its own self-regulating processes.

Thus, just like for early Christian communities the economy of salvation designed and administered by God is higher to all other human institutions, so Hayek's market as a spontaneous order is superior to all other human constructs such as forms of law as *thesis*.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Leshem, *The Origins of Neoliberalism*, 155.

¹⁸ Leshem, *The Origins of Neoliberalism*, 157.

¹⁹ Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty Vol. 1*, 127.

2.3 Market Order as Spontaneous Order

The market as a spontaneous order or catallaxy is a defining aspect of Friedrich August Hayek's economic and political thought. For Hayek, the market represents a valid ordering system that humanity cannot reject because it is part of its own natural evolutionary process. The market, unlike the state, is not an artificial construct and is therefore one of the intrinsic modes of organisation, like law and language, which has spontaneously developed to organise and develop human civilisation.

The market order as a catallaxy, a type of spontaneous order, implies that it is a self-sustaining cosmos that does not require external forces for its functioning. Nature designed the market as a homeostatic system capable of finding its own balance through inbuilt mechanisms such as price equilibrium.

According to Hayek the market is not the product of a transcendent being, God, who has imbued it with His powers but, is the result of a naturally occurring ordering system.²⁰ He argues that ascribing the ability of creating and controlling the market, to a transcendent power is a form of animistic thinking.²¹ In *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, Hayek states that the belief in the possibility of planning an economy through the coercive powers of an authority is akin to superstition.²² For Hayek, these notions are linked to that of a planned economy with a providential outcome, as promised by socialism, which according to him is fallacious and mistaken.

The crux of Hayek's free market system is the distinction he makes between 'economy' and catallaxy.²³ The economy is artificially created and used as a form of artificial ordering bringing together different interests and activities as common interest through force or control, whilst a catallaxy is a natural system that spontaneously brings together individual interests. An economy happens through coercive powers, whilst a catallaxy coordinates the interests and activities of the disparate participants through free exchange of resources and market responsiveness, leading to a more efficient system.²⁴ This is the basis of Hayek's concept of liberty.

²⁰ Friedrich August Hayek, *The Fatal Conceit, The Errors of Socialism*, *The Collected Works of Friedrich August Hayek*. (London: Routledge, 1988), 73.

²¹ Hayek, *The Fatal Conceit*, 73.

²² Friedrich August Hayek, *Law, Legislation, and Liberty, Vol.3* (London: Routledge, 1988), 175-176.

²³ Tim, Christiaens. "The crypto-theology of Friedrich Hayek" in: Schwarzkopf, S (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Economic Theology*, 367-376, (London & New York, 2019a), 367.

²⁴ Hayek, *Law legislation and Liberty*, Vol.2. 106-109.

For Hayek, *The Great Society*, is characterised by the market order and not by the economy. Only the market order allows for the possibility of a free and pluralistic society.²⁵ The market order as a catallaxy enables the achievement of a more advanced society and superior overall outcomes. Although Hayek denies the concept of a providential design, he still conceptualises the market order as a providential system that produces beneficial results, however he ascribes it to a process of nature and evolution instead, thus proposing a form of natural law thinking.

Libertarian authors like Walter Lippmann and Hayek, present the market as a type of natural law that transcends the state, and the state cannot engage in planning the economy because of the existing epistemological gap. These are Lippmann and Hayek's main justifications for the conception of the state as protector of the market, both in a non-interventionist role and, as an enforcer of the market order.

Lippmann contrasts the market order as natural as opposed to the collectivist political programmes. These are antithetical to the intellectual and political progress of humankind as designed by nature. He argues that collectivist programmes are based on assigning state administrators control over aspects of life which they have no claim to, thus exceeding their authority.²⁶ Human authority must abide by and be subservient to a higher law or code which Lippmann refers to as natural law,

For more than two thousand years, since western men first began to think about the social order, the main preoccupation of political thinking has been to find a law which would be superior to arbitrary power. Men have sought it in custom, in the dictates of reason, in religious revelation, endeavouring always to set up some check upon the exercise of force. This is the meaning of the long debate about Natural Law. This is the meaning of a thousand years of struggle to bring the sovereign under a constitution, to establish for the individual and for voluntary associations of men rights which they can enforce against kings, barons, magnates, majorities, and mobs.²⁷

As John Patrick Diggins states, Lippmann 'never specified what he meant by the idea of natural law' to such a degree that for Lippmann natural law does not even require that it is 'rationally demonstrable'.²⁸ Furthermore, for Lippmann political values are to be found in a 'theological universe of natural law, where metaphysical values are to be discovered and obeyed'.²⁹ Therefore

²⁵ Hayek, *Law legislation and Liberty*, Vol.2. 109.

²⁶ Walter, Lippmann *The Good Society, An Inquiry into the Principles of*. (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1938), 5.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

²⁸ John Patrick Diggins, "From Pragmatism to Natural Law: Walter Lippmann's Quest for the Foundations of Legitimacy." *Political Theory*, (1991), 19(4):519-538, 532.

²⁹ Diggins, *From Pragmatism to Natural Law*, 522.

one may surmise that the market which is a naturally occurring system that is organised and functions on an unconscious level³⁰, is also part of this theological universe which must be obeyed.³¹

As Lippmann asserts, “The market is not something invented by businessmen and speculators for their profit, or by the classical economists for their intellectual pleasure. ... This bringing together at the right time, in the right quantities, in accordance with the ability to produce and the desire to consume, cannot be organised and administered from above by any human power”.³² In decrying the illusion of those who wish to create and organise a new ‘social order’, Lippmann emphasises that the market is an ‘infinitely complex system of working routines’ that is beyond the comprehension of the human mind³³ and that is outside of human control.

It is critical to note that for Lippmann the difference between a liberal position and a Marxist position is that the liberal wants to change the social order to meet the needs of the economy, and to safeguard a ‘widening and freer market’, whilst the Marxist political project is about changing the social order through control of the market and leading to the eradication of individual freedom.³⁴

Similarly, Hayek proclaims the market as a form of spontaneous order not of human design. In *The Constitution of Liberty*, Hayek argues that humans do not design nor create the key institutions by which society organises itself, humans stumble upon these institutions through natural progression. These institutions result from a process of a ‘survival of the successful.’ Furthermore, Hayek stresses that order is not the result of human intelligence or planning but a process of evolutionary ‘cumulative growth.’ In his work he emphasises that all established forms of ordering like morality, law, and language are not the result of a social contract or a legislator but of a process that exists outside of human design.³⁵

³⁰ Lippmann, *The Good Society*, 30.

³¹ It is critical to note that for Lippmann religious thinking does not only constitute a form or source of knowledge, but he also reiterates that religious thinking is in opposition to collectivist or totalitarian ideologies or regimes. He argues that “religious experience entails the recognition of an inviolable essence in men; it cultivates a self-respect and a self-reliance, which tend at some point to resist the total subjection of the individual to any earthly power.” (*The Good Society*, p.382) For Lippmann religion provides a form of resistance against oppressive systems.

³² Lippmann, *The Good Society*, 176.

³³ Lippmann, *The Good Society*, 30.

³⁴ Lippmann, *The Good Society*, 180.

³⁵ Friedrich August Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 57.

The market order is also part of this evolutionary process, it is a form of ‘spontaneous order’ that is “spontaneous, ‘endogenously’ grown, evolutionary order or cosmos”.³⁶ This is in stark contrast to human constructs like ‘society’ or the ‘state’ which do not reflect or are part of the universal laws of nature. It is therefore as an extension of this position that Hayek argues that the state has no right to interfere with the market to promote social programmes or social policy.

In his critique of Conservatism, Hayek states that government control restricts and stops the spontaneous adjustments of economic and social forces leading to harmful outcomes. Successful social order stems from the spontaneous action of social and economic forces and not from the supervision and involvement of state authority.³⁷

Like Lippmann, Hayek states that the state is bound by the rule of law, which allows it to create ‘general’ rules, but not to impose (or coerce) ‘particular’ rules, which can be arbitrary and discretionary. Hayek argued that forms of distributive justice, *thesis*, are incompatible with rule of law, *nomos*, because it requires state involvement in the free market leading to decisions based on discriminatory and discretionary decisions. He therefore argues that state involvement in the economy leads to a ‘command economy’ that infringes on the liberties of everyone.³⁸

While Lippmann refers to these general rules as a form of natural law embedded in theological reasoning, Hayek refers to them as a spontaneous order or catallaxy derived from nature and created through an evolutionary process. However, although there is no reference to religious or theological concepts, Hayek’s spontaneous orders, which are ‘not the execution of human design’³⁹ still rely on theological concepts and discourse. Lars Cornelissen (2017)⁴⁰, Tim Christiaens (2019)⁴¹, and Jessica Whyte (2019)⁴² all argue that Hayek’s market as a self-adjusting spontaneous order exemplifies the notion of a providential design that lies outside of human control and understanding.

³⁶ Gareth, Dale. “‘Our world was made by nature’: constructions of spontaneous order,” *Globalizations*, (2018), 15 (7): 924-940, 932.

³⁷ Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, 400-401.

³⁸ Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, 231-232.

³⁹ Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, 57.

⁴⁰ Lars, Cornelissen. “The Secularization of Providential Order: F. A. Hayek’s Political-Economic Theology,” *Political Theology*, (2017) 18(8): 660-676.

⁴¹ Tim, Christiaens. “The crypto-theology of Friedrich Hayek.” Schwarzkopf, S (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Economic Theology*, (London & New York: Routledge, 2019): 367-376.

⁴² Jessica, Whyte. “The Invisible Hand of Friedrich Hayek,” *Political Theory*, (2019), 47(2): 156-184.

Daniel Luban⁴³ and Jessica Whyte⁴⁴ trace the term 'spontaneous order' to Michael Polanyi, however it was Hayek who further developed and made the concept more mainstream. Both authors also refer to Hayek's indebtedness, which he claims himself, of the concept of spontaneous order mainly to authors from the Scottish Enlightenment.⁴⁵ This direct trajectory to authors like Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson⁴⁶ illustrates how Hayek uses this concept as a means of explaining the phenomena of the free market and to justify its legitimacy as a superseding mechanism over all other political mechanisms or institutions.

Hayek uses the concept of spontaneous order as part of his defence of the market as a free entity that must be protected from centrally planned economies and from other forms of constructivist rationalities.⁴⁷ However the notion of spontaneous order goes beyond this defence of the free market and its mechanisms, it must be read as form of cosmology that explains human endeavours and social order.⁴⁸

For Hayek just like other aspects that define the human, such as language, morality or law, the market too is created via an evolutionary process, as means of bringing order and organising life.⁴⁹ He defines these systems as a 'spontaneous order'. He contrasts this to other institutions such as the state or society, which he associates with human constructivism, that are the result of human design and detached from the universal laws of nature.

For Hayek the emergence of spontaneous orders is a natural process that exists beyond the human realm. As Luban notes, for Hayek the process of spontaneous order extends into the physical world and is used to explain the natural occurring order that can be found in nature.⁵⁰ Hayek explains the emergence of spontaneous orders in physical terms when he compares them to the way that atoms structure themselves in a natural way to produce a compound or element.⁵¹ For Hayek, the superiority of the market order, over all other orders or systems stems from this premise.

⁴³ Daniel, Luban, "What Is Spontaneous Order?" *American Political Science Review* 114, no. 1, 68-80, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 68.

⁴⁴ Jessica, Whyte, "The Invisible Hand of Friedrich Hayek", *Political Theory*, Vol.47 No.2, 156-184, (Sage Publishers, 2019), 161.

⁴⁵ Luban, *What Is Spontaneous Order?*, 68; Whyte, *The Invisible Hand of Friedrich Hayek*, 161.

⁴⁶ Friedrich August, Hayek. *The Constitution of Liberty*. (Chicago, USA: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 57.

⁴⁷ Luban, *What Is Spontaneous Order?*, 68.

⁴⁸ Luban, *What Is Spontaneous Order?*, 68-69.

⁴⁹ Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, 57.

⁵⁰ Luban, *What Is Spontaneous Order?*, 70.

⁵¹ Hayek. *The Constitution of Liberty*, 160.

2.4 The Market Order replacing the Political Order

In her 2019 book, *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism*, Wendy Brown sets herself the task of showing how Hayek's theories on the market, coupled with his conception of law and legislation, are an attempt to dissolve the power of the political and to additionally show that market rationality is part of the accepted conduct of modern humans.⁵² Brown argues that for Hayek freedom is not entrenched in the legal or political sphere, as other philosophers attribute, "but in the evolved, often inarticulate principles of conduct...principles that we 'freely' accept and abide".⁵³ For Hayek these rules of conduct are the result of a natural development in people which are then shared and willingly followed, a spontaneous order. These shared principles are the foundation of a free society, and they must be "left untouched" and "made supervenient".⁵⁴ For Hayek the aim of progress is the attainment of the free society which he refers to as the Great Society.

The main thrust of Hayek's theoretical framework is the contrast he makes between primitive societies, planned societies and the Great Society (or open society). Primitive societies and planned societies are characterised by 'anthropomorphism'.⁵⁵ In primitive societies they ascribe the design and control of all social institutions to a greater mind or superior entity, and in planned societies, the state has the authority to regulate and plan society. Hayek argues that this anthropomorphic frame of mind creates a collectivist vision that views society as a unified entity. For this reason, Hayek argues that primitive and planned societies engage in economy which he defines as "the deliberate arrangement or organisation of resources in the service of a unitary hierarchy of ends, such as a household, an enterprise, or any other organisation including government".⁵⁶ Thus, for Hayek planned societies are representatives of an economy, not of a catallaxy. Additionally, Whyte argues that Hayek's definition of economy as "the household model", implying that society and the economy are governed in the same way as a household.⁵⁷ This stems from the etymology of the word, *oikonomia*, which means, management of the household.

In this household model, the head of the economy has full authority over the actions and resources of all the members of the community towards achieving specific goals. Furthermore,

⁵² Wendy, Brown. *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism: The Rise of Antidemocratic Politics in the West*, (New York: Wellek Library Lectures, Columbia University Press, 2019), 67-75.

⁵³ Brown. *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism*, 75.

⁵⁴ Brown. *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism*, 74.

⁵⁵ Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, Vol.1, 27.

⁵⁶ Friedrich August, Hayek, *The Confusion of Language in Political Thought*. (London: Institute of Economic Affairs, 1968), 28.

⁵⁷ Whyte, *The Invisible Hand of Friedrich Hayek*, 80-81.

the household model entails the creation of categories of people who are fully reliant on those outcomes and are therefore dependent on the actions of others. For Hayek, decisions taken by the state in the interest of society lead to the erasure of individual freedom.⁵⁸ The state as a household or economy is what Hayek identifies as a collectivist state, and this type of state infringes on the liberties of the individual.

By contrast, the open society does not engage in planning but allows for the naturally occurring spontaneous orders to grow and flourish. It is only within these spontaneous orders that the individual is allowed to live and act freely and achieve their individual goals.⁵⁹ An open society does not manage the expectations and purpose of its members but allows them to pursue their own interests.⁶⁰ Therefore, an open society will not engage in economic planning but allow the free market to thrive.

According to Hayek the market order is a type of spontaneous order which he refers to as a catallaxy.⁶¹ A key concept that informs his work, catallaxy is a term derived from the “Greek verb *katallattein* (or *katallassein*) which meant, significantly, not only 'to exchange' but also 'to admit into the community' and 'to change from enemy into friend'”.⁶² Hayek explains that a market economy is not designed or controlled towards achieving specific ends (like an economy). The market system is a spontaneous *cosmos*, a catallaxy, in which individuals come together to trade and whose efforts are coordinated spontaneously to achieve their individual purposes.⁶³

Whyte describes Hayek’s market catallaxy as “a peaceful realm of voluntary relations grounded in mutual interest.”⁶⁴ In *The Fatal Conceit, The Errors of Socialism*, Hayek claims that trade preceded the state, and that it was trade and the resulting market order that led to the flourishing of civilization and the success of humanity. He argues that the role of government in the progress of civilization is exaggerated and when governments intruded on the mechanisms of the market, they damaged the “spontaneous improvement” resulting from the market order leading to the halting of cultural and social progress.⁶⁵

⁵⁸ Friedrich August, Hayek. *Individualism and Economic Order*. (Chicago: University of Chicago press, 1948), 19.

⁵⁹ Hayek, *Law Legislation and Liberty*, Vol.2. 110.

⁶⁰ Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, Vol.2. 109.

⁶¹ Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, Vol.2. 108.

⁶² Hayek, *The Confusion of Language in Political Thought*, 29.; Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, Vol.2. 108.

⁶³ Hayek, *The Confusion of Language in Political Thought*, 7.

⁶⁴ Whyte, *The Invisible Hand of Friedrich Hayek*, 80.

⁶⁵ Hayek, *The Fatal Conceit*, 43-44.

Hayek even criticises Aristotle for not recognising that Athens' success is not the result of political decisions but its central role in the market order.⁶⁶ In Hayek's anthropological theory, humans are naturally inclined towards trading with others, even from outside their communities, referring to this as a form of 'internationalisation', with territoriality being replaced by trading routes and markets, leading to cultures of "hospitality, protection, and safe passage."⁶⁷

This natural inclination is what allowed for human settlements to succeed and grow, leading to population growth and the spread of humanity over the whole globe.⁶⁸

"A chain reaction began: the greater density of population, leading to the discovery of opportunities for specialisation, or division of labour, led to yet further increases of population and per capita income that made possible another increase in the population. And so on."⁶⁹

This illustrates how the market order is the primary reason for the growth and development of the human species. If allowed to function without political interference the market order leads to civilisational prosperity and growth. This reflects the providential function of the market order.

From this perspective I extrapolate that for Hayek, humans are not primarily political animals as identified by Aristotle but *homo economicus*, or if we want to be more in line with Hayek's thought, humans are a 'trading animal'. This is a critical distinction that must be made.

Whilst the aim of the political animal is the success and growth of the state which in turn allows for the growth of the citizen, humans as trading animals, are actively engaging in an activity to attend to their individual needs and to pursue their individual aims. Whereas the political animal is a collectivist being, the trading animal is an individualist being. The state is a collectivist and artificial system, but the market order is a naturally occurring system that spontaneously brings together the disparate and individualised needs of all those that participate in it, a catallaxy.

"The decisive step which made such peaceful collaboration possible in the absence of common purposes was the adoption of barter or exchange. It was the simple recognition that different persons had different uses for the same things, and that often each of two individuals would benefit if he obtained something the other had, in return for his giving the other what he needed".⁷⁰

An essential aspect of the market order as a catallaxy is its propensity towards producing a state of peace and civilisation. In defining the market order as a catallaxy Hayek is intentionally

⁶⁶ Hayek, *The Fatal Conceit*, 45.

⁶⁷ Hayek, *The Fatal Conceit*, 40.

⁶⁸ Hayek, *The Fatal Conceit*, 40-41.

⁶⁹ Hayek, *The Fatal Conceit*, 40.

⁷⁰ Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty, Vol.2.*, 109.

referring to the exchange of goods and services, and, exchange of information and knowledge, and to the relational aspect that this exchange produces between humans.

A catallaxy also brings together human participants by allowing them to join the community. Additionally, as a catallaxy the market order transforms enemies into friends. This makes the market order a catalyst of peaceful relations and a state of peace. By bringing people into the community and transforming them into friends, a “globalised” or cosmopolitan society emerges whose intent is of providing the space where people can trade and pursue their own goals without interference from political structures.

This for Hayek is what a civilised and peaceful society is about. Society can flourish and develop not by imposing artificially designed systems and orders, but by participating in the naturally occurring systems which are in line with human nature.

In determining the market order as a catallaxy, Hayek is arguing that the market order is a *cosmos* as opposed to a *taxis*. Any organisation created and planned by humans, within which all parts are assigned specific tasks, like in a planned economy, is considered as *taxis*.⁷¹ However, “A *cosmos* will result from regularities of the behaviour of the elements which it comprises. It is in this sense endogenous, intrinsic or, as the cyberneticians say, a 'self-regulating' or 'self-organising' system.”⁷²

2.5 Providential Design

Hayek practically quotes Ferguson when stating that the market as a spontaneous order is, “indeed the result of human action but not the execution of human design”.⁷³ This begs the question of who the architect and designer of the market and the resulting social order is if it is not human made. Whereas Ferguson declares that it is a providential design by God, Hayek ascribes it to evolution and nature.

However, Lars Cornelissen (2017), Tim Christiaens (2019), and Jessica Whyte (2019) argue that Hayek’s conception of the market as a spontaneous order or *catallaxy*, relies on a theological discourse and structure that is provided by the conceptual formulation of providential design.

In his work Hayek avoids reference to providential design and as mentioned before does not attribute the emergence of the spontaneous order of the market to an external deity but to a form of evolutionary process. Luban, in his analysis of the concept of spontaneous order, also discards

⁷¹ Hayek, *The Confusion of Language in Political Thought*, 11.

⁷² Hayek, *The Confusion of Language in Political Thought*, 12.

⁷³ Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, 57.

the notion of providential mechanisms both in Hayek and in the 18th century Scottish authors who inspired Hayek.⁷⁴ However, Cornelissen, Christiaens, and Whyte still ascribe a form of providential thinking in Hayek's theory of the market as a spontaneous order with Christiaens stating that Hayek's "catallactic order is a *secularized version* of providential theology".⁷⁵

Furthermore, Whyte states that "Hayek distils from this [providential] tradition an account of social order in which the blind, self-interested actions of individuals converge spontaneously without the need for human *or divine* coordination".⁷⁶ Cornelissen also states that Hayek's "conception of the market does not escape a basic theological architecture"⁷⁷ whereby the market serves as a form of "*deus absconditus*".⁷⁸

While never invoking any supernatural or transcendental principles. Hayek does state that there are systems and mechanisms that ensure the prosperity and health of the orders and structures designed through a process of evolution and spontaneous order.⁷⁹ For Hayek "the twin concepts of evolution and spontaneous order enables us to account for the persistence of these complex structures, not by a simple conception of one-directional laws of cause and effect, but by a complex interaction of patterns".⁸⁰ Thus, the free market as a catallaxy with its intricacies and complexities, cannot be the result of human design but of something larger than the human mind or human intent can fathom or control.

Hayek argues that humans do not have the intellectual ability, knowledge, or information to organise and manage the market. The markets are 'superior information processors' that 'correctly utilize social "knowledge"' while the state 'fails to appreciate both social and natural reality for what it is'.⁸¹ Humans lack the necessary information, knowledge, and control over the mechanisms of the market, which implies that humans must submit to these market forces and not attempt to control them. Ideologies like socialism provide mistaken interpretations and 'embody a misguided view of reality'.⁸²

⁷⁴ Luban, *What Is Spontaneous Order?*, 70; 78.

⁷⁵ Christiaens, *The crypto-theology of Friedrich Hayek*, 374. (italics from original)

⁷⁶ Whyte, *The Invisible Hand of Friedrich Hayek*, 161. (italics from original)

⁷⁷ Lars, Cornelissen, "The Secularization of Providential Order: F. A. Hayek's Political-Economic Theology." *Political Theology* 18 (8): 660–676. (Taylor and Francis Online, 2017), 673.

⁷⁸ Tim, Christiaens, "Hayek's vicarious secularization of providential theology". *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, Vol.45 No.1, 71-95.(Sage Publishers, 2019b), 79.

⁷⁹ Hayek, *Law, Liberty and Legislation*, Vol. 3, 158.

⁸⁰ Hayek, *Law, Liberty and Legislation*, Vol.3, 158.

⁸¹ Joshua, Ramey, Neoliberalism as a Political Theology of Chance: The Politics of Divination, *Palgrave Communications* (Palgrave, 2015), 3.

⁸² Ramey, *Neoliberalism as a Political Theology of Chance: The Politics of Divination*, 3.

When discussing the issue of rental control, Hayek states that in Europe forms of rent control and social welfare have not led to helping people but the inverse, leading to a restriction in freedom and prosperity.⁸³ However should such externalities happen, there are systems in place that if allowed to function will restore “the order of the whole if it is disturbed by external influences”.⁸⁴ Similarly, Hayek, opposes the concept of distributive justice through manipulation or control of the market order.⁸⁵ Thus, for Hayek, humans or human institutions should not interfere with the market system.⁸⁶ In many ways this kind of reasoning is reminiscent of the notion of the inability and lack of authority of humans to interfere with the work of the divine.

This concept of the market as a spontaneous order exposes two fundamental difficulties, the problem of evil and the limits of human agency. Although for Hayek the unimpeded functioning of the market leads to prosperity and socio-economic growth, the question arises about the efficiency of and the validity of this claim in the context of the social and economic inequality that result from free market order. Similarly, in his endeavour to formulate a system that enhances the freedom of the individual, there is a clear thrust towards a limitation of human agency and freedom vis-à-vis the market. The only manner to respond to these challenges is to therefore refer to a position of providential design, although Hayek tries to deny this.

2.6 The Problem of Evil

Gentili states that, “The cosmic order of the market does not depend on the success or failure of individual enterprises”⁸⁷ which means that as a cosmos the market is indifferent to the fate of those who participate in it.⁸⁸ This kind of “indifference and impassivity”, which for Hayek are key qualities of the market order as a cosmos, are comparable to the qualities of the Pythagorean cosmos which is determined by mathematical ordering and not the individual will of those who are part of the cosmos.⁸⁹ This means that in the success of the market lays the possibility of the failure and suffering of some of the participants of the market since what counts is the positive outcome of the system as a whole, independent from the success of its individual parts. This inequality of outcomes poses as a challenge to the positive outlook of the market order.

⁸³ Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, 343.

⁸⁴ Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty, Vol.3.*, 158.

⁸⁵ Hayek, *The Fatal Conceit*, 118.

⁸⁶ Naomi, Beck. *Hayek and the Evolution of Capitalism*, (Chicago and London :The University of Chicago Press,2018), 95.

⁸⁷ Gentili, *The Age of Precarity*, 115.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

Hayek recognises that the progress and providence of the market can also have adverse effects on certain categories of people: “the benefits we receive from the spontaneous order of the market are the results of such changes, and will be maintained only if the changes are allowed to continue. But every change of this kind will hurt some organized interests; and the preservation of the market order will therefore depend on those interests not being allowed to prevent what they dislike.”⁹⁰ Notwithstanding, these adversities and interests should not lead towards interfering with the market or to limit the functions of the market.

The notion of providential design and the beneficial outcomes of such a design, are challenged by the recognition that human life is marred by pain and suffering. There is a dissonance between negative events such as disease, poverty, or famine and the existence of a providential design which transcends everything. Philosophers and theologians have attempted to show that it is not a contradiction that providence also allows for the existence of material negative outcomes and that the presence of these events does not disprove the possibility of a providential plan.

Agamben and Christiaens identify authors who present the existence of evil as an unavoidable secondary effect. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz utilised Chrysippus to support his position that we live in the best possible version of the world. He states that in discussing the role of disease and illness in the world, Chrysippus shows that it is not the intention and primary design of Nature to make humans sick, but this arises as a necessary consequence of the order of things.⁹¹ In Philo, providence does not only come with positive results, but are also accompanied by “negative collateral effects”.⁹² Similarly in Aquinas, evil is not the direct result of providential design but is a side effect of, or secondary cause of a good that must be achieved.⁹³

For Agamben the problem of evil in providential design must be interpreted in terms of the distinction between *providentia generalis* and *providentia specialis*.⁹⁴ *Providentia generalis* ensures a benevolent outcome for creation as a whole, implying that some individuals may have to be ‘sacrificed’ for the actualisation of God’s plan for humanity. To have forms of *providentia specialis* implies a direct intervention in the happenings of the cosmos which goes against the principle of blind participation in the mechanics of the universe as designed by God. The lack of a *providentia specialis* proves that market mechanisms are universal, objective, and unbiased,

⁹⁰ Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, Vol.3., 94.

⁹¹ Giorgio, Agamben. *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*. trans. Chiesa, Lorenzo. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 114.

⁹² Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 119.

⁹³ Christiaens, *Hayek’s Vicarious Secularization of Providential Theology*, 81.

⁹⁴ Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 116.

aiming only at fulfilling their intended function towards providing a holistic good. This non-interventionism is the same as the one formulated by Hayek with regards to human intervention on the mechanisms of the market order.

For providence to thrive and the market order to fulfil its benevolent *telos* it must be allowed to function without intrusion or external influences irrespective of the adverse effects that it has on some members of society or the seemingly negative results that are happening around us. Economic downturns, financial crashes, or economic crises are part of the spontaneous order and its mechanisms of change leading towards the achievement of stability and ordering. These are all part of the uncontrolled forces of the market which is working towards achieving the “necessary balance, between demand and supply, between exports and imports, or the like”.⁹⁵ Our duty as participants in the market is to accept the ‘mysterious’ ways of the market through blind faith.⁹⁶ In the same way that providential design requires the suffering of individuals to allow for the possibility of salvation through redemption, “Hayek similarly justifies the misery of the disadvantaged in the name of a future higher market order, but ignores the irremediable suffering along the way”.⁹⁷ We may argue that the infamous Thatcherite slogan “There is No Alternative” may well refer to the fact that there is no escape from the providential order of the market even if it entails the suffering of many.

In his critique of Hayek, Christiaens refers to the collateral damage that is created by the providential design of the market system.⁹⁸ Competition is part of the process of amelioration of the market system, prosperity is created through the competitive order that is part of the market. However, in such a process there are “winners and losers”.⁹⁹ The losers of the competitive order are the collateral damage of the providential system of the market system.¹⁰⁰ In this evaluation Christiaens identifies two categories of people who have to pay the price for the process of growth and prosperity of the market, those who adapt to the market but are the victims of the changes through ill fortune and those who do not succeed in adapting to the market.¹⁰¹ The pain and

⁹⁵ Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, 400.

⁹⁶ Christiaens, *Hayek’s Vicarious Secularization of Providential Theology*; Whyte, *The Invisible Hand of Friedrich Hayek*

⁹⁷ Christiaens, *Hayek’s Vicarious Secularization of Providential Theology*, 2.

⁹⁸ Christiaens, *Hayek’s Vicarious Secularization of Providential Theology*, 81.

⁹⁹ Christiaens, *Hayek’s Vicarious Secularization of Providential Theology*, 81.

¹⁰⁰ Christiaens, *Hayek’s Vicarious Secularization of Providential Theology*, 81.

¹⁰¹ Christiaens, *Hayek’s Vicarious Secularization of Providential Theology*, 81.

suffering of these individuals are a necessary consequence of the process of adaptation which leads to the prosperity of the whole.¹⁰²

Whyte also identifies the privations of sectors of the community as being an essential aspect of Hayek's market system, market "adaptation necessarily advantages some at the expense of others who may be thrown into penury by price rises or the destruction of industries".¹⁰³ In adapting to changes and seeking its internal balance the market as a spontaneous order creates turmoil and points of crisis. However, the internal mechanisms of the market will ultimately lead to the harm of some for the improvement of all and Hayek has full confidence and commitment to such a process and outcome.¹⁰⁴

Hayek's conviction in the market system and the unquestioning benevolence of the general outcome of its mechanisms is tantamount to a form of article of faith which is impervious to the signals of the negative phenomena being experienced. Such a faith in the system is therefore comparable to a form of catechism of providence. Blind faith and submission to God's will are signs of a true believer. These believers recognise that they do not have the ability to know or understand God's will and knowledge and because of this they must submit to his providence. This logic is also found in Hayek's conception of the market order, and the necessity of submission to its systems and rationale because they are unknowable to the individual.

2.7 Epistemological Gap

Humans do not have the mental acuity or intellectual ability to understand the complexities of the market and therefore do not have the capacity to correctly foretell the consequences of their decisions and interventions.¹⁰⁵ Scott A. Kirkland comments that for Lippmann, economic state planning is a form of 'Promethean pretence to providential governance' because the 'market itself is governed by divine rather than human design'.¹⁰⁶

For Lippmann all forms of social control are merely an approximation of what God's governance and mastery of the world entail.¹⁰⁷ "A doctrine, a policy, measures, can take account only of certain of the more immediate and obvious aspects of a situation", they do not reflect the infinite

¹⁰² Christiaens, *Hayek's Vicarious Secularization of Providential Theology*, 82.

¹⁰³ Whyte, *The Invisible Hand of Friedrich Hayek*, 164.

¹⁰⁴ Whyte, *The Invisible Hand of Friedrich Hayek*, 164.

¹⁰⁵ Lippmann, *The Good Society*, 32.

¹⁰⁶ Scott, A. Kirkland. "Hayekian Neoliberalism as Negative Political Theology," *Political Theology* (2020) 21(7):623-633, 629.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

variables or complexities that govern the market.¹⁰⁸ I argue that Lippman's position can be posited as a form of Cartesian 'trademark argument' proving the existence of God. The market succeeds in coordinating infinite possibilities to achieve the best outcomes because it was designed by an infinite intellect that has infinite knowledge. Therefore, the success of the market proves the existence of an infinite and benevolent intellect, God. The providential design of the market is evidence to the existence of God, and furthermore, since it directly forms part of God's will, then humans do not have the authority or intellect to intrude or control it.

Hayek adopts a comparable position, in arguing that markets are 'superior information processors' that 'correctly utilise social "knowledge"' while the state 'fails to appreciate both social and natural reality for what it is.'¹⁰⁹ Humans lack the necessary information, and knowledge, to successfully control the mechanisms of the market, which implies that humans have to submit themselves to these market forces and not attempt to control them. Ideologies like socialism are mistaken and 'embody a misguided view of reality.'¹¹⁰

For Hayek, 'the future cannot be predicted, let alone controlled' and therefore humans must entrust their fate to the market and its mechanisms.¹¹¹ He states that "We must rely on the fact that in certain conditions they will arrange themselves in a structure possessing certain characteristics. The use of these spontaneous forces, which in such instances is our only means of achieving the desired result, implies, then, that many features of the process creating the order will be beyond our control".¹¹²

In *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, Hayek unambiguously states that the market order is 'not made by man' and that "Its degree of complexity is not limited to what a human mind can master." Unlike *taxis*, a constructed order, a spontaneous order is complex and 'comprising more particular facts than any brain could ascertain or manipulate.'¹¹³ Unlike a constructed order, humans do not have the authority or sovereign power over a spontaneous order.

Gentili explains that in Hayek's cosmology, the market order is a system that permeates every aspect of reality.¹¹⁴ As Gentili argues, 'The rationality of the cosmos is superhuman', and thus

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ramey, *Neoliberalism as a political theology of chance*, 3.

¹¹⁰ Ramey, *Neoliberalism as a political theology of chance*, 3.

¹¹¹ Ramey, *Neoliberalism as a political theology of chance*, 6.

¹¹² Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, 230.

¹¹³ Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, 38.

¹¹⁴ Dario, Gentili. "The Order of the Cosmos: From Harmony to Governance by Algorithm," *Electra, The Numbers*, (2022), (15):51-60, 52.

humans are not the masters of their fate.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, as part of this cosmos, human life and its activities are part of the market order and its dynamics and therefore subject to its mechanisms.¹¹⁶ In this system, humans are subjected to the forces of the market and they must behave and act within the parameters of this system accepting their fate.

In accepting that the market order is beyond human comprehension, and transcends humanly constructed institutions and concepts, I argue that Hayek and Lippmann's logic is a form of negative theology. Negative theology recognises God's ineffability, God transcends human concepts and human language, and thought is unable to describe or explain God's nature. These limits are also reiterated in the Lippmann's and Hayek's formulation of the market order.

The main claim of an apophatic approach towards God is that if God cannot be described, then no authority can be claimed over Him. The inability to comprehend God, or to reduce His nature to human concepts, implies that humans have no authority over God, he transcends them.¹¹⁷ Similarly, if the market order transcends human comprehension, then no human institution can claim authority over the market. The epistemological gap is no longer an epistemic issue but is transformed into a question of a politico-theological nature.

2.8 Deus Absconditus and Providence

As mentioned earlier, Christiaens states that Hayek's market is structured in the form of a *deus absconditus*, a hidden God that exists but is hidden and unknowable. In this formulation, God is elusive, inscrutable, and beyond human understanding. He exists and His decisions have effects and repercussions on the world, however subjected to them, humans do not understand or know the reasons for these decisions. The attribute of incomprehensibility is a feature of Thomas Hobbes' God as represented in the *Leviathan* and a key aspect of Hayek's market order. This inaccessibility by human knowledge plays a central role in justifying the power and authority of the Leviathan in Hobbes and of the market order in Hayek.

The concept of *deus absconditus* acknowledges human epistemic limits, the need for faith and trust in the benevolence and sovereignty of God, and it suggests that there are divine reasons behind suffering and evil that are beyond human comprehension, and that faith requires trusting in God's ultimate goodness and justice. A review and analysis of Hayek's theory reveals that these

¹¹⁵ Ibid. 55.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ This is in direct contrast to the episode in Genesis 2:20 whereby God grants Adam authority over other living beings by allowing him to name them, therefore reducing them to human concepts.

aspects are identifiable in his formulation of the market order as a catallaxy. This logic further reinforces the providential design that is imbued in Hayek's formulation of the market.

The notion of a hidden God is a theological concept that profoundly influenced western authors. A God that hides from his creation is in stark contrast to the concept of a God that reveals Himself either through revelation, prayer, or reason. This aspect of God's nature is voiced for the first time in Isaiah 45:15 who proclaims that, 'Truly, you are a God who hides Himself.' Isaiah declares this when he cannot explain nor understand the trouble and tribulations that the people of Israel have are going through. God's plan for His people is hidden and cannot be understood.

Martin Luther, also adopts this concept of God, arguing that God hides from His people by allowing evil to befall them, and through His mysterious ways. God's providential design is inexplicable by human reason and logic. Luther agrees with the concept of an omnipotent God however, he also states that God's intentions for his creation is concealed and unknowable.¹¹⁸ The only guarantee that humans have about God's beneficent intentions is through his representative, Christ. For Luther, "we can know that God is ultimately merciful through Christ's redemption."¹¹⁹ The hidden nature of God's intentions can also be seen in Calvin's doctrine of predestination whereby everyone's fate and how it is part of God's plan is unknown.

Hobbes argues that in discussing the nature of God we can only ascertain His existence but have no knowledge of His nature and qualities.¹²⁰ He states that, "we understand nothing of *what he is*, but only *that he is*", that the nature and actions of God are incomprehensible.¹²¹ There is a gap between God's intentions and plans and the epistemological qualities of humans. Hobbes states that there are many things about God's word which are beyond reason, and which cannot be demonstrated through reason.¹²²

In addressing the theme of humanity's understanding of God, Hobbes shows that human concepts do not reflect the nature of God, and that the terminology used is merely a demonstration of worship and admiration of God, but not a reflection of His true nature.¹²³ In relating to God all humans can do, is pray and thank God to acknowledge Him as "author of all benefits" and not attempt to understand Him.¹²⁴ Therefore, in Hobbes, God is a *deus absconditus*

¹¹⁸ Rebecca Sophie, Marwege, "Hobbes' God Is Hidden and Idle." *Political Theology* 23 (8): 768–81. (Taylor and Francis Online: 2021), 773.

¹¹⁹ Marwege, *Hobbes' God Is Hidden and Idle*, 773.

¹²⁰ Thomas, Hobbes. *Leviathan*, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008), 262.

¹²¹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 262.

¹²² Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 247.

¹²³ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 241.

¹²⁴ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 241.

who has created nature according to specific rules and mechanisms, with the intent of progressing towards a beneficial outcome. However, humans do not have the mental capacity to understand this process, and their role is to acknowledge His existence, His power (potestas), and to submit to the mechanisms that are inbuilt in His creation which are the result of His power. Similarly, *The Constitution of Liberty*, portrays the role of the market order as a form of *deus absconditus*. For Hayek, the limit of human reason, and faith in the system applies to all forms of evolutionary emerging systems of rules such as moral codes and the market order. He argues that “submission to undesigned rules and conventions whose significance and importance we largely do not understand, this reverence for the traditional, ...is indispensable for the working of a free society.”¹²⁵ He also adds that “the system of values into which we are born supplies the ends which our reason must serve”.¹²⁶ This implies that individuals can only fulfil their role as members of the community if they abide by and adopt the moral codes of conduct of the community without questioning or scrutiny.

In his critique of Hayek, Gentili argues that for Hayek, moral systems are not the result of reason but of an evolutionary process. In such a system Hayek promotes the concept of a ‘conservative utopia’ which means that to maintain order, humans must not act towards transforming social order but to preserving order. More crucially, for Hayek, moral development and its progression is not the result of human reason and control but the product of ‘evolution’s rationality – unintelligible a priori’.¹²⁷ This all means that adhering to Hayek’s vision implies that humans must accept the ordering system and must not impose change but accept the process of evolution.

Furthermore, Hayek recognises that the progress and providence of the market can also have adverse effects on certain categories of people: “the benefits we receive from the spontaneous order of the market are the results of such changes, and will be maintained only if the changes are allowed to continue. But every change of this kind will hurt some organized interests; and the preservation of the market order will therefore depend on those interests not being allowed to prevent what they dislike.”¹²⁸ Here, Hayek holds a position like the one espoused by Luther, the mystery of the ways of a *deus absconditus* stems from the observation that negative outcomes supposedly discredits the claim of a providential and beneficent plan. Additionally, like Luther and Hobbes’ argument on God’s incomprehensibility, for Hayek humans do not have the intellectual or epistemological capacity to comprehend the design and mechanisms of the

¹²⁵ Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, 63.

¹²⁶ Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, 63.

¹²⁷ Gentili, *The Age of Precarity*, 78-79

¹²⁸ Hayek, *Law, Liberty and Legislation*, Vol.3, 94.

market order. This implies that humans should not interfere with the market order, just like humans should not interfere with God's plans according to Luther and Hobbes.

This aspect is further emphasised in Hayek, in his discussion on *The Legal and Political Philosophy of David Hume*, whereby he argues that Hume's conception of freedom is based on the position that only general laws are legitimate and should be followed.¹²⁹ These general laws are laws of nature that have evolved and adapted until a suitable form of order was established. Humans are not excluded from these laws and there should be no interference from human institutions like magistrates or sovereigns through discretionary powers.¹³⁰ As in the case of the inadequacy of humans to control the market, similarly humans do not have the ability to pass legal judgment and construct laws, because of 'the narrow bounds of human understanding' and 'their inevitable ignorance.'¹³¹ By utilising Hume, Hayek entrenches his position that because of 'the imperfection of all human reason', only harmful outcomes can result from the enactment of 'political organisation' like the state.¹³² Peace, liberty and justice can only come to be if the laws of nature, in the form of general laws, are allowed to act without human intrusion.¹³³ This framing of Hume's political philosophy conceives of the laws of nature as providential because it leads to the attainment of 'greatest political goods'¹³⁴ if allowed to progress and develop autonomously.¹³⁵ Providence thrives and the market order fulfils its benevolent *telos* if they are allowed to function without intrusion or external influences irrespective of the adverse effects that it has on some members of society or the seemingly negative results that are happening. Economic downturns, financial crashes, or economic crises are part of the spontaneous order and its mechanisms of administering change leading towards the achievement of stability and ordering.

¹²⁹ Friedrich August Hayek, *The Legal and Political Philosophy of David Hume*. *Il Politico*, Vol. 28, No. 4, 691-704, (Rubettino Editore, December 1963).

¹³⁰ Hayek, *The Legal and Political Philosophy of David Hume*, 701-703.

¹³¹ Hayek, *The Legal and Political Philosophy of David Hume*, 699.

¹³² Hayek, *The Legal and Political Philosophy of David Hume*, 704.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ In his analysis of Hume, Hayek, refers to Hume's posthumous work *Dialogues on Natural Religion*. In this essay Hume offers a critique of traditional notions of God and arguing that humans do not have the intellectual capacity to understand the true nature of God. This leads to a form of negative theology that this chapter identifies in the work of Hayek and Lippmann.

These are all part of the uncontrolled forces of the market which is working towards achieving the “necessary balance, between demand and supply, between exports and imports, or the like”.¹³⁶ 2.9 Leviathan

The Leviathan is Hobbes response to the *deus absconditus* and the providential design. To deal with self-interested human nature and the inability to comprehend the providential plan for humanity, a new entity must be created to rationalise and act in manner that is logically sound and explainable. Furthermore, the role of this entity is to offer direction and stability to those who submit to its authority. This entity is referred to by Hobbes as the Leviathan.

Hobbes uses the concept of *deus absconditus* to argue for the necessity of a powerful, earthly sovereign, a commonwealth which is represented by the image of the Leviathan. In a world where God's will and plan is hidden, the sovereign becomes the visible, comprehensible source of order and law. By acknowledging God's hiddenness, Hobbes limits the influence of religious authorities that claim special knowledge of God's will. This is crucial for maintaining political stability and preventing conflicts. Hobbes proposes a clear separation between divine authority and civil authority, this separation is essential for a stable political order.

Hobbes “elevates the authority of the sovereign to that of a mortal God in the *interregnum* period and removes the prospect of God's immediate interference.”¹³⁷ Carl Schmitt, places an emphasis on the notion of the sovereign as a *deus mortalis* arguing that in such a conception the state is not a defender of a peace enacted by God, but is instead the creator of peace (*Creator Pacis*).¹³⁸ For Hobbes, the state has a divine nature because of its supreme authority, because of fear for their existence atomised individuals come together and enter a contract by which they “submit to the strongest power”, the sovereign.¹³⁹

Hobbes describes this sovereign, or Leviathan, as the reduction of all wills “unto one will” and “to submit their wills, everyone to his will, and their judgments, to his judgment.”¹⁴⁰ This submission of individual interests to the interest of the Leviathan is Hobbes response to ascertain peace and stability.

Hobbes conceives of the Leviathan as an artificial entity that acts as a monolithic will. In discussing the Trinity and the role of a hidden God, Hobbes makes the distinction between

¹³⁶ Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, 400.

¹³⁷ Marwege, *Hobbes' God is Hidden and Idle*, 778.

¹³⁸ Carl, Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes; Meaning and Failure of a Political Symbol*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 32-33.

¹³⁹ Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, 33.

¹⁴⁰ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 114.

natural and artificial, whereby he states that a natural person is speaking or acting out their own volition and mind, whereas an artificial person is someone, or something, “representing the words and actions of another.”¹⁴¹ In the context of a hidden God, His plan and will have to be represented by someone else because He has to remain hidden from the people. It is therefore the role of ‘artificial persons’ to voice and actualise His plan, as shown by the figures of Moses, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost.¹⁴² Thus for Hobbes, the Leviathan, is an artificial person who is replacing the role of the immortal God, by being a mortal god, and acting without restrictions from those he represents, who willingly submitted their will to his.

Hobbes doctrine of the *deus absconditus* allows for a separation between state and Church, and a submission of the Church, and other institutions or organisations, to the power of the state. In this format, the state becomes a secularised Church, that demands the complete trust and faith of its citizens. I argue that in Hayek there is a similar logic at play except that it offers an opposing conclusion, i.e. that the state is subservient to religion (the market), because of a divergent premise from Hobbes.

In his work Hayek, is critical of Hobbes positions and arguments. In *The Fatal Conceit*, Hayek rejects Hobbes notion of primitive individualism and the state of war of all against all, for Hayek primitive societies engaged in collectivist behaviour.¹⁴³ Furthermore, Hayek is critical of the legal positivist, rationalist, and contractualist position proposed by Hobbes. Hayek argues that these are erroneous¹⁴⁴ and anthropomorphic¹⁴⁵ forms of thinking. However, in juxtaposing Hayek’s ideas to Hobbes’ it is evident that the major dichotomy between the two authors is their position on ‘natural’ and ‘artificial’. It is within this positioning that Hayek is critical of Hobbes political theory.

Like Hobbes’ *deus absconditus*, Hayek’s market as a catallaxy creates a division between that which has evolved naturally and that which is constructed naturally. This distinction allows for the formulation of a political vision that demarcates a separation between the state and other institutions like the market order. Whilst for Hobbes, the state is sovereign and has authority over everything, thus guaranteeing peace and stability, for Hayek, the separation of institutions is what ensures and protects the freedoms of the individual, allowing for peace and stability to prosper.

¹⁴¹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 106.

¹⁴² Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 108.

¹⁴³ Hayek, *The Fatal Conceit*, 12.

¹⁴⁴ Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, 181.

¹⁴⁵ Hayek, *Law, Liberty and Legislation, Vol 1*, 10.

For Hayek, Hobbes' state is a form of planned society and therefore, antithetical to the open society that he proposes.

Like Hobbes, Hayek also views the state as an artificial entity, a constructed institution, that, as mentioned before, came about after the establishment of trade and markets. For Hayek, the state is a form of *taxis*, not a spontaneous order that emerged naturally. In Hayek's view, the state does not have authority over the market and has no legitimacy in enacting policies that interfere with the market order and its mechanisms. While for Hobbes, the state as an artificial person gains legitimacy as a sovereign power because it results from a covenant or contract, for Hayek, only a spontaneous order has legitimacy because it results from the natural order of things in which individual interests are coordinated without human intervention.

Furthermore, in Hayek the market order has supremacy over law and state power, effectively making it the dominant authority instead of the state. In such a reading, the market order takes the form of the mortal god, a Leviathan, whose mechanisms and principles guide and direct all other participants and social institutions. Like Hobbes's construct, Hayek's market order is about the submission of everyone's will and reason to the rules and principles that govern the market order.

Submitting to the market order, as a 'natural' Leviathan is a form of dogmatic thinking, a religious faith that does not jeopardise the legitimacy of traditional norms and market norms as the most effective and efficient rules possible which have been selected through a process of social evolution.¹⁴⁶ Through his appeal to the process of evolution, Hayek is establishing the twin justification of moral codes and market rules. He presents both of these as being good "because they are evolved, adaptive, and have stood the test of time".¹⁴⁷ Therefore, any calls towards changes in the moral codes, or economic system, based on principles of social justice are to be considered illegitimate just like any proposals to intervene in the market to redistribute resources to help those in need.¹⁴⁸

Therefore, I argue that in Hayek, the market order has a dual role, that of *deus absconditus* and of Leviathan, simultaneously. The market is the dominant authority or sovereign authority over all other authorities, a Leviathan. As an authority, the market order sends signals to its participants, however the intentions and processes are too complex for humans to comprehend, and therefore

¹⁴⁶ Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, 63.

¹⁴⁷ Brown, *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism*, 106.

¹⁴⁸ Brown, *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism*, 107.

remain hidden, making it a *deus absconditus naturalis*, or in other words, a hidden god that represents itself.

In interpreting Hayek's market order as a Leviathan and hidden god, human rationality loses its function as the agent of human action and instead it is the market that determines how human agency should act for the benefit of the system.¹⁴⁹ For Hayek the role of reason is to accept its limitations and to avoid the temptation to organise social affairs and to allow "the undirected and spontaneously grown". He therefore makes "an appeal to men to see that we must use our reason intelligently and that, in order to do so, we must preserve that indispensable matrix of the uncontrolled and non-rational which is the only environment wherein reason can grow and operate effectively".¹⁵⁰ This implies that for Hayek, reason loses its authority (especially if one takes into context its epistemological limitations) and is reduced to an evolutionary tool that humans use as an aid to navigate and adapt to the changes and mechanisms of the market system, thus submitting their will to the will of the market.

Thus, Hayek's conceptualisation of the human as *homo economicus* differs from that of other authors such as Milton Friedman or Gary Becker. Hayek's *homo economicus* is not a rational, logical, and calculative actor but is instead someone who through reason recognises the limits of reason and therefore submits to the directions provided by the market.¹⁵¹ As his ideas developed over time Hayek stated that the concept of cybernetics is suitable to describe the kind of system loop that he associates with a spontaneous order.¹⁵² The market is an information system that cannot be comprehended or understood by humans because it is too vast and complex.¹⁵³ Therefore, humans are parts of the feedback loop system and their role is to receive and act upon the information that is provided to them. In this sense, the notion of cybernetics as a form of steering or piloting (*kybernētēs*) becomes even more pertinent. Under the rule of a Hayekian Leviathan, the human actor is merely a reactionary agent programmed to behave in a predictable manner that fulfils the needs of the market system. As Hayek states, "The

¹⁴⁹ Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, 69.

¹⁵⁰ Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, 69.

¹⁵¹ Nicholas, Gane, "Competition: A Critical History of a Concept" *Theory, Culture & Society* Vol. 37(2) 31–59. (Sage Journals, 2020),47-48.

¹⁵² Hayek, *Law Liberty and Legislation*, xii.

¹⁵³ Philip, Mirowski. "Postface: Defining Neoliberalism" in: Mirowski, P. (ed.) & Plehwe, D. (ed.) *The Road to Mont Pelerin: The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press,2009),435.

remunerations which the market determines are, as it were, not functionally related with what people have *done*, but only with what they *ought* to do.”¹⁵⁴

In this context the notion of freedom is redefined, not only as negative freedom but as “an epistemic virtue”, or the ability to use the knowledge in the world to help adapt one’s personal behaviour as a response to the signals sent by the market system.¹⁵⁵ Furthermore, for Hayek the free market must also serve as a moral code to be followed, his economic theories must serve as a normative system that guides human behaviour in the same manner that a moral code would.¹⁵⁶ Thus, the market as formulated by Hayek, always functions as a means of defining the conduct of those who participate in it, as expected under a Leviathan.

Although the market creates forms of conduct such as the competitive order that should be obeyed and followed, this does not mean that there is an understanding of these mechanisms. Like when dealing with the sacred, the human subject can only leave themselves open to signs and respond to these accordingly. This does not imply one’s knowledge of God’s plan, but merely a responsiveness to it. This also applies to Hayek’s conception of the market.

The unknowability of the market creates a form of negative thinking akin to negative theology whereby one can assert what the market is not, for example it is not an economy, and it is not a human construct, and not what it is. The unintelligibility of the market (like the unintelligibility of the sacred) creates the space for inferring the limitations of political and sovereign authority over the market activities because that which is sacred is external to human authority.

2.10 Negative Political Theology

Lippman’s and Hayek’s conception of the market can be described as a form of negative theology, because of the prominence given to the mysterious or unknowable nature of the market. As Kirkland argues, the market is unknowable because each market actor has a separate and individualised set of interests and “it progressively unfolds and changes through time”.¹⁵⁷ For Kirkland this unfolding through time, provides the market with an eschatological discourse since current decisions and actions are the promise of a future outcome that will unfold.¹⁵⁸ In this interpretation the market order becomes the unfulfilled or unfinished plan that promises a positive and better future.

¹⁵⁴ Hayek, *Law, Liberty and Legislation*, Vol 2., 116.

¹⁵⁵ Mirowski, *Postface: Defining Neoliberalism*, 439.

¹⁵⁶ Mirowski, *Postface: Defining Neoliberalism*, 440.

¹⁵⁷ Kirkland, *Hayekian Neoliberalism as Negative Political Theology*, 631.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

The unknown possibilities and the infinite number of outcomes offered by a free market provides the space for individual liberty to thrive. This is in direct contrast with a controlled economy, in which the possible outcomes are reduced, and therefore individual freedom is reduced, because of state action and control.¹⁵⁹

Kirkland argues that the aim to remove economic relations and economic activity from state intervention is a form of negative political theology.¹⁶⁰ Kirkland elaborates that in Lippmann and Hayek the market is treated as a 'sublime object' that must be extricated and defended from 'from the interventionist planning forces of collectivism'.¹⁶¹ The aim of the state is to encase the market from political interference or manipulation. The purpose and legitimacy of the law is to 'protect the sovereign economic process'.¹⁶²

Through the deployment of negative political theology, neoliberal authors show that the state does not have jurisdiction or authority over the market. The market as natural law or as a spontaneous order, is transformed into a sovereign entity that is outside the grasp of political authority. This is further emphasised by the market as a mystery which cannot be known and therefore controlled, and thus must be allowed to fulfil its progress through time.¹⁶³

Negative political theology is a form of delegitimation and critique of political structures and political power.¹⁶⁴ Negative political theology asserts an inability of the human intellect to fully grasp and replicate transcendental concepts such as justice. Therefore, because of human limitations in terms of imperfection and limited knowledge, negative political theology offers a critique of political theological claims on authority and state power.¹⁶⁵

A careful reading of Lippmann's and Hayek's conception of the market order shows why Kirkland explains it as a form of negative political theology. In asserting the sovereignty of the market, both Lippmann and Hayek are effectively putting into question the limits of state authority.

In *The Public Philosophy*, Lippmann sets out to explain and further develop his notion of natural law, which he deems as the response to the pluralism of the modern age.¹⁶⁶ Natural law,

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. 624.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid. 632.

¹⁶⁴ David, Newheiser, "Why the World Needs Negative Political Theology," *Modern Theology* (2020), 36(1): 5-12, 6.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Walter, Lippmann. *Essays in The Public Philosophy*. (Boston & Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1955), 108-109.

according to Lippmann, originated from reason and represented the rational order that governs the world.¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, he quotes Otto von Guericke to state that natural law is the highest law and that all earthly powers are subject to it, “above the Pope and above the Kaiser, above the ruler and above the sovereign people...above the whole community of mortals.”¹⁶⁸ For Lippmann, natural law guarantees freedom because it controls and limits the power of the sovereign.¹⁶⁹

Lippmann also outlines the discussion on the foundations of natural law as either the decree of ‘an omniscient and omnipotent’ God or ‘as the principles of the nature of things’¹⁷⁰ framing this discussion in terms of naturalism and supernaturalism.¹⁷¹ However, for Lippmann the most critical aspect of natural law is that it is an objective truth that exists and can be discovered, and must be obeyed.¹⁷² Therefore, the market as natural law makes it an objective institution whose rules must be obeyed because they are the highest law.

In Hayek, the market as a cosmos or catallaxy, implies that it is self-reliant and does not require reference to institutions that are external to it. From a political perspective, this means that the market does not require reference to the state or society to justify its processes.

Analogous to Carl Schmitt; Lippmann’s, and Hayek’s conception of the market order as a sovereign and autonomous institution with naturally inherent constitutive powers, traces its roots in theological reasoning. However, they disagree with Schmitt’s political theology because whilst Schmitt justifies the emergence of the state as a secular replacement of divine authority,¹⁷³ for Lippmann and Hayek, the market is superior to the state because it is the very embodiment of ‘divine’ design. For them the market order, conceived as natural law or spontaneous order, embodies divine authority. In describing natural law as having power over kings, Lippmann is asserting that the market order has authority over the political order, and not vice versa.

Furthermore, for Schmitt ‘the sovereign is he who decides on the exception’¹⁷⁴ and therefore has the power to intervene directly and cause an exception and lead to a miracle.¹⁷⁵ The state, as envisioned by Lippmann and Hayek does not have this power of intervention, implying that

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. 173-174.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. 174.

¹⁶⁹ Lippmann, *The Good Society*, 5-6.

¹⁷⁰ Lippmann, *Public Philosophy*, 174.

¹⁷¹ Ibid. 174.

¹⁷² Ibid. 175.

¹⁷³ Carl, Schmitt. *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*. trans. by George, Shwab. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 36.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. 5.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. 36.

neoliberalism has ‘banished the miracle from this world.’¹⁷⁶ A negative political theology therefore, paves the way for economic theology to become the dominant paradigm, superseding political theology and thus allowing economic power to replace sovereign or political power as the highest authority.

Geminello Preterossi asserts that neoliberal economic theology¹⁷⁷ is a form of ‘anti-politics.’ Through the extraction of the market order from politics, human behaviour has become depoliticised leaving only price equilibrium and competition as the rules that govern life.¹⁷⁸ Proponents of neoliberal economic theology undertake a process of naturalisation.¹⁷⁹ The framing of market rules as natural laws, creates a market fundamentalism. The market is perceived as more truthful and essentialist than the political institutions that can be deemed as untrustworthy and unreliable. Thus, the market order is presented as a reliable and trustworthy alternative to these political institutions because of its ability of self-organising equilibrium which is perceived as objective in its mechanism and outcomes.

The replacement of the political with the economic happens through a process that Brown refers to as ‘economisation’. She argues that through this process political concepts and values are replaced by market concepts and values, and simultaneously through governance politics becomes management.¹⁸⁰ From here, I infer that through this dual process of economisation and governance politics is reduced to the original definition of *oikonomia*, or management of the household because all political activity is reduced to managing society to fulfil the requirements of the market. (Since the market is a cosmology, then everyone inhabits the market, thus making it an abstract form of household.) This kind of market fundamentalism can only exist with a theological foundation that replaces other theological systems.

As referenced previously in this chapter, Hayek frames Hume’s legal and political thought as an antecedent of his own work and ideas. He presents Hume’s political theory as a form of

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Whilst political theology requires the existence of a transcendent order, economic theology revolves around the role of an immanent order. As Giorgio Agamben argues, the theory of the sovereignty of the state relies on a transcendent authority from where it derives its power, whilst biopolitics (or governmentality) is the result of the immanent ordering of the market, *oikonomia*. (The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011)

¹⁷⁸ Geminello, Preterossi. *Teologia Politica e Diritto*. (Bari-Roma: Editori Laterza, 2022), 209-210.

¹⁷⁹ Emanuele, Alloa. “Suum Cuique. Capitalismo, Cibernetica, Teologia” in *Teologie e Politica: Genealogie e Attualità*, ed. Elettra Stimilli. (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2019), 88-89.

¹⁸⁰ Wendy, Brown. *Undoing the Demos, Neoliberalism’s Stealth Revolution*. (New York: Zone Books, 2015), 207.

evolutionary thinking that is on par with his own.¹⁸¹ In his essay, Hayek argues that Hume's 'theory of the growth of human institutions' forms the basis of the evolutionary anthropology of Adam Ferguson, Adam Smith, and Dugal Stewart.¹⁸² Like Hayek, these authors identified the existences of naturally emergent institutions that precede government (or political institutions) and are superiors to them.

Just like Hayek borrowed the concept of spontaneous order from Ferguson, he also identifies a similar concept in Hume. Hayek argues that for Hume, 'Law and morals, like language and money, are...not deliberate inventions but grown institutions or < formations >'.¹⁸³ Similarly, Hayek locates in Hume fundamental laws of nature that designate the natural predisposition to private property and exchange of goods.¹⁸⁴ Thus, for Hume, the general laws to be followed are a reflection of the laws of nature and the natural emergence on systems of exchange based on supply and demand.¹⁸⁵ According to Hayek, these laws of nature are '*antecedent to government*'¹⁸⁶ and that order can only be achieved if these rules of conduct are obeyed.¹⁸⁷ Therefore, according to Hayek it is in Hume that we find the formulation of liberty as the result of the application of naturally emerging order that is autonomous from political decisions.

Although the negative political theology found in neoliberal thought may offer the foundations to support the limits of political power, thus leading to a defence of individual freedom against totalitarian politics, this does not mean that there are no risks or threats associated to it. The freedom espoused by this discourse is a negative freedom which disallows forms of intervention including measures to help those in need.

As Miguel Vatter highlights, in Hayek's legal and political thought, laws do not command or prescribe action but create clear boundaries of non-interference.¹⁸⁸ It is only in such a legal-juridical system can the spontaneous order of the market come to be and flourish out of the self-interested actions of individuals.¹⁸⁹ A spontaneous order is "an order which cannot be mastered

¹⁸¹ Hayek, *The Legal and Political Philosophy of David Hume*, 702-703.

¹⁸² Hayek, *The Legal and Political Philosophy of David Hume*, 695.

¹⁸³ Hayek, *The Legal and Political Philosophy of David Hume*, 697.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Hayek, *The Legal and Political Philosophy of David Hume*, 696.

¹⁸⁶ Hayek, *The Legal and Political Philosophy of David Hume*, 698. (italics in original)

¹⁸⁷ Hayek, *The Legal and Political Philosophy of David Hume*, 696.

¹⁸⁸ Miguel, Vatter. 'Foucault and Hayek: Republican Law and Liberal Civil Society' in *The Government of Life, Foucault, Biopolitics, and Neoliberalism*, ed. by Vanessa, Lemm and Miguel, Vatter, 163-184 (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 175.

¹⁸⁹ Vatter, *Foucault and Hayek: Republican Law and Liberal Civil Society*, 174.

and on which everyone is absolutely dependent,”¹⁹⁰ implying that it is outside of the law and the jurisdiction of political power. Vatter emphasises this aspect when he states that neoliberalism creates a discourse of government that “places political power, that is, the power to make law, at the mercy of “political economy.””¹⁹¹ This state of affairs exposes the consequences of a depoliticised form of governmental thinking, that is found in economic theology. Furthermore, it also brings forth the risks of negative political theology, whereby the sacredness of the market as a spontaneous order, places it outside of the jurisdiction of legal and political authority, effectively placing outside of control and in control.

As affirmed by Hayek, subjugation to market forces implies accepting the risks and potentially negative outcomes for individuals that may occur. These changes and processes should not be disturbed or paused to curtail or prevent harm caused to certain groups or individuals. The purpose of the market is to produce a general positive outcome, even at the cost of hurting some.¹⁹² Although the general outcome of the market may be positive, this does not mean that the effects will be equally positive or will be beneficial to everyone. This implies that if we accept the market as a sublime and mysterious institution that operates autonomously, then the state has no authority to interfere even to protect those that are vulnerable to the changes in the market.

These changes expose individuals to new risks and threats, creating “a new field of “insecurity” generated by the very unpredictability and spontaneity of which characterises spontaneous orders.”¹⁹³ To borrow from Kirkland’s eschatological definition of the market order, in the progress of the market there are those who are saved and those who are damned, and this outcome should not be altered or interfered with. Using negative political theology to safeguard the market order poses the risk of disavowing forms of political intervention that can help and protect people from the outcomes of market ebbs and flows.

Additionally, the market order as envisioned by Hayek is not based on the principle of exchange but on competition¹⁹⁴, which inherently creates winners and losers. Furthermore, if Hayek’s theory of the spontaneous order is based on the process of evolution, this implies a process of natural selection.¹⁹⁵ This process of evolution and selection is the same one that Hayek himself

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Vatter, *Foucault and Hayek: Republican Law and Liberal Civil Society*, 175.

¹⁹² Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty, Vol.3.*, 94.

¹⁹³ Vatter, *Foucault and Hayek: Republican Law and Liberal Civil Society*, 180.

¹⁹⁴ Jörg Spieker, “Defending the Open Society: Foucault, Hayek, and the Problem of Biopolitical Order”, *Economy and Society, Vol . 42 No.2*, 304-321, (2012), 310.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

identifies in the work of Hume.¹⁹⁶ In a process of natural selection there are those who succeed and those who fail, thus further emphasising that the general positive outcome of the market order, comes at the cost of those who lose the selection.

Irrespective of whether we focus on an eschatological or evolutionist narrative, they both share the same religious concept of sacrifice. The lives of individuals are secondary to the progress or stability of the market order. As Brown states, the necessities of the individual are secondary to the “vicissitudes and exigencies” of the macroeconomic.¹⁹⁷ The notion of sacrifice implies that every individual belongs “to an order larger than oneself” and that requires the “destruction or deprivation of life in the name of sustaining or regenerating that order.”¹⁹⁸ The notion of sacrifice has become embedded in neoliberal discourse to such a degree that it has become part of the normal practices of private enterprises but more dangerously of public policymaking.

2.11 Conclusion

In assessing Hayek’s notion of the market order catallaxy and the resulting social order, it is challenging to identify and conceptualise the type of power that is at play. While it is undeniable that the market holds supreme authority and legitimacy, the state still plays a role in ensuring that the authority and supremacy of the market is maintained. For example, the state has the role of promoting and if necessary, produce a competitive order where there is none.¹⁹⁹ However, in this limited function of state, it is evident that the sovereign power of the state has been rendered obsolete through its genuflecting to the will of the market order.

The sovereignty of the state is limited to its role as guarantor of economic activity and protector of the market order. The state functions in terms of and following market mechanisms and market rationality, and the state owes its legitimacy to economic success and growth.²⁰⁰ Furthermore, in formulating the role of the state as a participant in the market order, Hayek defines the rule of law as a formal law, or the “opposite of a plan”.²⁰¹ A formal law is the general rules of the game by which every individual must play and participate, including the state.²⁰² The state therefore becomes one of the many players on the market arena and it must also abide by the legal framework that it has enacted, additionally just like other participants, the state does not have

¹⁹⁶ Hayek, *The Legal and Political Philosophy of David Hume*, 703.

¹⁹⁷ Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 211-212.

¹⁹⁸ Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 215.

¹⁹⁹ Gane, *Competition: A Critical History of a Concept*, 47.

²⁰⁰ Brown, *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism*, 42.

²⁰¹ Michel, Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France 1978-1979*, (New York: Picador, 2008), 172.

²⁰² Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 173.

the knowledge, information or control over the outcome of the market.²⁰³ Thus the state, like every other player, is subject to the mechanisms of a hidden god that determines present and future outcomes.

The market as a *deus absconditus* requires blind faith and trust, for this trust to reach its apex, everyone must submit to the power and authority of the market making it a Leviathan, that has authority over all other institutions. Submission to the market order, guarantees freedom and stability that civilization strives for because it allows humans to act according to their self-interest and individual freedom, and to partake in their natural predisposition, trade.

The implications of the market order as Leviathan and hidden god, reveal the challenges that a neoliberal economic and political system place on society. Firstly, the legitimacy of the political system, or the state, are determined by the market order. This leads to the state being submissive to the market and unable to make amends or corrections to it. Additionally, the market order as authority leads to the market dictating policy instead of the inverse, as was experienced in the 2008 financial crisis. Finally, by having the market order playing this dual role, it permeates every aspect of human reality thus enabling it to fulfil its *potestas* that is beyond human control and comprehension. This leads us to rephrase Schmitt's commentary on Hobbes' authority of the state, *because the market order is supreme, it possesses divine character*.

Lippmann and Hayek use nature to frame the market order as a system that is self-contained and autonomous and therefore extricated from political control. For them political authority is oppressive, whilst the market is liberating because it operates in a blind and objective manner. Furthermore, they argue that the inherent market mechanisms produce an overall beneficial outcome determined by its design. As participants in the economy, humanity is participating in the unbiased, objective, and providential design of the market order. For these authors individual freedom is guaranteed only through the protection of the sovereignty of the market from state intervention.

The major threat of neoliberal market ideology lies in its opposition to political authority. In Schmitt, the sovereign gains legitimacy through God's authority, therefore gaining the power to intervene and produce miracles. In neoliberal economic theology, the sovereign relinquishes this authority. Neoliberalism excludes the state from the workings of the market by delegitimising it from participating in or administering the market. This effectively puts citizens at the mercy of the market, without the protective measures of the state, they are left vulnerable to the

²⁰³ Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 173.

homeostatic processes of the market. This places all of humanity at the mercy of the market order in a manner that is analogous to humanity being at God's mercy.

Although, Hayek invokes Hume's legal and political philosophy as his antecedent, there is much that is Hobbesian in Hayek's formulation of the role of the market order. I agree with Jörg Spieker that Hayek's political project is similar to Hobbes' in that the process of ordering is a "project of security and pacification"²⁰⁴Peace and stability come to exist in a neoliberal system through adherence and acceptance of the market order. The market as a spontaneous order through its processes achieves a state of homeostasis or stability, akin to the stability envisioned in the Hobbesian state. The concept of *catallaxy* itself is about turning enemies into friends, which implies the necessity for having forms of discipline and control. Additionally, the market order as a catallaxy has the authority and power to sacrifice anyone for the benefit of restoring its stability and progress.

This becomes more evident in the process of subjectification created by neoliberal forms of governmentality showing how pastoral care is not restricted to conceiving of those who are saved but to also declare those who are damned. This discourse of salvation comes forward in the moral categories created and enacted by neoliberal thinking and its efficacy is exposed in the process of neoliberal governmentality. These themes are explored in the next chapters of this thesis.

This chapter emphasises my position that neoliberal thinking, especially in Hayek, is a form of theological thinking hidden under a veneer of naturalistic discourse. The concepts of nature or evolution utilised by Hayek, are not grounded in scientific empirical thought, but are formulated as metaphysical concepts. Nature and evolution in Hayek, are not forces of nature, but universal forces that are outside of human control and understanding like God. One can replace the scientific and secular language used by Hayek with theological concepts and have the same reasoning and doctrine. It is therefore evident that the secular use of theological concepts is ubiquitous within neoliberal thought that proposes the market as a cosmic order.

It is my position that the zeitgeist of the twenty-first century, dominated by neoliberal governments and policies, can only be understood within this theological discourse. Economic libertarian ideologies have come to dominate political elections, and more critically social interests have become secondary to economic interests. The never-ending cycles of financial crises have exposed a system whereby the market dictates policies and political decisions, both on a national and global level. Governments do not attempt to curtail economic forces but simply

²⁰⁴ Spieker, *Defending the Open Society*, 318.

act to adapt to the needs of the market, even at the risk of exposing human lives to danger and insecurity. The market order has replaced God as the embodiment of the absolute power that controls and manages the cosmos. The market system is the new *logos* or cosmic reason.

Furthermore, the exposition of the theological discourse of neoliberal thinking also allows to explain the forms of technological determinism that have arisen with the dominance of information, digital, and AI technologies. These technologies have become an intrinsic part of the current economic system and are inextricable from the workings of the market order. Furthermore, in the same manner that the market as a spontaneous order is autonomous from human authority and control, there is a drive to have technological advancement unhindered from political, legal, or ethical limitations, so that the full potential of technological progress can be achieved.

I argue that in a cosmology ordered through the principle of competition, technology becomes an extension of the political economic structures, creating an interwoven techno-economic framework that uses technology as a tool, but follows an economic logic. This framework creates new approaches to neoliberal governmentality which lead to the production of new forms of life.

Chapter 3: Neoliberalism and Moral Discourse

3.1 Introduction

It has been surmised that political theology and economic theology are secularised versions of theological discourse and concepts. Theological discourse does not only form the foundations of society's cosmology but also acts as the premise for the regulation of human activities and human relations. This implies that there is a direct correlation between accepted theological truths and the moral structures that are set in place. This argument is the basis of the next chapters which will sequentially explore the theological discourse of neoliberalism, the regulation of human activities, leading to new forms of subjectivity and being.

The aim of this chapter is to show how moral structures and value systems serve as a means of guiding and judging human activities and relations. Economic activity therefore also falls under the sphere of influence of these value systems and societies tend to organise and legislate economic activity in terms of these accepted norms. This type of regulation can be found in various forms throughout different cultures and historical periods. In his work, Graeber refers to the attitude of the Medieval Catholic Church towards usury and moneylenders, observing that officially the practice of moneylending for an interest was forbidden by the Church authorities.¹

However, with the development of capitalism and the introduction of a new cosmological order that envisions the world as a cosmic marketplace, there is a reversal of roles. Moral and religious values are no longer a means of scrutinising economic activity, instead economic activity becomes the measure and source of morality. As Graeber argues, "To tell the history of debt, then, is also necessarily to reconstruct how the language of the marketplace has come to pervade every aspect of human life – even to provide the terminology for the moral and religious voices raised against it."² With the further development of a market economy, economic categories have also become the standard definition of moral categories, and furthermore categories of life. Thus, notions like debt are not merely about economic activity but also about other aspects of life. Gentili reiterates that, since the market is a reliable mathematical model that is indifferent to subjective influences, every individual is responsible for the success or failure of their economic enterprise.³ This implies that every individual as an economic actor is responsible for their own social and economic status, and they should not blame the market for having dealt them a bad

¹ Graeber, *Debt*, 9-11.

² Graeber, *Debt*, 89.

³ Gentili, *Crisi Come Arte di Governo*, 108.

hand since this is not the result of subjective or unfair practice but part of the general process for the betterment and stability of the market.

As mentioned before, Smith, with his ideas of the world as a marketplace and the presence of the invisible hand, offered an economic-theological understanding of reality. In accepting this paradigm, then all other judgements and categories are based on this supposed fact. As Jesse Norman argues, Smith's project is ambitious because to him, "Markets are sustained not merely by incentives of gain or loss, but by laws, institutions, norms and identities, and without those things they cannot be adequately understood."⁴ In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith attributes the human ability to act in a moral way towards others as a result of the social nature of humans. For Smith humans act in a courteous and prudent manner because of an innate social consciousness and not as a product of reason or moral law. Virtue is a requisite to succeed in social relations. Similarly, for Friedrich Nietzsche, morality is also a result of a social nature and the need to exist within a community.

In his book *On the Genealogy of Morality* Nietzsche presents an economic-theological argument to explain the origin of both economic and moral discourse. He argues that the first truly human activities were acts of economic exchange, which created relations of obligation between the participating parties. Following from this, Nietzsche claims that humans felt a sense of debt towards their ancestors, which had to be redeemed through sacrifice. As communities developed further and grew into cities or states, they had to assuage their debt to a god, to whom they owed a debt for the resources and benefits that he gave to the community. This reaches a culmination with Christianity, with humanity being burdened by the debt of the original sin and the impossibility of redeeming all debt to God except through the figure of Christ. The primordial debt story described by Nietzsche illustrates the development of the concept of sin as a form of debt, and that humanity conceives its relationship with the universe as relations of exchange.

Thus, if we accept Smith's or Nietzsche's cosmologies as true, in which "we can imagine human life as a series of commercial transactions"⁵, then moral discourse is interpreted as a form of accounting exercise. Moral judgements are akin to a credit rating system that allow to discriminate between those who are to be saved and those who are damned.

⁴ Jesse Norman, *Adam Smith, What He Thought and Why it Matters* (UK: Penguin Books, 2019), 276.

⁵ Graeber, *Debt*, 75.

3.2 Economic Responsibility

The idea of economic theology shows that economic thinkers have perceived their theories as a continuation of divine providence and part of God's plan of salvation. However, this form of thinking is not exclusively about the creation of providence and good but must also account for the problem of evil. Kotsko problematises this issue in his work and argues that "the doctrine of divine providence deploys a two-pronged strategy in its attempt to reconcile the apparently contradictory facts that God is good, God is all-powerful, and evil happens."⁶ The first strategy is to argue that the source of evil and injustice is not God but the decisions and actions of the rational beings who are endowed with free will. The inequalities and injustices experienced by people are not the result of God's doing or His plan, but the responsibility of the choices made by themselves or by others. The second position is a counterargument to the critique that God should not have endowed His creations with free will if He knew that they would make the wrong choices. Here, the position presented is that God in his almightiness will extract a greater good than would have supposedly existed in a universe bereft of evil.

The main tenet of neoliberalism, following from classical liberalism, is in giving primacy to freedom. The major fundamental claim that is common to all neoliberal thinkers is the belief and supposed promulgation of individual freedom. Hayek and Friedman both argue that humans are rational beings endowed with free will and that the role of the free market economy is to materialise that freedom. This implies that the injustices and inequalities that exist are not a side effect of the competitive order, but a consequence of the wrong choices made by individuals. Structural causes of injustice are not caused by free market economy but by controlled markets and institutions that fall prey to the wrong decisions made by those who control them, as in the case of the failed economies of communist states.

Neoliberal thinkers are therefore adopting the same 'two-pronged strategy' identified by Kotsko as a means of defending the free market economy from its critics. Firstly, the evil that happens is not the responsibility of capitalism but of the people who make the wrong choices. Secondly, as a result of this evil, people will seek to rectify these injustices by foregoing the inefficient and counter-productive controlled economies and adopt a liberalised economy that will allow them to achieve their financial and social goals. In this system of thought the provision of welfare is to be abolished because welfare for the destitute and the unemployed only encourages their wrong behaviour and does not lead them towards improving themselves or their condition. The welfare

⁶ Kotsko, *Neoliberalism's Demons*, 80.

system keeps its beneficiaries shackled to their evil and corrupt ways and does not provide the salvation that it promises.

In neoliberalism the individual becomes the harbinger of their own fortune because they are ‘an entrepreneur of himself’. Foucault also adds that, “the stake in all neoliberal analyses is the replacement every time of *homo oeconomicus* as partner of exchange with a *homo oeconomicus* as entrepreneur of himself, being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of [his] earnings.”⁷ What is being presented here is the path towards salvation.

Neoliberalism offers the possibility of salvation to the individual because it provides them with the conditions of improving themselves and to succeed in life. This mode of thinking is exemplified by current economic models, such as the gig economy,⁸ adopted by companies like Uber, Bolt or Airbnb. The gig economy is characterised by short-term jobs or freelance work which is presented as a ‘liberation’ from the constraints of traditional employment and “the individual, as his own enterprise, lives an ‘autonomous’ life, free to choose from a variety of different kinds of work.”⁹ According to Thomas Lemke, this “‘economic approach’ conceives of all people as autonomous managers of themselves, who make investment decisions relevant to themselves only and who aim for the production of surplus value.”¹⁰ This notion of human nature is proposed by Gary S. Becker, who interprets human beings as “a rational actor who is constantly allocating scarce resources in the pursuit of competing goals.”¹¹ This implies that through these practices the success of one’s economic fate becomes the prerogative of the individual and not of the state or the system, contrary to what would happen in a controlled economy or the institution of a welfare system.

⁷ Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics, Lectures at the Collège de France 1978-1979* (New York: Picador, 2008), 226.

⁸ In a 2018 report, the United Kingdom’s Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy, the gig economy was defined as “‘The gig economy involves exchange of labour for money between individuals or companies via digital platforms that actively facilitate matching between providers and customers, on a short-term and payment by task basis.’” Katriina Lapanjuuri, Robert Wishart and Peter Cornick, *The Characteristics of those in the Gig Economy, Final Report*, (United Kingdom, Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy, February 2018), 12.

⁹ Newman, *Political Theology*, 135.

¹⁰ Thomas Lemke, *Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction*, (New York & London: New York University Press, 2011), 110.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Max Weber states that as a response to this despair; labour, industry and enterprise are formulated as a form of calling that allows for the possibility of attaining God's grace.¹²

This exemplifies a discursive transformation which creates a new caste of intermediaries between the community and providence:

sage-technocrats can become sage-priests: [who] left to their own devices they can develop elaborate, internally coherent theologies which they enforce with the dogmatic certainty of medieval clerics; and once established, it is difficult to shake them out of their certainties.¹³

For Agamben, this new priesthood is represented by bank functionaries and banking experts, who function within an institution that has replaced the Church. In these terms, Central Banks and Private Banks govern credit and the administration of the faith. This authority that has been bestowed upon them gives them the power to decide upon the fate of human beings. Bankers through their power of judgment over creditworthiness and levels of credit have control over the future and possibilities of nations and individuals. Those who control the lines of credit, have control over the world. Furthermore, Agamben argues that this transfer of power to the banks is what has led to political power being subjugated to financial and economic power, to such a degree that all political and social policies are shaped and formulated by economic considerations above all.¹⁴ As a result of this control, Davies argues that considerations of "economic judgements of 'efficiency' and 'competitiveness' [come] above moral judgments of social justice"¹⁵ and social policies are being enacted as a means of disciplining those who are considered as economically unfit.

The central role of economists in all fora has allowed them to become a nexus that pivots and shapes all policymaking decisions including social, education and health policies. Economic experts are transformed into a new priesthood with the opportunity to whisper into the ears of the leaders and make them do their bidding. Furthermore, just like any priesthood, economists have control on passing moral judgement of the subjects of the state.

¹² Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 1992), 121.

¹³ Priestland, *Merchant, Soldier, Sage*, 194-195.

¹⁴ Giorgio Agamben, "Se la Feroce Religione del Denaro Divora il Futuro", *La Repubblica*, February 16, 2012, <https://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2012/02/16/se-la-feroce-religione-del-denaro-divora.html>.

¹⁵ Davies, *The New Neoliberalism*, 122.

3.3 Debt and Guilt

With economic discourse becoming the dominant discourse, it developed into the foundation of all socio-political discourse, to such a degree that economic categories formed the basis of the conceptualisation of categories of life. This implies that economic relations would define the social and power relations between members of society. A person's economic position came to signify their moral status in the eyes of society.

Money was identified as a means of measuring the debt that one party owed to another. In this sense, money serves as an accounting tool but more importantly it serves as a legal bind between those that enter this relationship as creditor and debtor. Money as a legal tender is effectively a legal contract that shapes and defines the relationship between the parties involved. This economic arrangement is the defining element that shapes every aspect of the relation between the two parties. The creditor and debtor are in a relation of power, one being the master and the other the slave, and this unequal relationship is also expressed by the moral categories that these parties occupy. Since, the debtor has an obligation towards the creditor, until this debt is fulfilled, the debtor is also morally indebted to their benefactor, the creditor.

In his commentary on Benjamin's essay, *Capitalism as Religion*, Agamben¹⁶ makes an emphasis on Benjamin's use of the word guilt to describe the cult of capitalism: "A vast sense of guilt that is unable to find relief seizes on the cult, not to atone for this guilt but to make it universal, to hammer it into the conscious mind, so as once and for all to include God in the system of guilt."¹⁷ The German term used by Benjamin to refer to guilt is *Schuld*, which does not only signify guilt but also debt. If we had to resort back to the original term, Benjamin's description of capitalism would be as a system of universal guilt and universal debt. This denotes that guilt and debt are amalgamated together leading to a definition of sin as a form of debt, which implies that the sinner is a debtor, and the debtor is a sinner.

The conjunction of the two concepts can be traced both in modern philosophical thinking and in the Judeo-Christian religious tradition. Graeber argues that in the original version of the Lord's prayer the Classical Greek term used is *opheilema*, which also means debt and sin. He states that *opheilema* was used to replace the Aramaic word *hoyween*, which also means both debt and sin.¹⁸ Thus, in this sense, the notion of guilt-debt, may also be read as a form of politico-theological thinking.

¹⁶ Agamben, *Profanations*.

¹⁷ Benjamin, *Capitalism as Religion*. 288-289.

¹⁸ Graeber, *Debt*, 411.

In his essay, Benjamin refers to God as becoming part of the system of guilt-debt and of God taking on the full burden of this guilt-debt.¹⁹ This role of God as creditor and redeemer of debt may be linked to the 'Parable of the Unforgiving Servant' in Matthew 18: 23-34, "the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants...The servant's master took pity on him, cancelled his debt, and let him go."²⁰ The servant in this parable has a debt to pay and he is summoned to the king's court to defend himself as a guilty party. Further on, the same servant who had his debt redeemed, demands restitution from a fellow servant, and for this lack of mercy, the king sanctions the servant to imprisonment and torture, until he repays his due since he was not ready to forgive that which he was owed by his fellow men.²¹

For Graeber, this parable and other instances in the New Testament frame existence and spiritual affairs in commercial terms with ledgers denoting and measuring our sinful and virtuous acts.²² This form of reasoning further solidifies the logic of debt and sinfulness since the underlying logic is that a believer will live a good life of mercy and forgiveness that will repay their debt, in terms of their corrupt nature, and attain access to the Kingdom of God.²³

Similarly, in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber argues that the equivalence of debt and sin was further accentuated with the development of the Reformation and its theology. He argues that Christian writers like the preacher John Bunyan, adopted and emphasised the previously held notion of God as bookkeeper. Weber argues that, "the old medieval (even ancient) idea of God's book-keeping is carried by Bunyan to the characteristically tasteless extreme of comparing the relation of a sinner to his God with that of customer and shopkeeper. One who has once got into debt may well, by the product of all his virtuous acts, succeed in paying off the accumulated interest but never the principal."²⁴

In *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche explores the notion of *Schuld* to trace the origins of morality and law. He states that, the moral concept of guilt originated from the material notion of debt, thus according to him, guilt is a means of sanctioning those that do not fulfil their material obligations. He argues that the origins of morality and duty lay, "in the contractual relationship between creditor and debtor, which is as old as the very conception of a 'legal subject' and itself refers back to the basic forms of buying, selling, bartering, trade and traffic."²⁵ For Nietzsche the

¹⁹ Benjamin, *Capitalism as Religion*. 289.

²⁰ Graeber, *Debt*, 82-83.

²¹ Graeber, *Debt*, 84.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 77.

²⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 40.

initial and most basic forms of human relations, were relations of exchange. In these relations of exchange the parties involved enter a calculating and measured transaction that came with obligations and sanctions. This implies that that the basis for the foundation of human communities and societies were economic relations. In turn, these economic relations were sanctioned and controlled through moral codes that allowed for the progress and functioning of the community.

This paradigm implies that individuals who do not fulfil their economic obligations are not merely renegeing on their financial obligation but are also failing in their communal duties. This suggests that the debtor in is a position of debt both with the creditor and with the community. Furthermore, the defaulter is not merely a person with a poor reputation in financial matters but is also considered as someone with a dubious moral character.

This becomes even more accentuated when we take into consideration Benjamin's more radical conclusion, compared to Weber, that, "The Christianity of the Reformation period did not favour the growth of capitalism; instead it transformed itself into capitalism."²⁶ Thus, whilst Weber identified Calvinism as a model or framework leading to a capitalist mindset, for Benjamin capitalism is a religion in and of itself.²⁷ This transformation leads to a merging of two dimensions of human life, the spiritual and the economic. This implies that the spiritual and the economic realm are the same, thus there is no distinction between spiritual judgment and financial judgement, they are effectively the one and the same. This aspect is further accentuated through the function of pastoral power in neoliberal thinking and governmentality, which is explored in the next chapter of this thesis.

This value judgement has developed into one of the axioms of capitalist society, whereby financial success or failure is not only reflective of one's social standing but also of their moral worth. Therefore, individuals who rely on debt to survive, are considered as engaging in anti-social behaviour and to be morally questionable. Within this mode of thought, welfare is also considered as a form of debt, welfare recipients are indebted to society and the state for the help that it provides them. The debt that they owe comes both in the form of financial indebtedness but also in takes the form of social indebtedness and obligations. This implies that people, and at times categories of people, who are lifelong welfare beneficiaries are deemed as anti-social and morally corrupt for engaging either in dishonest behaviour or for being indolent. Weber

²⁶ Benjamin, *Capitalism as Religion*. 290.

²⁷ In the previous chapter there is reference to Philip Goodchild and Eugene McCarragher position that market economy is a religion dedicated to Mammon.

argues that contrary to Medieval Catholic thinking, in which mendicants were tolerated, glorified, or perceived as an opportunity for the provision of good works through alms giving,²⁸ in Puritan circles this activity was considered as immoral and transgressive. He argues that in Protestant Asceticism, as in other forms denominations, “faithful labour, even at low wages, on the part of those whom life offers no other opportunities, is highly pleasing to God.”²⁹ However, Weber reiterates that in Protestant ascetism this belief is further accentuated and imbued, “through the conception of this labour as a calling, as the best, often in the last analysis the only means of attaining certainty of grace.”³⁰

The success of the capitalist economic model is attributed to the propensity of societies imbued with Calvinist and Baptist teachings that are made up “for the most part [of] thinking, sober men, and such as believe that Labour and Industry is their duty towards God.”³¹ In this mode of thinking, welfare beneficiaries are not only indebted to society for providing them with help, but are also acting in sinful behaviour by not responding to their calling and not fulfilling their duty towards God.

As Silvia Federici argues, “capitalism must justify and mystify the contradictions built into its social relations – the promise of freedom vs the reality of widespread coercion, and the promise of prosperity vs the reality of widespread penury.”³² In a similar vein, Connolly concludes that faith in the ‘providential image of a self-equilibrating market’ creates a variety of interpretations of the world with:

The sunny side of this image is blind optimism; its dark side is fatalism after optimism has been dashed; its black side is an ethos of revenge seeking vulnerable targets upon whom to focus responsibility for the lack of fit between a market system assumed to be providential and the experience of history.³³

This paradigm and discourse effectively lead to the establishment of stereotyped categories and figures like “the welfare-queen [who] exercises a near-demonic power over American society”.³⁴ According to Kotsko, “Within the ideological narrative, the welfare queen does not simply victimize the broader community through her parasitism, but she comes to embody the moral

²⁸ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 120.

²⁹ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 121.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 122.

³² Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch, Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (New York: Autonomedia, 2014), 17.

³³ William E. Connolly, *Capitalism and Christianity, American Style*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008), 102-103.

³⁴ Kotsko, *Neoliberalism’s Demons*, 72.

crisis.”³⁵ Kotsko argues that neoliberalism, especially in its alliance with the religious right and neoconservatives, has led to a process of demonisation that has shaped social policy and eroded the welfare state or outsourced social services to faith based providers allowing religious indoctrination and moral disciplining to become the conditions for the provision of basic care.³⁶

What is encountered here is the process of narrative creation whereby:

1. The debtor is a sinner;
2. The sinner is a debtor;
3. Welfare beneficiaries are unproductive marginalised groups;
4. Unproductive marginalised groups are sinners, Welfare beneficiaries are debtors;
5. Welfare beneficiaries are sinners and debtors.

Therefore, it may be surmised that within this narrative those who find themselves in vulnerable categories and do not have access to employment, education, or basic care, are not merely marginalised but as Kotsko argues, demonised, thus removing them from the category of victims but transforming them into perpetrators and criminals. This process can be compared to what William E. Connolly defines as “an ethos of existential revenge”³⁷ which “finds expression in punitive orientations towards others outside the fold...in an extreme sense of entitlement for your constituency, and in a tendency to devalue the claims and needs of other constituencies.”³⁸ This kind of existential revenge becomes embedded in social, cultural, and political institutions including work, education, and economic theory.³⁹ Consequently, through the amalgamation of the notions of guilt and debt, the possibility of the totalising force of debt as a category of life is created.

In her work, *Il Debito del vivente* (The Debt of the Living), and *Debito e Colpa* (Debt and Guilt) Elettra Stimilli focuses on debt as the key feature of contemporary economics and politics. Through a genealogical project she explores the concept of debt and guilt in western thought and Christianity, however she also identifies debt as having a unique role in the contemporary neoliberal model. In both works she argues that contemporary economic models are not based on production and consumption but have ushered in a reliance on the creation of debt. Global indebtedness, in the form of public or private debt, according to Stimilli, forms the basis of

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Kotsko, *Neoliberalism's Demons*, 78–79.

³⁷ Connolly, *Capitalism and Christianity, American Style*, 12.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

current global economic model and the power it exerts.⁴⁰ Consequentially, being in debt has become a permanent existential condition that is perpetrated by and imposed upon society by national and international institutions.

Stimilli does not interpret indebtedness as an economic issue but as a normative and political issue. She argues that the condition of debt and guilt is reproduced in various forms by political institutions as a means of subjugating and controlling society. Thus, debt which is reproduced as a condition of human existence, being in debt, becomes a form of governmentality, with an existence of its own, 'the psychic life of debt.'⁴¹

Maurizio Lazzarato argues that the category of debtor eliminates all forms of distinctions and erases all identities to such a degree that it becomes the only defining element for whole sectors of the population. He argues that "the creditor-debtor relationship shapes all social relations in neoliberal economies."⁴² Agamben further states that a society that makes credit its guiding principle, will end up existing only in terms of credit and all relations are defined in these terms.⁴³ Furthermore, Michel Feber asserts that in contemporary neoliberal society creditworthiness becomes the defining feature that asserts the dignity and access to social benefits.⁴⁴

Neoliberal discourse has adopted the concept of guilt-debt and made it one of its main features. International and national economic policies are formulated around the moral rectitude of a people which is defined on their creditworthiness, levels of debt and ability to honour their financial obligations. This has been most evidenced in the years following the 2008 financial crisis, whereby the EU member states were categorised based on their levels of debt and need for financial aid. Sam Brazys and Niamh Hardiman argue that, "analytical categories for interpreting the world are freighted with value-laden assumptions. Classification systems can themselves generate beliefs about the world that have consequences for actors' expectations,

⁴⁰ Elettra Stimilli, *Il Debito del vivente. Ascesi e capitalism*, (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2011), 81. *Debito e Colpa* (Roma:Ediesse, 2015), 18.

⁴¹ Stimilli, *Debito e Colpa*, 172-186.

⁴² Maurizio Lazzarato, *The Making of the Indebted Man* (Amsterdam: Semiotext(e), 2012), 35.

⁴³ Agamben, *Creazione e Anarchia*, 122.

⁴⁴ Michel Feber, "Disposing of the Discredited," in *Mutant Neoliberalism, Market Rule and Political Rupture* ed. by William Callison and Zachary Manfredi (USA: Fordham University Press, 2020), 155-157.

preferences and decision-making.”⁴⁵ The acronym PIIGS⁴⁶ was coined as a collective term to refer to the weakest and most indebted economies of the Eurozone.

The ‘word’ itself has a derogatory meaning which also became a signifier of a specific geopolitical region, identity and culture that were considered as not only economically but also morally bankrupt compared to the rest of their Eurozone partners. Thus, as Brazys and Hardiman state, “Language, therefore, is freighted with performative power; the economy can indeed be viewed as a morality play,”⁴⁷ making PIIGS a value-laden term defining a whole geopolitical segment of the European population. Economic discourse is not restricted to economic values, but also signifies and shapes moral discourse. Neoliberal thought has used this apparatus to push forward and implement its policies, both at the macro and the micro level. Economic evaluations act as moral judgments that categorise and shape the lives of nations and individual persons.

The discourse of debt and credit is used by neoliberal institutions to create new forms of life. Neoliberal thought has systematised an economic and moral discourse whose values are entrenched together in an indissoluble manner reshaping and remodelling human life in accordance and in compliance with its market models. It is through this process that human life is redefined in economic terms thus transforming it into human capital.

The debt-guilt discourse becomes more powerful and damning within a discourse of economic and technological optimism. In the ‘Achievement Society’, identified and formulated in the work of Byung-Chul Han⁴⁸, being in debt or lacking the ability to succeed in the economy or society becomes a stronger source of guilt. In an optimist discourse centred around the paradigm that every individual has the potential and freedom to succeed, those who do not are responsible and guilty for their own lack of success and inability to achieve their goals and potential.

As Han himself argues, the drive towards self-optimisation and the search for the elimination of any obstacles that keep the neoliberal subject back, creates a sense of fanaticism. This quest for increased efficiency and mastery over oneself is comparable to the ‘self-examination and self-monitoring of Protestantism’, with the aim not of purging ‘sins’ but of removing the negative

⁴⁵ Sam Brazys and Niamh Hardiman, “The ‘PIIGS’ acronym had a clear negative impact on the response of financial markets to the “PIIGS countries’ during the crisis” in The London School of Economics and Political Science Blog, 12th December 2014, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/euoppblog/2014/12/12/the-piigs-acronym-had-a-clear-negative-impact-on-the-market-treatment-of-the-piigs-countries-during-the-crisis/>

⁴⁶ PIIGS referred to Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece and Spain.

⁴⁷ Brazys and Hardiman, “PIIGS countries’ during the crisis”.

⁴⁸ Byung-Chul Han, *The Burnout Society*, trans. Erik Butler. (Stanford, California: Stanford Briefs, 2015) and Byung-Chul Han, *Psychopolitics*, trans. Erik Butler. (London & New York: Verso, 2017).

thoughts and negative traits that might block one's path to success on the market and in life.⁴⁹ This has led to a conflation of religious discourse with managerial and economic discourse whereby 'even fundamentalist preachers act like managers and motivational trainers.'⁵⁰ This creates a logic of failure as sin, whereby failure to succeed economically is a debt one has with oneself and with others who invested in you, this kind of debt is a sin incurred towards oneself and others, since one is free to achieve, then failure to achieve is a personal responsibility which leads to a sense of guilt and mortification for not having produced the return on investment that is expected by a successful economic subject. This guilt, which is an interiorised state of being, drives the neoliberal subject towards seeking help to get back on track and become a net contributor to the economy.

Help is provided in accessible forms, by replacing the religious pastoral figure of the priest or minister with its secularised version, the psychologist (who oversees pastoral care) or with its automated version in the shape of mobile apps or wearable technologies that gather data, assess it and evaluate it allowing one to monitor and judge themselves.

Ron Roberts argues that there is a correlation between the rise of psychology and the emergence of the capitalist order.⁵¹ Life under the power relations of capitalist structures creates an internal gaze, akin to Christian practices of the self, whereby one is expected to monitor and categorise oneself so that they make sure that they are productive members of the system.⁵² I argue that, this type of voluntary self-monitoring is driven by a sense of guilt and the will to rectify oneself. This motivation is further evidenced by the success and uptake of self-monitoring technologies that have flooded the market following the ubiquity of smart phones and wearables such as smart watches.

Sun-Ha Hong, shows how these technologies of self-surveillance become disciplinary tools, that extract free labour, through our data production, by utilising a moralising discourse and schema.⁵³ These technologies achieve their goals by creating targets that their users are expected to achieve and failure to do so produces a sense of failure and guilt. In a system akin to Han's 'Achievement Society', these data driven technologies provide a moralisation of self-knowledge through the process of designing 'an aspirational trajectory' which shows the user which goals

⁴⁹ Han, *Psychopolitics*, 30.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ron Roberts, *Psychology and Capitalism, The Manipulation of Mind*. (Winchester, UK & Washington, USA: Zero Books, 2015) 34.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Sun-Ha Hong, *Technologies of Speculation, The Limits of Knowledge in a Data-Driven Society*, (New York: New York University Press, 2020), 108-111.

and targets should be achieved to reach one's prescribed goals.⁵⁴ In such a context these new technologies of the self, rely on the function of virtue signalling, by which method they instil a sense of guilt reminiscent of the Protestant guilt and self-monitoring.⁵⁵

3.4 Moral Economy

The neoliberal moral discourse of responsibility and guilt may be considered as a form of moral economy, albeit not in the classical sense as formulated and developed by E.P. Thompson. The notion of moral economy in the tradition of Thompson used as a counter paradigm to the objective and calculative norms associated with the market and its mechanisms. Authors such as Norbert Götz⁵⁶, and Neville Kirk⁵⁷, situate Thompson's moral economy as an antithesis to political economy and the market economy. They argue that moral economy as envisioned by Thompson envisioned price mechanisms to be dominated by a form of paternalistic care through which prices were adjusted and controlled to help and support the poorer classes. This mechanism was therefore guided by moral principles of communitarianism, justice, and fairness, and these values were expected to be the underlying movers of market decisions. This price mechanism is in contrast to what Smith and free market authors proposed, since for them the price mechanism was guided by an objective system whose purpose was to maintain the stability of the market and not to assuage the needs of the weaker members of the community. Furthermore, the guiding value driving all economic actors is not a communitarian drive but an individualistic and self-interested one which through the market system generates a general positive outcome.⁵⁸ Arguably, from a Thompson's perspective, the self-regulating free market that monitors and regulates itself in terms of objective systems like price mechanism is devoid of a moral economy.

However, as argued by Tiziano Bonini and Emiliano Treré, moral economy cannot be restricted to communitarian or virtue ethics. Moral economies are an underlying system of values and beliefs that dictate what is considered as proper behaviour. In such a context different economic systems embody different moral economies because their underlying values are divergent each other. In a neoliberal free market system, although guided by neutral and detached mechanisms,

⁵⁴ Hong, *Technologies of Speculation*, 109.

⁵⁵ Mark, Coekelbergh, *Self-Improvement, Technologies of the Soul in the Age of Artificial Intelligence*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022. 4 & 57-58.

⁵⁶ Norbert Götz, "Moral economy": its conceptual history and analytical prospects", *Journal of Global Ethics*, Vol.11 No.2, 147-162 (2015).

⁵⁷ Neville Kirk, "EP Thompson's moral economy and legacy", *Economic and Industrial Economy*, Vol.46, No.1, 27-48, (2024)

⁵⁸ Kirk, EP Thompson's moral economy and legacy', 6, and Götz, "Moral economy": its conceptual history and analytical prospects', 153.

there are still underlying values that are considered as proper and pertinent to the advancement of the market.⁵⁹

In this scenario any type of market that is created under a neoliberal guise will be informed and designed according to neoliberal values and codes of conduct. In such instances the moral economy is therefore based on values such as competition, individualism, and self-entrepreneurship.⁶⁰ Therefore, new marketplaces such as digital platforms, the expected conduct and benefits are not based on classical communitarian values as envisioned by Thompson in the case of food markets, but on neoliberal values that are accepted by the users, both suppliers and consumers, and exploited by the owners of the technology.

The inherent moral economy is centred around the individual who is participating in the market and who acts according to the dictates of the free market. In accepting this moral economy, one also understands the terms and conditions that come with it. This implies that in an economic system dominated by neoliberal values the notions of justice and fairness are different to what Thompson identified in *The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century*,⁶¹ In this essay Thompson shows how the paternalism of the economy should ensure that basic goods like bread should be made accessible for everyone and therefore price control is required. In a self-regulating free market, competition, which among other things forces a reduction in production costs, leads to a price mechanism that creates price stability and a lowering of prices.

Here, we can see two opposing moral economies, a communitarian moral code that requires regulation for the benefit of the community, and an individualist moral code that repudiates regulation and through the value of competition produces an overall beneficial outcome. The first model is linked to a controlled economy, whilst the second model is linked to a free market or spontaneous order.

For example, in the case of transport platforms such as Uber, which acts as a marketplace that brings together the service provider and customers, users are incentivised to use that particular app, the more users there are the more the app grows and can provide better deals. Similarly, the more customers there are the more drivers will be associated⁶² with the app. The more drivers there are the more customers will be able to find a quick ride, and prices are cheaper because

⁵⁹ Tiziano Bonini and Emiliano Treré, *Algorithms of Resistance: The Everyday Fight Against Platform Power*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: MIT Press, 2024), 31-34.

⁶⁰ Bonini and Treré, *Algorithms of Resistance*, 36.

⁶¹ E. P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century", *Past & Present* No. 50, 76-136, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1971).

⁶² Drivers who work on platforms like Uber are not employed by the company but are considered as freelance workers who are termed as associates.

there is more demand than supply. As Nick Srnicek states, the success of the platform is in their “network effects’: the more numerous the users the more valuable that platform becomes for everyone else.’⁶³

This network effect implies that a shared form of conduct is becoming more widespread and becoming an accepted model of moral economy. Under these conditions price regulation, trust, and responsibility are still maintained as the required conduct, but these values exist not out of a moral sense but as an entrepreneurial necessity. Within the neoliberal mode of thinking, moral values are redefined as individualistic economic qualities that make a person as a successful entrepreneur of the self.

It is critical to point out that although neoliberal thinkers emphasise the role of individual choice and freedom, and the role of the self-regulating free market, there are many ways how values are imposed upon or reinforced within the market. The paternalistic care of the state is replaced by a form of ‘Big Brother’ and forms of rating systems that are driven by users and algorithms. In this scenario the sense of guilt is transformed into shame, more akin to the public shaming exercised by the crowds described in Thompson’s essay.

The regulation of the market stems from the self-regulation imposed by the users of the market or by the design of the market itself through its designed systems and algorithms. Bonini and Treré argue that ‘When someone does not comply with the rules of behaviour set by the platform, the first to intervene are often the users themselves, even before the algorithms and human content moderators can notice the violation.’⁶⁴ In a similar way, customer rating on these platforms, or review pages such as Google Review or Tripadvisor, can make or break a business.

Bolt have a rating system out of five, in which a passenger can rate their experience of the ride and their customer satisfaction. On their official website, bolt make it very clear that a driver who has a rating of less than four and a half has their account blocked and therefore cannot work for Bolt as a driver.⁶⁵ The very same blog post also provides tips and advice on how drivers should conduct themselves if they do not wish to have their accounts suspended because they have incurred poor customer ratings.⁶⁶

⁶³ Nick Srnicek, *Platform Capitalism*. (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2017), 45.

⁶⁴ Bonini and Treré, *Algorithms of Resistance*, 36.

⁶⁵ Bolt Company, “10 hacks to keep your Bolt driver rating high (and 3 reasons why customers give 1-star ratings)”, *Bolt Blog*, published on 24th January 2019. Accessed 28th December 2024.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

It is therefore evident that participation on the market is regulated by a strict moral economy that is imposed upon. Everyone is expected to behave in a specific manner and to self-monitor themselves unless they wish to be excluded from participating in the market. This form of regulation is akin to what Foucault identified as governmentality which will be explored in a subsequent chapter.

3.5 Conclusion

In the neoliberal age in which economic values supersede social and political values, economic discourse is transformed into moral discourse. The secular transition from a religious paradigm to an economic paradigm disregards other sets of values and priorities, making moral success equitable to economic success in which wealth becomes a symbol of virtue. This theological underpinning will be delved into in the upcoming chapter, where the role of concepts like providence are shown to play a critical role in conceptualising the free market.

Within this paradigm guilt plays the role of arbiter, and guilt results from one's failure as an economic subject. In this context guilt becomes a driving force that directs all actions towards being a productive economic player. Guilt is further imposed through new technologies that allow self-monitoring and impose forms of self-regulation via the datafication of our behaviour and conduct.

Moral economies dictate the expected behaviour of those who participate on the market, and they designate the moral code that everyone ascribes to. These values are imposed through various stratagems. These stratagems create a form of regulatory system that is defined as governmentality, which will be analysed and evaluated in a later chapter.

The aim of this chapter is to show that although economic activity is portrayed as an amoral endeavour based on economic pursuits, this is not the case. Under neoliberal thinking moral judgements such as guilt and sin play a crucial role. These moral judgments are aimed at imposing a moral economy based on neoliberal values such as self-entrepreneurship. Furthermore, new digital technologies are designed with these values embedded in their design and coding, creating a system that shapes the behaviour and character of neoliberal subjects. Values like competition become embodied in the choices and actions of these subjects thus further advancing and promulgating neoliberal thinking. In this manner, new technologies are not only forms of value extraction or means of production (through data collection and processing) but serve the function of subjectification. This effectively makes technology a form of *dispositif* utilised by neoliberal institutions to further their agenda. This role of technology will be identified

and discussed in the upcoming chapters on governmentality and the production of new forms of being.

Chapter 4: Neoliberal Government

4.1 Introduction

Economic policies are not merely about the regulation or administration of trade but are also a political project aiming to shape and change society at its very core, that is, the individual. This can be traced back even to the work of Adam Smith, whose aim is to create a society based on commerce that offers a virtuous path out of misery by appealing to humans' self-interest.¹ Similarly, neoliberal economics is also about a reformulation of society by engaging with and utilising human drives and desires towards the attainment of economic prosperity and the creation of wealth.²

For neoliberalism to succeed in this venture, it must therefore tear the rulebook and rewrite it according to its own rules and concepts. As Thomas Biebricher observes, 'the neoliberal problematic concerns the political and social conditions of possibility for functioning markets,' and 'how does the social environment of markets have to be shaped,' implying that 'neoliberalism must be understood as discourse in political economy that explicitly addresses the noneconomic preconditions of functioning markets and the interactive effects between markets and their surroundings.'³ Foucault's lecture series on neoliberalism identifies the institutional methods used for the conditioning of the environment, society, and the individual to achieve its aspirations.⁴

This process explains the traumatic transition brought about by the politics of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan among others. The implementation of their neoliberal policies brought with them a new social contract that tore communities asunder. The lobbies promoting the adoption

¹ In Book 1 Chapter 2 of *The Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith famously declared that "Give me that which I want, and you shall have this which you want, is the meaning of every such offer; and it is in this manner that we obtain from one another the far greater part of those good offices which we stand in need of. It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages." Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, (New York: The Modern Library, 1937), 14.

² Franco Berardi states that 'On an anthropological level a determinant aspect has been the assertion of a life model totally focused on the value of wealth, and the reduction of the concept of wealth to economic and purchasing power.' Franco "Bifo" Berardi, *The Soul At Work, From Alienation to Autonomy* (South Pasadena: Semiotext(e), 2009), 81.

³ Thomas Biebricher, *The Political Theory of Neoliberalism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018), 26-27. (Italics in original text.)

⁴ Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*. Bröckling argues that 'Michel Foucault grasps subjectification as a conditioning process, in which social shaping and self-shaping merge.' Ulrich Bröckling, *The Entrepreneurial Self, Fabricating a New Type of Subject*, trans. Steven Black (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2016), 8.

of neoliberal policies portrayed the values of ‘individualism, freedom, and liberty’ as the antagonists of state bureaucracies and the power of worker unions. This was a direct assault on the welfare state and social relations of post-war Britain.⁵

Harvey recounts how Thatcher used all possible means to eradicate the power of the labour unions and to remove the negotiating power of the working classes. The importation of cheaper coal led to the closure of the coal mines and pits, and the industries dominated by national, and public companies were sold to foreign private companies.⁶ Harvey states that ‘The overall effect was to transform the UK into a country of relatively low wages and a largely compliant labour force.’⁷ The social structures of British society were transformed, leading to a renewed dominance of the higher and middle classes and an impoverishment of the working classes.⁸

Similarly, these radical shifts are also identifiable in the impact of forced privatisation resulting from European Union policies which are directly taken out of Thatcher’s playbook. In her endeavour to privatize all sectors of the economy, she sought to create a cultural change which emphasises personal and corporate responsibility by driving for efficiency, private initiative, and innovation.⁹ Britain showed the way how privatisation can be done in a profitable and successful manner leading to the desired economic and political changes.¹⁰ The European Union and the International Monetary Fund were quick to take up this neoliberal model. Biebricher refers to the conditions and measures imposed by the European Union to countries who want to access the financial assistance of the European Stability Mechanism. These conditions are like the ones prescribed by the IMF onto those states that want to access the funds of the Structural Adjustment Programs that it offers.¹¹ The aims of these political institutions are to reshape society in terms of their neoliberal economic vision, which implies that economy here is not about trade but about government.

By explaining *oikonomia* as a form of administration of life, we may formulate what neoliberal governmentality entails and what its aims are. Neoliberalism proposes economic models that incorporate all aspects of human life and therefore an analysis of it cannot be divested of its political and social ramifications. Under a neoliberal government the economy and economic logic are the primary motivation that shape and mould all other institutions. The role of the state

⁵ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 56-57.

⁶ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 56-63.

⁷ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 59.

⁸ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 62.

⁹ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 60.

¹⁰ Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 60-61.

¹¹ Biebricher, *The Political Theory of Neoliberalism*, 169.

is not diminished but is reconfigured so that economic goals become its primary objectives, thus shaping its policies. Notions like wellbeing and health are redefined in terms of economic growth, economic prosperity, and productivity.

This leads to a redesign of our very understanding of human selfhood and the human subject so that it fits a cosmological model and social reality that is envisioned by economic thought but does not necessarily reflect reality. The underlying theological discourse that dominates the economic paradigm of government allows for the possibility of a totalising reconceptualisation of nature, human life, and human society. Although economic theology is about *praxis*, the effects and consequences of this *praxis* have an ontological bearing, leading to the creation of new ontological categories.

Neoliberal governmentality, with its emphasis on *ascesis* and its transformation of practice into a way of life, reveals how the theological and moral dimensions of neoliberalism have practical and real-life implications and effects. In previous chapters, I have shown how neoliberal thinking utilises theological paradigms and moral categories to justify, enact, and sustain a governmentality that relies on forms of *dispositif* associated with neoliberal government and policy making.

Through the interrelation of theology, morality, and governmentality, the process of salvation is no longer a liberatory journey, but a commercial affair that is managed through market mechanisms. Freedom is reimagined as being allowed to fail, in the same way that free market pundits are against state intervention in helping organisations from failing, irrespective of the consequences it may have on employees or the community. In such a context, *homo oeconomicus* is not restricted to being one definition of the human, but a totalising category that redefines every aspect of human life.

4.2 Oikonomia

Oikonomia has a pivotal function in Agamben's book *The Kingdom and the Glory* when deriving a distinction between two forms of rule, the kingdom (to reign) and the government (to govern). Whereas the first concept is associated with notions of politics, and thus political theology, the second concept is bound to *oikonomia*.

Oikonomia is the foundation of a paradigm of management. As Agamben states, Tertullian's notion of *oikonomia* is 'administrative-managerial or pragmatic-rhetorical', it 'does not concern

being and ontology, but rather action and praxis.¹² The basis of this treatment can be traced to Aristotle's definition of *oikonomia* as management of the household, which implies the existence of a form of governing people that is distinct and different from that established and implemented by the *polis*. As Aristotle states, "It is a mistake to believe that the statesman is the same as the monarch of a kingdom, or the manager of a household, or the master of a number of slaves."¹³ For Aristotle, the statesman's role and function are a political one, whereas that of the manager of the household is a non-political one.

The aim of *oikonomia* is not to establish a juridico-political function of government (sovereignty) but to design and implement a form of governmentality that administers life and resources. Economic theology is about the establishment of practices to govern and manage life; it is a *dispositio* (*disposition*), a means of arranging and ordering life.¹⁴

Foucault, who in his 1978 lecture quotes Guillaume de La Perrière, "Government is the right disposition of things arranged so as to lead to a suitable end", also identifies this paradigm.¹⁵ Therefore, economic or managerial thinking is about establishing practices that effectively lead to the ordering and administering of life and resources to achieve the required aims and goals. This implies that all forms of disposition, apparatus, are forms of governance that serve a managerial function of ensuring that all life and resources are shaped and ordered appropriately for the efficient and proper functioning of the economic machine.

The transition from political theology to an economic theology delineates the transformation from governance based on political considerations to one based on economic ones. As stated by Roberto Esposito, "Instead of talking about the end of political theology, we should be talking about its transformation into economic theology."¹⁶ Furthermore, as Gentili argues, this change signifies that the political apparatus becomes subservient to the economic apparatus, making the economy the primary source of decision-making and administrative functions, resulting in a "techno-economic administration".¹⁷ Laura Bazzicalupo argues that in the realities of an economic theology in which 'the logic of economy' prevails, 'market and economic growth slowly

¹² Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 41.

¹³ Aristotle, *Politics*, translated by Ernest Barker (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1995), 7.

¹⁴ Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 19.

¹⁵ Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population, Lectures at the College de France, 1977-1978*. Ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell. (New York: Picador, 2004), 96.

¹⁶ Roberto Esposito, *Two: The Machine of Political Theology and the Place of Thought*. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 204.

¹⁷ Dario, Gentili, *The Age of Precarity: Endless Crisis as an Art of Government*, Translated by Stefania Porcelli with Clara Pope, (London and New York: Verso, 2021).

become the criteria for political legitimation.¹⁸ Similarly, Louis Althusser argues that, ‘All Ideological State Apparatuses, whatever they are, contribute to the same result: the reproduction of the relations of production, i.e. of capitalist relations of exploitation.’¹⁹

According to Thanos Zartaloudis, economic theology, which “bases itself on the notion of an *oikonomia*,” establishes “an immanent and non-political order of both human and divine life.”²⁰ Zartaloudis identifies in Agamben’s economic theological paradigm the foundation of “modern biopolitics and the current domination of economic and managerial logics over all aspects of social life.”²¹ Read also argues that neoliberalism is not a way of administering and running a state or an economy, but is about designing and implementing a “particular manner of living.”²²

As Foucault states in his reading of La Perrière, government is about the administration of people in “their relationships, bonds, and complex involvements with things like wealth, resources, means of subsistence” and their “relationships with things like customs, habits, ways of acting and thinking.”²³ This implies that proper administration of things is not only about controlling and managing public affairs, but also about actualising forms of control and the proper administration of the behaviour, thinking, and values of the people for the good of the whole.

Petrosino states the concept of humanity as an economic animal, must be understood as the capacity of individuals to inhabit a space and environment and to administer and cultivate it. Petrosino is therefore adopting an understanding of economy as a habitat which is cultivated and safeguarded, in other words administered.²⁴ Foucault also adopts this understanding of economy and argues that the difference between the Greek concept of economy and the Christian concept found in the pastorate lies in the fact that for the Greeks, economy is about the family and family business, but for Christendom, economy refers to all humanity, or at least to all Christians. Foucault interprets this conceptualisation of economy as meaning that the *oikos* refers to a habitat, thus extending its jurisdiction over the whole community that inhabits this habitat.²⁵

¹⁸ Laura Bazzicalupo, “Economy as Logic of Government”, *Paragraph*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 38.

¹⁹ Louis Althusser, *On The Reproduction Of Capitalism: Ideology And Ideological State Apparatuses*. (London, UK: Verso Books, 2014), 250.

²⁰ Thanos Zartaloudis, “Government/Oikonomia”, in *The Agamben Dictionary*, ed. Alex Murray & Jessica Whyte. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 84.

²¹ Zartaloudis, Government/Oikonomia, 84.

²² Jason Read, “A Genealogy of Homo-Economicus: Neoliberalism and the Production of Subjectivity”, *Foucault Studies*, No 6, pp. 25-36, (February, 2009), 26.

²³ Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 96.

²⁴ Petrosino. *Elogio dell'uomo economico*, 57.

²⁵ Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 192.

In his lectures on the pastorate, Foucault refers to the *oikonomia psuchōn*, as the ‘economy of the souls’. He argues that economy in this context is about management of souls, the people. Foucault reiterates that the Latin translation, *regimen animarum*, ‘government or regimen of souls’, further uncovers the element of governmentality. Following this, he states that the best understanding of Gregory Nazianzen’s *oikonomia psuchōn*, is therefore ‘the conduct of souls.’ This implies that for Foucault, management of the souls is about governmentality through the conduct of conduct.²⁶

Agamben argues that *oikonomia* is about ‘praxis’, “a practical activity that must face a problem and a particular situation each and every time.”²⁷ Thus, in Christian theology, *oikonomia* becomes the term that represents the way how God administers and governs human history through His Son, who in turn administers salvation and redemption on Earth, making *oikonomia*, “the idea of divine providential governance of the world.”²⁸

Already in Clement of Alexandria, *oikonomia* merges with the notion of Providence and begins to indicate the redemptive governance of the world and human history. Now, what is the translation of this fundamental Greek term in the writing of the Latin Fathers? *Dispositivo*.²⁹

Through this genealogy, Agamben formulates the link between *oikonomia*, providence and dispositif (apparatus). For Agamben, Foucault’s concept of apparatus must be linked to the theological articulation of the distinction between God’s nature, His being, and the manner that “He administers and governs the created world.” For Agamben, all forms of apparatus are, “a pure activity of governance devoid of any foundation in being.” More crucially, he argues that they “always imply a process of subjectification, that is to say, they must produce their subject.”³⁰

To him, the religio-theological foundation of apparatus is found in Hyppolite’s work on Hegel, which served as the source for Foucault’s formulation of the concept of apparatus. In this work, Hyppolite tackles some of Hegel’s essays on religion and spirituality, in which he makes a distinction between ‘natural religion’ and ‘positive religion’. Agamben identifies Hegel’s definition of positive religion as “the set of beliefs, rules, and rites that in a certain society and at a certain historical moment are externally imposed on individuals” as the antecedent to the contemporary notion of apparatus.³¹ This implies that Hegel’s conception of positive religion is rooted in the idea

²⁶ Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population* 192-193.

²⁷ Agamben, *What is an Apparatus?*, 9.

²⁸ Agamben, *What is an Apparatus?*, 10.

²⁹ Agamben, *What is an Apparatus?*, 11.

³⁰ Agamben, *What is an Apparatus?*, 11.

³¹ Agamben, *What is an Apparatus?*, 4.

of conduct and government of life according to a prescribed discourse and normative order. Thus, positive religion is about the management of life.

4.3 Opus Dei

Economic theology provides us with two distinct but interlinked concepts that have a critical bearing on life. We have already surmised that the notion of economics is about the management and ordering of the household. *Oikonomia* is about the care and ordering of all resources, including the most poignant and central resource, life. Technically, the aim of *oikonomia* is to maximise the utility of all resources for the betterment and growth of the household, the *oikos*.

The theological dimension implies that the management of the household relates to and is part of the work of God. This implies that all the resources, including life itself within the *oikos*, are considered as participants in and also part of, the work of God, *Opus Dei*.

Therefore, if we had to consider the two aspects as a unified concept, *oikonomia* and *Opus Dei*, then we may conclude that economic theology is about the management and administration of life with the aim of transforming it into the work of God.

This leads us towards extracting a number of conclusions and possibilities,

1. If the fruits of the earth are part of God's work, and people are participating in God's work (the divine work) then the products and surplus resources, including monetary profits, created by the people are also part of God's work.
2. If labour is part of God's work, then the very life that engages in that labour is also part of God's work.
3. If all resources including life are part of God's work, then even the act of managing and ordering those resources becomes part of God's work.
4. This implies that to fulfil God's work, all life is directed towards becoming the form of life that can be identified as God's work.
5. If the role of apparatus is to direct life into following the required conduct of life to fulfil the *Opus Dei*, then the apparatus are part of God's will and therefore also part of His work.

To understand the implications that are mentioned here it is poignant to read and evaluate some of the conclusions drawn by Weber in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Weber states that although ascetic literature from different traditions are imbued with the notion of 'faithful labour', or that labour is pleasing to God, it is with the development of Protestant

asceticism that a more profound and long lasting change happens.³² Labour and industriousness are redefined as a calling, a duty that every good Christian must fulfil to participate in God's work. This redefinition of labour in turn created new relations of production, whereby exploitative working conditions are considered to be the necessary conduct of life to be part of God's plan,

it legalised the exploitation of this specific willingness to work, in that it also interpreted the employer's business activity as a calling. It is obvious how powerfully the exclusive search for the Kingdom of God only through the fulfilment of duty in the calling, and the strict asceticism which Church discipline imposed, especially on the propertyless classes, was bound to affect the productivity of labour in the capitalistic sense of the word. The treatment of labour as a calling became as characteristic of the modern worker as the corresponding attitude toward acquisition of the business man.³³

Agamben traces the origins of the transformation of labour into divine work, in the literature of the monastic rules originating and starting to spread between the fourth and fifth century CE. In his book, *The Highest Poverty*, he identifies various instances whereby labour and productivity are formulated as aspects of the *Opus Dei*. Agamben himself argues that the process of spiritualisation of work is a precursor to what Weber identifies as the Protestant reformulation of labour as God's calling with capitalism being the secularised version of this religious paradigm.³⁴ Weber himself also identifies monasticism as an antecedent to the Protestant ethic when he states that, 'For when asceticism was carried out of monastic cells into everyday life, and began to dominate worldly morality'.³⁵ The transition from monastic *askesis* to the Protestant ethic brings with it a change from work as a communal and communitarian act to work as individualised and personal, thus uncovering an emergence the individualistic thinking that we associate with capitalism and neoliberalism.

In researching different monastic rules, Agamben identifies many instances in which labour and every activity by the monks are considered as spiritual activities fulfilled for the glory of God. Manual labour is described as 'spiritual labour', and "the monastic rule, considers the work of the hands as an indiscernible part of the *Opus Dei*."³⁶ In his work Basil furthers this argument by using

³² Weber, *Protestant Ethic*, 121.

³³ Weber, *Protestant Ethic*, 121.

³⁴ Giorgio Agamben, *The Highest Poverty, Monastic Rules and Form-Of-Life*, trans. Adam Kotsko. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2013), 23-24.

³⁵ Weber, *Protestant Ethic*, 123.

³⁶ Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*, 23.

multiple examples from manual labour to show that every activity taken up by the monk is to be considered as “the execution of a “divine work,””.³⁷

The critical argument that must be considered here is that, if every action or activity is considered as part of God’s work, then by extension, the whole life of the individual is also considered as part of the *Opus Dei*. Life is a consecutive sequence of activities and events, and therefore, if all these moments are part of God’s work, then the sum of all parts, life, is part of God’s work. In Basil’s words, the whole life of the monk is the execution of the divine law.³⁸ This argument explains how norms and rules expand from regulating all actions to regulating life itself.

Forms of ascetic practices transform from a way of doing things to a form of living, as Stimilli argues, Christian asceticism becomes a form of subjectification that allows the individual to achieve a future salvation, thus making ascetic practice a form of investment.³⁹ Since the aim of asceticism is the achievement of salvation, Christian ascetic practices are not relegated to the private life of the individual, transforming themselves from a type of self-government to government of the other.⁴⁰ Salvation of the flock leads towards a transition from salvation as a private matter to becoming a public matter because everyone shares in the mystery of salvation.⁴¹ Thus, all aspects of human life become part of a divine economy of salvation that must be governed in every possible detail, thus creating a form of subjectification.⁴²

Both Agamben and Stimilli identify Christian ascetic life, especially monastic life, as a process of governmentality through which the very life of the person is redefined and moulded through contemplative and physical practices that are directed towards the fulfilment of God’s providential plan. This is a process of internalisation through which the very life of the individual becomes the embodiment of these principles. Thus, life itself becomes *Opus Dei* and is treated as part of the divine economy of salvation.

4.4 Homo Oeconomicus

We are enjoined to rational choice. We are taught that our freedom is one with the freedom of choice. We are told we become who we are by how we choose. We are assured that if we choose well, according to our own best interests, we will end up serving the interests of all. We are told that there is a mechanism in place to ensure this convergence between our interests and others’.

³⁷ Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*, 23.

³⁸ Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*, 23.

³⁹ Stimilli, *Il Debito del Vivente*, 117.

⁴⁰ Stimilli, *Il Debito del Vivente*, 126-127.

⁴¹ Stimilli, *Il Debito del Vivente*, 127.

⁴² Stimilli, *Il Debito del Vivente*, 132 – 133.

Market is its name. Its “invisible hand” adjusts best choices to each other, its magic touch guided by the principle of competition. Competition weeds out suboptimal choices, selecting for efficiency.”⁴³

Foucault’s discussion on the concept of *homo oeconomicus* as utilised and developed in neoliberal thought unveils the paradoxical nature of freedom as defined by neoliberalism. Freedom is reduced to freedom of choice, but this choice is determined by the nature and interests of the market, implying that the market is making the choice for the individual. Foucault argues that there is a transformation of the concept of *homo oeconomicus*, from the way it is utilised by classical economics and classical liberalism and the way it is used by neoliberal authors.

Classical liberalism and liberal economists, envision human beings as individuals who engage as equal partners in a process of exchange. In this context *homo oeconomicus* is defined as a partner of exchange who is guided by a principle of utility and who acts in terms of their identified needs.⁴⁴ Humans are considered and looked at as individuals who have needs and attempt to fulfil them by entering relations or processes of exchange with fellow individuals.

However, Foucault argues that under neoliberal systems of thought, this conception changes. He argues that for neoliberalism the basic element that makes up everything is not the individual or the processes they engage in, but the enterprise. The aim of neoliberal economic analysis and measures is to understand the nature and functions of enterprise units. Individuals are to be considered as a form of enterprise with all the characteristics and qualities of an enterprise.⁴⁵ This process leads towards neoliberal thinkers reinterpreting *homo oeconomicus* in two distinct but correlated ways.

In the first instance *homo oeconomicus* is a free agent who has mastery over themselves, the aim being of developing and growing not as persons but as a successful enterprise. Thus, Foucault defines *homo oeconomicus* as,

Homo oeconomicus is an entrepreneur, an entrepreneur of himself. This is true to the extent that, in practice, the stake in all neo-liberal analyses is the replacement every time of *homo oeconomicus* as partner of exchange with a *homo oeconomicus* as entrepreneur of himself, being

⁴³ Brian Massumi, *Ontopower: War, Powers, and the State of Perception*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2015), 2.

⁴⁴ Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 225.

⁴⁵ Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 225

for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of [his] earnings.⁴⁶

As highlighted by Massumi, the notion developed here is that the individual subject is presented with an array of choices, and they are free to choose that which is deemed to be the optimal choice as an investment in themselves. The aim of such an investment is to increase one's value as human capital and to position themselves in a better position in the competitive order. The competitive order is represented by the market, and as identified by Massumi, the market directs our freedom towards making the right choices to becoming successful enterprises who can outperform other enterprises, in other words other persons.

In his commentary on Foucault, Jason Read argues that what Foucault identifies in his analysis of the evolution of the concept of *homo oeconomicus* is a transition from one understanding of human nature to another. He argues that under neoliberalism, there is a reinterpretation of the human in terms of competition instead of exchange. Read argues that the neoliberal *homo oeconomicus* is a competitive creature and that neoliberalism actively promotes and encourages this competitive nature as a means of directing individuals towards neoliberal subjectification.⁴⁷

It is therefore the redefining of the human as a competitive subject that explains Foucault's second understanding of the neoliberal *homo oeconomicus*.

homo oeconomicus, that is to say, the person who accepts reality or who responds systematically to modifications in the variables of the environment, appears precisely as someone manageable, someone who responds systematically to systematic modifications artificially introduced into the environment. *Homo oeconomicus* is someone who is eminently governable.⁴⁸

The neoliberal subject, identifiable with *homo oeconomicus* as an enterprise of themselves, is a governable subject that can be moulded and shaped by the normative powers of the market and competition. As a neoliberal subject, *homo oeconomicus* must succeed on the market and find a space in the competitive order. To succeed in the market, they must personify the qualities and values that are in demand on the market. If these requirements are not fulfilled, then they will fail to be competitive and will be excluded from the competitive order. This implies that the neoliberal subject is an enterprise of themselves, who are free to choose what they want. However, that choice is determined by the will to fulfil one's response to the demands of the market and to place themselves as a supply to that demand. Thus, it may be surmised that in this order of things, the

⁴⁶ Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 225

⁴⁷ Read, "A Genealogy of Homo-Economicus", 27-28.

⁴⁸ Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 270.

enterprise of the self is not a liberating axiom but is a normative structure producing new processes of subjectification and new relations of subordination.

Ulrich Bröckling states that the entrepreneurial self is ‘both a normative model of the human and a multitude of contemporary technologies of self and social technologies.’⁴⁹ Furthermore, Byung Chul Han states that ‘As a mutant form of capitalism, neoliberalism transforms workers into *entrepreneurs*. ... Today, everyone is an *auto-exploiting labourer in his or her own enterprise*.’⁵⁰ Additionally, Foucault states that in a neoliberal economic analysis, the worker is not viewed as an object of supply and demand providing labour power in this system of exchange; but is instead seen as ‘an active economic subject’.⁵¹

In commenting about the work of Hutter and Teubner, Bröckling argues that *homo oeconomicus* (like *homo juridicus*) is a ‘real fiction’ that offers the type of agents that the system requires for it to function. Thus, *homo oeconomicus* is the type of active agent that the economic system needs for its processes and operations.⁵² Social subsystems, like the economy (or the legal one), use their own rationale to “personify specific human qualities, ‘seeing’ and personifying only these. Each ‘invents its own psychology’, fabricating the agents it needs.”⁵³ Read, commenting on Foucault, argues that *homo oeconomicus* is ‘a new regime of truth, and a new way in which people are made subjects’.⁵⁴ Furthermore, he states that *homo oeconomicus* is different from *homo juridicus* because their guiding motivations and principles are different.⁵⁵

Additionally, Bröckling states that ‘the discourse of the entrepreneurial self does not so much tell people what they are; rather it tells them what they have to become, and they can only become it because they have always been addressed in terms of it.’⁵⁶ The neoliberal *homo oeconomicus*, or entrepreneurial self is a new form of subject, resulting from the processes of subjectification enacted by neoliberal ideology and policy making. This process of subjectification creates neoliberal subjects that are defined as entrepreneurial units.

⁴⁹ Ulrich Bröckling, *The Entrepreneurial Self, Fabricating a New Type of Subject*, trans. Steven Black (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2016), 21.

⁵⁰ Byung-Chul Han, *Psychopolitics*, trans. Erik Butler, (London & New York: Verso, 2017), 5.

⁵¹ Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 223.

⁵² Bröckling, *The Entrepreneurial Self*, 11.

⁵³ Bröckling, *The Entrepreneurial Self*, 12.

⁵⁴ Read, *A Genealogy of Homo-Economicus*, 28-29.

⁵⁵ Read, *A Genealogy of Homo-Economicus*, 28-29.

⁵⁶ Bröckling, *The Entrepreneurial Self*, 21.

Berardi, who diagnoses neoliberal subjectification as a form of *psychopathology*,⁵⁷ argues that the transformation from labour to enterprise has ensured that employees direct their desires and energies towards their work, to such a degree that they are willing to invest themselves for the benefit of their job. The employee as an enterprise is willing to be fully invested in their work to such a degree that it becomes a psychological investment.⁵⁸

In *The Burnout Society* and *Psychopolitics*, Byung-Chul Han argues that late modernity with the rise and dominance of neoliberalism has created a society that is dominated by the figure of the entrepreneurial self, who as previously identified by Massumi is free to choose and to make optimal life choices in life.⁵⁹ Han posits that the neoliberal discourse of freedom, and entrepreneurship permeate every aspect of human life to such an extent that they have transformed contemporary society into an 'achievement society'.⁶⁰

Han claims that under neoliberalism, there has been a transition from a society of negativity to a society of positivity. The dominant discourse has transformed itself from one of 'may not' or 'should' to one of 'can'.⁶¹ The neoliberal discourse of freedom and individualism offer a narrative of empowerment which according to Han, "gives way to a renewed subjugation" and "freedom itself is bringing forth compulsion and constraint."⁶² Han states that,

Under neoliberalism, the technology of power takes a subtle form. It does not lay hold of individuals directly. Instead, it ensures that individuals act on themselves so that power relations are interiorised - and then interpreted as freedom. Self-optimisation and submission, freedom and exploitation, fall into one. Such engineering of freedom and exploitation, which occurs in order to effect self-exploitation, is what escaped Foucault.⁶³

Han also adds that in this dominant discourse of freedom and achievement, a new form of life has been created. People are no longer "subjugated *subjects*, but rather *projects*: always refashioning and reinventing" themselves, and this brings with "a sense of freedom", however this transition from subject to project only brings with new forms "of compulsion and constraint – indeed, to a *more efficient kind of subjectivation and subjugation*."⁶⁴ Han reiterates that in the

⁵⁷ Berardi, *The Soul At Work*, 10.

⁵⁸ Berardi, *The Soul At Work*, 77-78.

⁵⁹ Byung-Chul Han, *The Burnout Society*, trans. Erik Butler. (Stanford, California: Stanford Briefs, 2015) and Byung-Chul Han, *Psychopolitics*, trans. Erik Butler. (London & New York: Verso, 2017).

⁶⁰ Han, *Psychopolitics*, 8.

⁶¹ Han, *Psychopolitics*, 9.

⁶² Han, *Psychopolitics*, 1.

⁶³ Han, *Psychopolitics*, 28.

⁶⁴ Han, *Psychopolitics*, 28.

twenty-first century society its members “are no longer, “obedience-subjects” but “achievement-subjects.” They are entrepreneurs of themselves.”⁶⁵

Successful projects or enterprises require investments that promise increased returns and profits. Under the paradigm of the self as a project or enterprise, every life choice or action is interpreted in terms of one’s gains and more importantly of how they offer a better edge in the competitive order that is society and life itself. As Bröckling states, “Leading your life’ in turn becomes a series of strategic decisions and tactical calculations, ‘a politics of life.”⁶⁶ Life itself becomes a ledger in which expenditure and returns are listed allowing for the quantification of the value of life.

Therefore, the notion of the enterprise of the self cannot be separated from the concept of human capital as illustrated by Foucault in his *Birth of Biopolitics* lecture series in which he links the concept of the neoliberal definition of *homo oeconomicus*, to the concept of human capital. The neoliberal *homo oeconomicus* as an entrepreneur of themselves also requires a reconfiguration of the concept of wage. Wage becomes a form of ‘remuneration, the income allocated to a certain capital, a capital that we will call human capital inasmuch as the ability-machine of which it is the income cannot be separated from the human individual who is its bearer.’⁶⁷

This new conceptualisation of work has also been identified by Alain Supiot, who argues that in contemporary neoliberal economic discourse, employees or workers have been replaced by stakeholders. Employees do not work in a company, but offer their abilities and skills to the company. These individuals possess a ‘human resource’ or a ‘human capital’ which they offer as a service to the company with which they are contracted (employed).⁶⁸

Supiot states that salaries are directly linked to human capital, to such a degree that in corporate culture the direct link of financial packages to the company’s performance leads to an intertwining of the financial interests of the employee and the financial success of the company.⁶⁹ In a corporate world dominated by shareholders and stakeholders, there further exists the possibility of having employees who are also shareholders, therefore placing them in a double bind whereby their returns are both as employees but also as investors, thus also reinforcing their status as entrepreneurs.

⁶⁵ Han, *The Burnout Society*, 8.

⁶⁶ Bröckling, *The Entrepreneurial Self*, 5.

⁶⁷ Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 226.

⁶⁸ Alain Supiot, *Governance by Numbers: The Making of a Legal Model of Allegiance*, trans. Saskia Brown (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2017), 27.

⁶⁹ Supiot, *Governance by Numbers*, 27.

For Tim Christiaens, Hayek's notion of the spontaneous competitive order, or catallaxy, forces individuals to adapt to the market changes, represented by demand and supply, in such a way that they have to show initiative and adapt according to the price signals that the market offers. In such a competitive environment, only those who are efficient and pro-active entrepreneurs of themselves will succeed. Thus, the qualities of those who win in this competitive order are those who are capable of reading the appropriate signals stemming from the market and taking the initiative to adapt accordingly and beat their competitors.⁷⁰

Therefore, in this context, the wages of employees are no longer to be considered as 'rewards for past efforts, but signals for where to invest future labour...If wages in a particular sector are high, it means that expertise in this field is in high demand, and vice versa.'⁷¹ More critically is the aspect that, for Hayek, not only must employees act as entrepreneurs of the self, but that they must perceive and treat other employees not as associates, but as competitors, leading to winners and losers.⁷² This implies that in Hayek's competitive order, there is no space or possibility for class solidarity; collaboration with others only stems from mutual interests and benefits, and as a means of outperforming the competition.

The transition from employee to entrepreneur of one's own human capital is tackled by Bröckling, who expresses this conundrum by asking 'Entrepreneurial self or entrepoyee?'⁷³ Bröckling shows that in contemporary neoliberal discourse, the employee is expected to meet several demands by their employers, which are normally expected of the owner of the company or an entrepreneur. Thus, employees are expected to be "self-controlling, self-economizing, and self-rationalizing,"⁷⁴ with a blurring of lines between work life and private life, and even between work and leisure.⁷⁵ The entrepreneurial life becomes an imposed way of life that cannot be avoided, especially by those who are working as freelancers or in precarious conditions. In such conditions, the neoliberal self is not merely an entrepreneur of the self, but the self, or life itself, becomes an enterprise.

⁷⁰ Tim Christiaens, "Hayek's vicarious secularization of providential theology", in *Philosophy and Social Criticism* Vol. 45(1), 2019, 75.

⁷¹ Christiaens, Hayek's vicarious secularization of providential theology, 75.

⁷² Christiaens, Hayek's vicarious secularization of providential theology, 75.

⁷³ Bröckling, *The Entrepreneurial Self*, 21.

⁷⁴ Bröckling, *The Entrepreneurial*, 22.

⁷⁵ Bröckling, *The Entrepreneurial*, 21.

The enterprise of the self or entrepreneurial self becomes a form of life that treats and lives life as a project. This notion is captured in Agamben's concept of the habitus as presented throughout his work *The Highest Poverty*.⁷⁶

The Highest Poverty argues that the principal interest of monastic rules is that of governing life and its execution, on an individual and collective level. Agamben reiterates that the monastic rules rearticulated the relationship between human actions and norms, life and rule, paving the way for modernity's ways of shaping human life.⁷⁷ "What is in question in the monastic rules is thus a transformation that seems to bear on the very way in which human action is conceived, so that one shifts from the level of practice and acting to that of form of life."⁷⁸ For him, there is an identifiable transition from the enactment of a form of rule, *forma regulae*, to a form of life, *forma vivendi*.⁷⁹ This implies that in such a system, normative practices are not designed to guide and control actions but become a guide and control of living itself. Agamben's argument is that norms and morality focus on persons as subjects and not on their actions.

Agamben also elaborates on the notion of 'habitus', which originally refers to clothing or dress. Monastic rules identified and stated the type of clothing that had to be worn by their members. The clothes, or habit, went through a process of moralisation and regulation because they came to embody and represent the values and the conduct of those who wore them.⁸⁰ Thus, habitus came to signify not only the attire of the individual but the way one conducts oneself.⁸¹ Agamben states that the term 'habitus cinguli' does not refer to the belt of the dress but to the dress as a *hexis* and *ethos*.⁸² This implies that the notion of habitus is about the disposition and way of doing things; it requires constant practice, leaving no distinction between work and leisure, work life and private life.

In his commentary on the work of Paul Thibaud, Bröckling argues that through the development of a culture of entrepreneurship, in which the self becomes an enterprise, self-realisation and economic success become complementary to each other.⁸³ One could not achieve self-fulfilment without financial success. The project of the self is not merely about fulfilling one's

⁷⁶ Giorgio Agamben, *The Highest Poverty, Monastic Rules and Form-Of-Life*, trans. Adam Kotsko. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2013).

⁷⁷ Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*, 4.

⁷⁸ Agamben, *The Highest Poverty* 61.

⁷⁹ Agamben, *The Highest Poverty* 60.

⁸⁰ Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*, 14-15.

⁸¹ Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*, 13.

⁸² Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*, 15.

⁸³ Bröckling, *The Entrepreneurial Self*, 24.

calling, but about fulfilling one's calling as an entrepreneur, which is exemplified by the new cultural heroes of the West, that is, the successful entrepreneur who makes it from nothing.⁸⁴ This culture is witnessed every day in the obsessive coverage by the media of individuals like Warren Buffett, Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, or Steve Jobs, who are exemplified as the success stories to be emulated by everyone. The 'American Dream' or the 'rags to riches' narrative has become the dominant narrative pandered by popular media and the mass media, creating a new archetype that dominates contemporary collective consciousness.

Bröckling also shows how entrepreneurship of the self became the dominant paradigm of the Thatcher and Reagan administrations, who pushed forth the ideal of individual responsibility in contrast to dependency on social benefits and the welfare state.⁸⁵ The state's role was to transition from a provider of safety nets and aid towards establishing a general 'enterprise culture', an active programme leaving no area untouched.⁸⁶ This enterprise culture is to be deemed as the conditions required to create a culture of achievement in all sectors of the economy, including the arts and sciences, and also in people's private lives.⁸⁷ This notion of enterprise culture in terms of achievement and value creation through knowledge and skill creation is nowhere more prevalent than in the domineering concept of human capital.

The transition from being employed to becoming an entrepreneur of the self, or self-enterprise, redefines the ontology of the human and produces new forms of thinking of the human self. In this new context, self-worth and the value of human life are explained as investments and assets leading to the development of human capital as the mainstay of social and political discourse.

4.5 Human Capital

Theorists like Gary Stanley Becker have incorporated the concept of human capital in all forms of policymaking, simultaneously making it the determining value of contemporary administration, whether private or public. These theorists "approach human beings as benefit-maximizing self-entrepreneurs," leading to "a program for the systematic economization of life."⁸⁸ Human capital is the measure expressing the wealth and competitiveness of an individual, a company, or a state.

⁸⁴ Bröckling, *The Entrepreneurial*, 24.

⁸⁵ Bröckling, *The Entrepreneurial*, 24-25.

⁸⁶ Bröckling, *The Entrepreneurial*. 25.

⁸⁷ Bröckling, *The Entrepreneurial*, 25.

⁸⁸ Ulrich Bröckling, "Human Economy, Human Capital, A Critique of Biopolitical Economy" in *Governmentality, Current Issues and Future Challenges*, Edited by Ulrich Bröckling, Susanne Krasmann & Thomas Lemke, (New York: Routledge, 2011), 249.

Human capital as a measurable index is the epitome of the concept of the entrepreneurial unit. Just like we can measure an enterprise in terms of capital and assets, to assess how competitive it is on the market, similarly, one can measure the competitiveness and competitive edge of an individual by measuring their human capital. In this context, the OECD defines human capital as ‘as the stock of knowledge, skills and other personal characteristics embodied in people that helps them to be productive.’⁸⁹ Human capital is therefore not about the success of the person as a person, for example their achievement of happiness, but the individual as an economic resource. (The focus on human capital index instead of other measurable qualities such as the wellbeing index or the happiness index reflects the prioritisation of economic policy over all other social policies.)

In *The Age of Human Capital*, Becker defines human capital as,

Human capital refers to the knowledge, information, ideas, skills, and health of individuals. This is the “age of human capital” in the sense that human capital is by far the most important form of capital in modern economies. The economic successes of individuals, and also of whole economies, depends on how extensively and effectively people invest in themselves.⁹⁰

Therefore, for Becker, human capital is not about the accomplishment and self-realisation of the individual as a person but as a net contributor to society in terms of production and capital creation. Furthermore, in describing contemporary western economic models, he states that ‘a more accurate term is human capital or a knowledge capital economy. While all forms of capital are important, including machinery, factories, and financial capital, human capital is the most significant.’⁹¹

Capital is an asset, an asset that is owned and available for investment, therefore human capital is the asset a person owns that they can invest. The neoliberal *homo oeconomicus* as an entrepreneur of themselves owns capital, themselves, that they can invest in their enterprise, themselves. In reducing persons to enterprise units, we may argue that people’s life is redefined as a form of capital investment cycle. The individual identifies the available assets and where investment is required, the capital is invested (as a form of expenditure), new skills or qualifications are purchased through the expenditure, these skills and qualifications offer new opportunities leading to a return on investment, and then the newly accumulated capital (in

⁸⁹ OECD, “Productivity, human capital and educational policies”, accessed 13th December 2022, <https://www.oecd.org/economy/human-capital/>.

⁹⁰ Gary Stanley Becker, ‘The Age of Human Capital’ in *Education in the Twenty-first Century*, Edited by Edward P. Lazear, (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 2002), 3.

⁹¹ Becker, *The Age of Human Capital*, 3

terms of skills and qualifications) are reutilised for further investment opportunities. Like any other enterprise, the individual must be positively positioned on the market so as to be attractive for other enterprises (individuals or organisations, including the government) to invest in them.

Mark Coeckelbergh, in his work on the culture of self-improvement, shows how, through new technologies and new services, individuals are offered the opportunity to further themselves by using products that increase their human capital through a process of constant self-improvement. 'Self-improvement is a project, and it needs to be managed, measured, and lead to outcomes.'⁹² The self must be managed and run like any company, and all aspects of life must be curtailed towards efficiency and growth.

The entrepreneurial self needs to be constantly upgraded so that it remains competitive and valuable. As Coeckelbergh points out, 'In neoliberal societies, in which the state provides minimal welfare and health care and supports highly competitive employment markets, people are forced to be self-reliant and are encouraged to view themselves as commodities.'⁹³ In this commentary on neoliberal policies, it is evident, as had been identified by Foucault, that the notion of human capital is intertwined with the principles and values of neoliberalism and its dominant paradigm of the competitive order.

In his study on the role of psychology and the dominance of capitalism, Ron Roberts emphasises the process of objectification of people for the success of capitalist, and by extension neoliberal, social relations. He argues that 'Their intrinsic value as human beings is transformed into a value based upon how they can be used. Everybody comes to have a price and a use. They appear only as objects to be 'consumed' that they may satisfy us.'⁹⁴ To determine the price and value of people, a supposedly objective and quantifiable numerical value must be calculated, and this corresponding measure is human capital.

We can argue that the process of human capitalisation is akin to the process of commodification, as conceptualised by Karl Marx in his *Capital, Volume 1*.⁹⁵ Marx argues that 'The wealth of societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails appears as an 'immense collection of commodities', these being, 'an external object, a thing which through its qualities satisfies

⁹² Mark Coeckelbergh, *Self-Improvement, Technologies of the Soul in the Age of Artificial Intelligence*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022), 39.

⁹³ Coeckelbergh, *Self-Improvement*, 49.

⁹⁴ Ron Roberts, *Psychology and Capitalism: The Manipulation of Mind*, (Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2015), 38.

⁹⁵ Karl Marx, *Capital, A Critique of Political Economy, Volume 1*, trans. Ernest Mandel, (London: Penguin Classics, 1990)

human needs of whatever kind.⁹⁶ All commodities are valued in two ways, in terms of their 'use-value' and their 'exchange value'. The use value is the value an object has in terms of its usefulness, while the exchange value, which is abstracted from the use value, is determined by market relations and 'appears to be something accidental and purely relative'.⁹⁷ Additionally 'As exchange values, all commodities are merely definite quantities of *congealed labour time*' and labour time changes according to a variety of factors of production including the skill and knowledge of the worker.⁹⁸

Marx emphasises the dual nature of commodities, as having use value and exchange value, and therefore in the process of commodification, all aspects of life become commodities because they have this dual nature. In such a system all human qualities like skills, knowledge, or human relations may all be commodified because they all fall within the definition of commodities as conceptualised by Marx. Thus, if we look back at the concept of human capital, individuals as *abilities-machines* are satisfying human needs and their usefulness is exchanged for other commodities or money.

For Marx capital must be understood in terms of the circulation of commodities through exchange. Money, which is a unit that represents labour time, is transformed into capital through the process of exchanging for a profit. He formulates this as M-C-M, money is exchanged for a commodity which is exchanged back for money. Between the first exchange and the second exchange there is an increase in the value, which results in profit.⁹⁹

Therefore, if we had to adopt this definition of capital, human capital can be interpreted as being the process of the individual spending money to obtain a commodity which in this case is new knowledge, skills or otherwise, which can in turn be exchanged for money on the labour market. This implies that in the logic of human capital, human life is not only commodified, because it becomes part of the logic of capitalism, but human life becomes the 'space' of the circulation of exchanges, *homo oeconomicus*. In such a scenario, human life is redefined as the economic activity par excellence therefore transforming the notion of *homo oeconomicus* into an ontological category.

Within a functioning market whose success is determined by effective competition and the establishment of a competitive order¹⁰⁰ human capital is transformed from exchange value to

⁹⁶ Marx, *Capital, Volume 1*, 125.

⁹⁷ Marx, *Capital, Volume 1*, 126.

⁹⁸ Marx, *Capital, Volume 1*, 130.

⁹⁹ Marx, *Capital, Volume 1*, 258-269.

¹⁰⁰ Biebricher, *The Political Theory of Neoliberalism*, 39.

becoming a key determinant in positioning individuals within the hierarchy of the competitive order. In these terms human capital becomes the quantification of the competitive ability or potential that an individual has, thus redefining *homo oeconomicus* as not merely a 'trading animal' but as a 'competing animal'. This dimension comes into being because the market where trade operates functions through competitiveness and the production of a competitive order. Thus, under neoliberalism, trade and competition become synonymous, implying that human capital is recontextualised from exchange value to competitive value.

Human capital has developed from a conceptual level as defined by Becker towards becoming an economic and mathematical system that can quantify the value of human life on an individual level and on a collective level. On one hand, human capital shows the competitive capacity of an individual, and on the other, it determines the competitive capacity of a state or country. This aspect of human capital as an economic and policy tool exposes how human capital has evolved into a determining force in the government of human life.

Nowhere is this dimension of human capital more pronounced than in the initiatives of the World Bank. In 2017, the World Bank announced its undertaking to develop the growth in human capital to eradicate poverty. This project is called 'The Human Capital Project' and was launched in 2018 through the establishment of 'The Human Capital Index'.¹⁰¹

The Human Capital Index is an accounting exercise that establishes the average productive value of an individual in a particular country. Through this determinant, the World Bank can therefore predict the productive value of the average individual and by extension the whole country. As they explain themselves, 'The index is a summary measure of *the amount of human capital that a child born today can expect to acquire by age 18, given the risks of poor health and poor education that prevail in the country where she lives.* ...A significant innovation is that the index measures the *contribution of health and education to the productivity of individuals and countries*, anchored in rigorous micro-econometric studies.'¹⁰² The establishment of, and the widespread adoption of this index uncovers a concerted effort to create a system whereby human life is solely redefined in terms of its economic output and excluding all other qualities and aspects of being human. The global dimension of this policy can be seen by the spread of the Human Capital index which by

¹⁰¹ World Bank, "About the Human Capital Project", accessed 21st December 2022, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/human-capital/brief/about-hcp#:~:text=The%20World%20Bank%20Group%20announced%20the%20Human%20Capital%20Project%20in%202017.> (Italics not in the original.)

¹⁰² World Bank, "Human Capital Project Frequently Asked Questions", accessed on the 21st December 2022, [https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/human-capital/brief/the-human-capital-project-frequently-asked-questions?cid=GGH_e_hcpexternal_en_ext#HCI17.](https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/human-capital/brief/the-human-capital-project-frequently-asked-questions?cid=GGH_e_hcpexternal_en_ext#HCI17)

2020 included one hundred and seventy-four countries, which represents more than ninety-eight per cent of the world's human population.¹⁰³

Even more critically, the role of the Human Capital Index is to establish a ranking system of the countries that are part of the project. This ranking system is developed to identify and show the competitive level of the individual countries, thus establishing the position of a country on the global economic market. The Human Capital Index, as designed by the World Bank uncovers two realities. It shows the close relation that exists between power and knowledge, as discussed by Foucault in his work. The policies that are enacted by governments in response to the results of the rankings of the Human Capital Index uncover how governance is shaped by knowledge and that knowledge is used to justify government policies to govern the population.

Additionally, the Human Capital Index also uncovers an uncontested definition of human society and culture as based on competitiveness. In her analysis and quoting of Hayek, Naomi Beck shows that for Hayek, it is through competition that a small number of successful individuals force the larger portion of the population to work harder, change their habits, or adapt so that the country is more successful and prosperous.¹⁰⁴ Beck quotes Hayek to show that in his theory of the development of human culture and morality, it is profitability that ensures the possibility and success of sustaining and raising a growing population.¹⁰⁵ This implies that the stated goal of the Human Capital Project of 'rapid progress towards a world in which all children arrive in school well-nourished and ready to learn, can expect to attain real learning in the classroom, and are able to enter the job market as healthy, skilled, and productive adults'¹⁰⁶ is a fulfilment of Hayek's vision of how competition shapes human society and civilisation.

In his lectures on *The Birth of Biopolitics*, Foucault identifies human capital as a key component of neoliberalism, and more crucially, he associates human capital with the phenomenon of the enterprise of the self. Thus, for him the neoliberal *homo oeconomicus* is the entrepreneur of the self that invests in themselves in terms of their human capital. Therefore, one's monetary income is directly related to their investment and value in terms of their human capital. At this stage of his argument, Foucault redefines the human person as an abilities-machine, which, like other machines, must be innovated, developed, and utilised for the exigencies of economic growth.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ "Human Capital Project Frequently Asked Questions"

¹⁰⁴ Naomi Beck, *Hayek and the Evolution of Capitalism*. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 84-85.

¹⁰⁵ Beck, *Hayek and the Evolution of Capitalism*. 84-85.

¹⁰⁶ The World Bank, "About the Human Capital Project".

¹⁰⁷ Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 226-231.

Although forty years separate Foucault's work and The Human Capital Project, we can see that he had already identified the possibility of such initiatives happening through the adoption of human capital as a political and social paradigm for economic growth. Foucault realises that human capital will become the dominant discourse, supplanting that of 'material investment of physical capital' or 'the number of workers.'¹⁰⁸ He states that,

in fact we are seeing the economic policies of all the developed countries, but also their social policies, as well as their cultural and educational policies, being orientated in these terms. In the same way, the problems of the Third World can also be rethought on the basis of human capital. And you know that currently an attempt is being made to rethink the problem of the failure of Third World economies to get going, not in terms of blockage of economic mechanisms, but in terms of insufficient investment in human capital.¹⁰⁹

The Human Capital Project, launched by the World Bank, exemplifies the materialisation of Foucault's reading of the neoliberal zeitgeist.

Foucault argues that humans as abilities-machines are moulded to produce the maximum possible income through 'educational investments' which are not limited to 'schooling or professional training'. Foucault identifies a broader understanding of educational investments towards increasing human capital to such a degree that all environmental aspects become part of it, including family values, health care, and hygiene.¹¹⁰ (These are also some of the determinants which form part of the calculation of the Human Capital Index.)

However, there is also a key aspect of Foucault's reading of human capital because he argues that what constitutes this capital is not only based on investment but also by what the original resource includes. He states that human capital 'is made up of innate elements and other, acquired elements.'¹¹¹ These innate elements that he refers to are biological and Foucault link these qualities to hereditary traits and genetics.¹¹² If human capital is closely linked both to nature and nurture, then the risks of exposing human life to threats, and not only to opportunities is even more pronounced. Within a discourse of valuing human life according to their productive value, what value is ascribed to human lives, who are not economically productive members of society. What place do people with severe disabilities have in such a style of administration, especially

¹⁰⁸ Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 232.

¹⁰⁹ Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 232.

¹¹⁰ Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 229-230.

¹¹¹ Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 227.

¹¹² Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 227.

considering that in a neoliberal style of government social support is minimal or altogether non-existent.

In a politics guided and driven by valuing human life based on their human capital and economic contribution¹¹³, the risk of exposing human life to threats of violence and death grow exponentially. Therefore, the notion of human capital and the institutions that are built around it create the possibility of producing what Agamben refers to as *bare life*.

In his *Homo Sacer* project, Agamben identifies the figure of the *Homo Sacer* (Sacred Man) with the notion of 'bare life'. Agamben defines *Homo Sacer* as an individual, 'who may be killed and yet not sacrificed, and whose essential function in modern politics we intend to assert.'¹¹⁴ This figure of the sacred man is one of the representations of bare life found in Agamben's work among which we find the figure of the *Muselmann* in *Remnants of Auschwitz*¹¹⁵, or the figure of the refugee in *Beyond Human Rights*.¹¹⁶ Bare life, is therefore a liminal figure, it is human life that is not recognised as deserving of that which qualifies them as fully human, and is therefore not ascribed certain rights and protections.

For Agamben the figure of bare life results from the Classical Greek distinction between *zoē* and *bios*. The former is identified with pure life, unqualified life, whilst the latter is associated with the concept of qualified life, '*zoē*, which expressed the simple fact of living common to all living beings (animals, men, or gods), and *bios*, which indicated the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group.'¹¹⁷ Agamben further states that the space for the development of *bios* is the polis, which for the Greeks is considered a natural characteristic of being human and for Aristotle is what distinguished the human from other animals allowing humans to achieve the good life.¹¹⁸

If we had to apply the concepts of *zoē* and *bios* to the discussion on human capital, then *zoē* represents human life as is, whereas *bios* is about investing in oneself to become a productive

¹¹³ Economic contribution does not only refer to productivity but also to consumption. In the consumer economy that dominates neoliberal systems, consumption is key to the success of the economy as much as productivity is. Foucault points out that in Becker, the act of consumption is considered as an act of production too. The consumer is simultaneously a producer. Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 226.

¹¹⁴ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer, Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), 8.

¹¹⁵ Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz, the Witness and the Archive*, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen (New York: Zone Books, 1999)

¹¹⁶ Giorgio Agamben, *Means Without Ends, Notes on Politics*, trans. Vincenzo Binetti & Cesare Casarino (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 15-28.

¹¹⁷ Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 1.

¹¹⁸ Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 7.

member of society as required by the state (the *polis*) or by the economy. Therefore, in this case, *homo oeconomicus*, is a form of qualified life, *bios*, because it is not mere life but a way of life that is expected by an individual who lives in a neoliberal system. Like *homo juridicus*, even *homo oeconomicus* is a form of politicisation of human life.

Bare life is about the politicisation of life, but instead of driving it towards achieving ‘the good life’ it is excluded from ‘the good life’ thus placing it in this liminal zone whereby human life is subject to politics but is not protected or cared for by politics. Human capital as a measure of value of human life, exposes categories of people towards the possibility of becoming bare life. Agamben identifies refugees as form of bare life because they are politicised and are legal subjects but are not protected by the law.¹¹⁹ The same may be stated in the case of low-income migrant workers who are considered as having low human capital and are therefore on the lower rungs of the labour competitive order. Furthermore, their low status in terms of human capital also exposes them to legal lacunae whereby their rights are not protected by legal institutions and are exposed to abuses which are justified for economic reasons.

In his discussion on bare life, Agamben argues (albeit fleetingly) that the creation of bare life is a phenomenon underlying western political systems and its economic system. He states that ‘The biopolitics of both modern totalitarianism and the society of mass hedonism and consumerism certainly constitute answers to these questions.’¹²⁰ Therefore to him, the potential of the state to create bare life also exists in the context of western contemporary economic systems that are based on mass capitalism.

Categories of people who are considered to have low human capital, but are still identified as *homo oeconomicus*, are therefore exposed to a precarious state whereby the requirements of the economy dictate their working and living conditions irrespective of the law, thus effectively transforming them into categories of bare life. An example of this transformation into bare life can be identified in the experiences of workers who are part of contemporary neoliberal models of employment such as the gig economy and zero-hour contracts, which are based on the notions of the enterprise of the self and human capital.

Han’s work proposes that in the neoliberal society dominated by the entrepreneurial self, which he terms as *The Achievement Society*, human life becomes ‘bare life’ because it is reduced to its vital functions and stripped of its transcendental value. The value of life is reduced to its

¹¹⁹ Giorgio Agamben, *Means Without Ends*, 15-28.

¹²⁰ Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 11.

functional value.¹²¹ Han also argues that in *The Achievement Society* every individual is potentially *homo sacer*, because we make ourselves expendable as persons so that we achieve the goals and ambitions that we set for ourselves to maximise our human capital.¹²²

In his analysis and critique of human theory Peter Fleming argues that coupled with other neoliberal policies like privatisation, reduction of public spending and exposing every aspect of life to the mechanisms of the market leads to a downward spiral in the working and living conditions of people. He states that the 'politics of work' is closely associated with other aspects of social justice 'like affordable housing, the cost of living crisis, personal debt and access to education.'¹²³ Fleming argues that human capital theory exposes everyone to a process of atomisation and individualisation which eats away at the strength of collective bargaining and the security of workers' rights. This leads to 'human capitalists...to be mired in debt insecure and dominated by authoritarian management systems.'¹²⁴ These social conditions are not about the flourishing of the good life but are methods of creating a way of life that is exposed to constant economic and social pressures leading to insecurity and lack of protection, a form of bare life.

In discussing the work of Robert Castel, Isabel Lorey shows how the transition from a wage labour economic model to a self-entrepreneurship model led to the creation of mass vulnerability whereby whole segments of the population are exposed to 'social and economic insecurities' and to threats to their living conditions. For Lorey, the widespread use of precarity as a form of working relation is leading to exposing large portions of society towards being excluded from the security and protection that they once enjoyed through wage labour and the welfare state, two social institutions that have been eroded and dismantled by neoliberal forms of government.¹²⁵

Coupled together human capital theory and the concept of the entrepreneur of the self, expose the individual further and further to the threats and dangers of the market and competitive order. 'Employment relationships inspired by human capital theory are lucrative to individual workers if their skill is scarce and demand is high.'¹²⁶ However if one's human capital is commonplace or the demand for one's skills are low, then this results in 'a downward pressure on income because

¹²¹ Byung-Chul Han, *The Burnout Society*, trans. Erik Butler. (Stanford, California: Stanford Briefs, 2015), 51.

¹²² Han, *The Burnout Society*, 49.

¹²³ Peter Fleming, *The Death of Homo Economicus Work, Debt and the Myth of Endless Accumulation* (London: Pluto Press, 2017), 187.

¹²⁴ Fleming, *The Death of Homo Economicus*, 207.

¹²⁵ Isabel Lorey, *State of Insecurity: Government of the Precarious*, trans. by Aileen Derieg. (London & New York: Verso Books, 2015), 52-53.

¹²⁶ Fleming, *The Death of Homo Economicus*, 187.

of competition'¹²⁷ Furthermore, because one is considered as an external enterprise who sells their services to the company, all costs and expenses are transferred onto the individual, implying also that all risks are also transferred onto the individual.¹²⁸ Working conditions and wages are not protected in these precarious conditions, because often national labour laws¹²⁹ do not apply, instead self-employment laws come into practice further exposing and isolating the individual to insecurity and placing them in a state of bare life.

The ideological underpinnings that sustain a neoliberal form of governance and control are to be found in human capital theory and the entrepreneur of the self. Neoliberal government uses a variety of strategies and tactics to maintain its power and to control society. These are justified in free market terms of freedom and competition leading to other epiphenomenal concepts like the entrepreneurial self and human capital. The creation of bare life is part of the biopolitical institutions that are at pay in the service of neoliberal administrations and will be further explored in the part of this chapter on neoliberal governmentality. Additionally, we can also identify in human capital theory a space of resistance that Agamben associates with the figure of Bartleby the Scrivener. For Agamben, this fictional character represents the act of contingency of the individual who through the act of inoperativity is resisting the dominant institutions.¹³⁰ This will be explored at a later stage of this study.

Human capital as a notion, offers the possibility of administering life, and it offers the necessary instrumentalization to make this administration both possible and effective. Human capital policies create forms of quantification and calculation, like the 'Human Capital Index', of that which originally was deemed as unquantifiable, that is human life itself. Like psychology as a discipline, the role of human capital is 'not to enhance human well-being or to promote a deeper understanding of the natural world, but to serve the needs of government and administrative bodies.'¹³¹ The aim of human capital and all associated quantifications is to serve as a form of '*Statistik*' which allows for 'the numerical disciplining of people and the social spaces they inhabit'.¹³² The role of the concept of human capital is to allow for the possibility of the administration and management of human life in terms of economic policy, *oikonomia*.

¹²⁷ Fleming, *The Death of Homo Economicus*, 187.

¹²⁸ Fleming, *The Death of Homo Economicus*, 187.

¹²⁹ Fleming, *The Death of Homo Economicus*, 187.

¹³⁰ Giorgio Agamben, *Potentialities, Collected Essays in Philosophy*, edited and trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999), 243-271.

¹³¹ Roberts, *Psychology and Capitalism*, 5.

¹³² Roberts, *Psychology and Capitalism*, 5

4.6 Governmentality

A moralistic and religious discourse has the dual function of defining the type of sanctions that should be imposed on individuals who breach these rules and to internalise the process of punishment in such a manner that individuals are compelled to ‘naturally’ behave in the manner that is expected of them.

The administration and management of the conduct of life must function on two levels: the individual level and the collective level. The government of souls is as much about the flock of sheep as it is about the lost sheep. If necessary, the lost sheep must be disciplined so that it finds its way back into the fold and behaves like the rest of the flock. In this context we may therefore observe the validity of Friedrich Nietzsche’s theory as presented in his work, *On the Genealogy of Morality*.¹³³

In this work Nietzsche argues that Christian morality should be interpreted as a form of revenge from those who are wronged, or perceived to be wronged, and as a form of self-mortification. The morality of the ignoble can be seen as a form of punishment that is used to control those who have broken norms and laws, therefore providing it with a disciplinary power. However, according to Nietzsche the most powerful and effective quality of an unheroic morality is its ability to generate a sense of guilt. Guilt is a socially constructed impulse within an individual subject that drives that individual towards behaving and acting within the bounds of accepted moral and social norms. Whereas punishment works on the individual, the use of guilt as a form of subjectification, functions on a collective level. Nietzsche states that, “it is the meaning of *all culture* to breed a tame and civilized animal, a *domestic animal*”.¹³⁴ Punishment and guilt work in conjunction to produce a tame and domesticated subject because, as David Owen remarks, “*Punishment does not produce the sense of guilt, it vindicates that one is guilty.*”¹³⁵

Nietzsche, in his second essay, states that “the central moral concept of ‘guilt’ [*Schuld*] originated from the very material concept of ‘debt’ [*Schulden*]”.¹³⁶ Therefore, a sense of guilt is a sense of indebtedness, and if someone is guilty, then they are also indebted. The condition of debt implies a debt towards someone or something, a creditor. Nietzsche argues that guilt is the representation of the contractual relationship between the creditor and the debtor. Furthermore, as a form of guarantee of repayment, the debtor also offers their own life, or the life of their family,

¹³³ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*.

¹³⁴ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 27. Italics from original text.

¹³⁵ David Owen, *Nietzsche’s Genealogy of Morality*, (Stocksfield: Acument, 2007), 107. Italics from original text.

¹³⁶ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 44.

as backup. This is reinforced by a sacred oath in which in some religions the very soul of the debtor may be requested as repayment for debts.¹³⁷ With this new dimension, the role of creditor is extended beyond the sole individual with whom the debt was made. The role of creditor is extended to society and all the institutions that represent it.

A legal framework of obligations and the process of internalisation leading to a sense of guilt or conscience are considered as a system of apparatus that subjectifies everyone into a debtor. Every individual is indebted to God, or that which replaces Him, in our case the Market. Nietzsche declares that “[i]t is in *this* sphere, in legal obligations that, then, that moral conceptual world of ‘guilt’, ‘conscience’, ‘duty’, ‘sacred duty’ originates,”¹³⁸ In a reality designed as a market, everyone is indebted to someone or something, and therefore, every individual is obliged to live according to the arrangements of this obligation. (This aspect will be explored further in the next chapter, which will explore indebtedness as an ontological category.)

If one’s debt is not paid, there are laws and regulations that dictate the type of punishment to be meted out to satisfy the missed repayment. Furthermore, one must always conduct oneself as a debtor and live by the internalised rules of one's guilt and conscience, simultaneously respecting one's sacred duty towards the market. Morality is thus an apparatus that acts both as a punishment and as a mode of behaviour and conduct of conducts. In Foucauldian terms, Nietzsche’s conceptualisation of morality defines it as both a disciplinary power and biopower.

Foucault shows how the art of living well, *ars artium*, transitioned from a religious discourse to a scientific one.¹³⁹ Foucault’s genealogy on the development of the confession in the context of sex, follows in the same direction and concomitantly with the genealogy presented in his lecture on the Birth of Biopolitics, which traces the development of the scientific discourse of human capital as a progression of the pastorate and the discourse of souls.

The discursive development identified by Foucault shows how the concept of *oikonomia* serves as paradigmatic to the change from a religious discourse to a scientific discourse. Economic discourse lends itself well to both a religious or spiritual mode and to a scientific mode. The fact that economics is considered as scientific and has allied itself with other disciplines like psychology creating new fields of knowledge like behavioural economics¹⁴⁰, provides it with the

¹³⁷ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals* 45.

¹³⁸ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals* 46.

¹³⁹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. by Robert Hurley. (New York: Vintage Books, 1990)

¹⁴⁰ Roberts explores the links between psychology and economics, showing how disciplines like behavioural economics create the required consent to implement economic and political policies that

required gravitas to guarantee that its claims are accepted as truth, in the same manner that religious discourse was previously accepted as truth.

Neoliberal governance becomes a reality because it offers itself as a voice of objective scientific knowledge thus offering itself as the only truthful form of governance. Human capital, with its grounding in the social sciences and its proliferate use of scientific discourse, makes itself truthful and therefore a requisite for good governance. Thus, neoliberal theory and policy making, through its adoption of economic discourse even in the dimension of human affairs, including the use of the notion of human capital, projects itself as a scientific truth that must be followed because it is the only truth. In such a scenario, TINA (there is no alternative) is not only about economic systems but about life itself. Neoliberal thinking becomes exhorted as a regimen of truth which allows for the creation of forms of power.

Throughout the progress of his work, Foucault identifies and explores three concepts of power which do not exclude each other. These are disciplinary power, biopower and governmentality. These three forms of power do not replace each other but can co-exist and be utilised by those who wield them depending on the context and requirements. In the *History of Sexuality Volume 1*, Foucault with reference to disciplinary power and biopower, states that, 'power over life evolved in two basic forms; these forms were not antithetical, however they constituted rather two poles of development linked together by a whole intermediary cluster of relations.'¹⁴¹ Similarly, contemporary neoliberal administrations focus on governmentality, but this does not mean that they do not exert forms of disciplining force on those who do not fit the desired mould or when required.

Foucault defines disciplinary power as 'an *anatomo-politics of the human body*' based on the notion of 'the body as a machine' and focusing on the 'disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls'.¹⁴² Disciplinary power is therefore represented by institutions like the prison or the factory.

favour businesses, not consumers or workers. He looks at various branches such as behaviourism, consumer neuroscience, and neuromarketing as examples of appropriation of scientific discourse for the benefit of commerce. Furthermore, he also shows how economics and psychology have come together to create a 'decision science' aiming to manipulate and change the decision process in people. This obviously has not only economic implications but also political implications. Roberts, *Psychology and Capitalism*, 71-88.

¹⁴¹ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, 139.

¹⁴² Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, 139.

The other form of power that he discusses is biopower or biopolitics which is focused on the human as life, as a 'species body' This form of power is interested in 'the biological processes: propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all the conditions that can cause these to vary.' He adds that these aspects of human life were controlled and managed through '*regulatory controls: a biopolitics of the population.*'¹⁴³

Additionally, in his 1977-1978 series of lectures *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault identifies a new form of power which he terms, governmentality.¹⁴⁴ Governmentality exists because of the existence of government, governmentality is about government and governing. Mitchell Dean provides two meanings of governmentality in Foucault, the first meaning is about how we think about governing and forms of knowledge on governing, in a sense the art of government. The second meaning of governmentality is the exercise of power over everyone, therefore making government an exercise to be applied onto the population as a whole and include every individual.¹⁴⁵ Governmentality is about the 'modes by which human beings are made subjects' and the 'modes of objectification that transform human beings into subjects.'¹⁴⁶

Foucault identifies three aspects that make up his understanding of governmentality. He argues that governmentality is a form of 'power that has the population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge, and apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument'. Therefore, governmentality is about 'the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations and tactics' used. For Foucault governmentality is also about the apparatuses and knowledge developed by other forms of power like 'sovereignty, discipline, and so on'. Finally, governmentality is the transformation of the role of the state into an administrative one leading to what he calls the 'governmentalization' of the state leading to the expansion of the remit and control of the state vis-à-vis the population and the lives of individuals.¹⁴⁷

Agamben, in discussing Foucault's concept of governmentality, states that the French theorist distinguishes between three power relations that are present in governmentality, these being; 'the legal system that corresponds to the institutional model of the territorial State of sovereignty and

¹⁴³ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, 139.

¹⁴⁴ Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 108-109.

¹⁴⁵ Mitchell Dean, *Governmentality, Power and Rule in Modern Society, Second Edition*, (London: Sage, 2010), 16-36.

¹⁴⁶ Michel Foucault, *Why Study Power, the Question of the Subject*, found in *Power*, Michel Foucault Essential Works 1954-84: Volume Three. Ed. by James D. Faubion, trans. by Robert Hurley et al. (UK: Penguin Random House, 2020), 326.

¹⁴⁷ Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 108-109.

that defines itself through a normative code that opposes what is allowed to what is prohibited, and consequently establishes a system of punishments; the disciplinary devices that correspond to the modern societies of discipline and put into practice, alongside the law, a series of police, medical, and penitentiary techniques to order, correct, and modulate the bodies of subjects; finally, the apparatuses of security that correspond to the contemporary state of population and the new practice that defines it, which Foucault names "the government of men ."¹⁴⁸

Therefore, from Foucault's own definition of governmentality and Agamben's reading of Foucault's notion of governmentality, it is evident that the other forms of power, disciplinary power and biopolitics are also incorporated in governmentality. The notion of governmentality offers a wider spectrum of what to govern means and how it impacts every aspect of human life and transforms them into subjects.

The notion of governmentality is not restricted to the government or to the state, but implies a wider concept that incorporates all forms of administration of the behaviour and conduct of individuals.

"Government" did not refer only to political structures or to the management of states; rather, it designated the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed – the government of the children, of souls, of communities, of families, of the sick...To govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of action of others.¹⁴⁹

Foucault also refers to Rousseau, who stated that "The word "economy" originally designates "the wise government of the house for the common good of the whole family." Also adding that the application of this notion implies, "supervision and control over its inhabitants, wealth, and the conduct of all and each, as attentive as that of a father's over his household and goods."¹⁵⁰ This implies that the concept of *oikonomia* is also defined as governmentality, thus the management of the people is also about managing and regulating their private lives. Therefore, the private sphere is no longer the sole jurisdiction of the individual but falls under the control of other institutions.

As stated by Weber,

The Puritan wanted to work in a calling; we are forced to do so. For when asceticism was carried out of the monastic cells into everyday life, and began to dominate worldly morality, it did its part

¹⁴⁸ Agamben, *The Kingdom and The Glory*, 109.

¹⁴⁹ Foucault, *Power*, 341.

¹⁵⁰ Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 95.

in building the tremendous cosmos of the modern economic order. This order is now bound to the technical and economic conditions of all the individuals who are born into this mechanism, not only those directly concerned with economic acquisition,¹⁵¹

In this passage, Weber identifies capitalism and its economic structures, not only as an activity, but like Hayek's competitive order, as a cosmology. Since it is a cosmology, then all laws and behaviour are determined by the structures and stricture of this cosmological order of things. Even more deterministic is Weber's argument that participation in this economic system or order of things is inevitable and unavoidable because this is the cosmos that everyone inhabits. Therefore, just like everyone who inhabits planet Earth must abide by its laws of physics, like gravity, similarly everyone must inevitably follow its fundamental laws of the market and is part of its order of things.

Both Foucault and Weber before him, have shown that morality plays a key role in designing and structuring not only the way of life of the people but also the very lives of the people, to make them suitable for and inconformity with the cosmologies defined by a capitalist system. In the passage by Weber, we see that he traces the roots of the ascetic values of the industrialist and merchant class back to the monastic way of life. Following a similar historical trajectory, Agamben refers to Foucault who identifies monastic precedents in the disciplinary apparatuses associated with institutions from the industrial revolution, and furthermore also states that these monastic ways of life preceded modern institutions by fifteen centuries in organising and defining every moment of the day in the lives of their subjects.¹⁵²

In *The Highest Poverty*, Agamben argues that the principal interest of monastic rules is that of governing life and its execution, on an individual and collective level. He reiterates that the monastic rules rearticulated the relationship between human actions and norms, life and rule, paving the way for modernity's apparatus.¹⁵³ "What is in question in the monastic rules is thus a transformation that seems to bear on the very way in which human action is conceived, so that one shifts from the level of practice and acting to that of form of life."¹⁵⁴ For Agamben, there is an identifiable transition from the enactment of a form of rule, *forma regulae*, to a form of life, *forma vivendi*.¹⁵⁵ This implies that in such a system, normative practices are not designed to guide and

¹⁵¹ Weber, *Protestant Ethic*, 123.

¹⁵² Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*, 18-19.

¹⁵³ Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*, 4.

¹⁵⁴ Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*, 61.

¹⁵⁵ Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*, . 60.

control actions but become a guide and control of living itself. Agamben's argument is that norms and morality focus on persons as subjects and not on their actions.

In his work he provides an analysis of the notion of 'habitus' which originally refers to clothing or dress. Monastic rules identified and stated the type of clothing that had to be worn by its members. The clothes, or habit, went through a process of moralisation and regulation because they came to embody and represent the values and the conduct of those who wore them.¹⁵⁶ Thus *habitus*, came to signify not only the attire of the individual but the way one conducts themselves.¹⁵⁷ Agamben states that the term 'habitus cinguli' does not refer to the belt of the dress but to the dress as a *hexis* and *ethos*.¹⁵⁸ This implies that the notion of habitus is about the disposition and way of doing things, which requires constant practice.

Therefore, for Agamben, the habitus is both the clothing and the way of life, and it symbolises and represents the commitment to one's *propositum*, the project to which one is devoting themselves. Thus, if *oikos* refers to the concept of habitat, as highlighted previously by Foucault and Petrosino, and *habitus* refers to the way of life, then we can observe that *oikonomia* is about the administration of the habitat and the way of life, the habitus. Furthermore, Agamben argues that there is "the attempt to make habit and form of life coincide in an absolute and total habitus."¹⁵⁹ or as Ute Tellman highlights in quoting Arturo Escobar, economics is about producing certain types of human subjects and social orders.¹⁶⁰ The role of governmentality is therefore to create the rules, regimens, and leadership to allow individuals to achieve the habitus that is required of them.

4.7 Pastoral Power and the Providential Machine

The function of governmentality is to produce subjects that fulfil their social, political, and economic function. Its aim is to guide and direct every individual towards that which is expected of them. This implies that governmentality goes beyond the physical and bodily control of the general population and of individuals, biopolitics and disciplinary power, and is also concerned with the psyche. The neoliberal subject, as entrepreneur of the self and purveyor of human capital, is a psychological subject, a being whose internal character must incorporate the values

¹⁵⁶ Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*, 14-15.

¹⁵⁷ Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*, 13.

¹⁵⁸ Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*, 15.

¹⁵⁹ Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*, 16.

¹⁶⁰ Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development. The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton, USA: Princeton University Press, 1995) quoted by Ute Tellmann, "The Economic Beyond Governmentality, The Limits of Conduct", *Governmentality, Current Issues and Future Challenges*. Ed. Ulrich Brockling, Susanne Krasmann & Thomas Lemke. (New York & London: Routledge, 2011), 285.

of the system that it inhabits, its habitus. Thus, neoliberal governmentality must be understood as a form of *regimen animarum* or *oikonomia psuchōn*.

In their studies on governmentality both Foucault and Agamben locate the origins and antecedent of this form of power in pastoral power, which is concerned with guiding, conducting souls towards their salvation. Pastoral power is the power of the shepherd over the flock, the shepherd who has to direct and conduct the flock towards the desired location and to then fulfil their function as required.

Foucault identifies the figure of the 'pastor' as being representative of the techniques and power utilised in conducting the life of others in a manner that goes beyond laws and punishment. Pastoral power represents a form of psychologism, in terms that it is effective because it works directly on the psyche of its subjects. Foucault states that, 'this form of power cannot be exercised without knowing the inside of people's minds, without exploring their souls, without making them reveal their innermost secrets. It implies a knowledge of the conscience and an ability to direct it.'¹⁶¹ This power which was relegated to the ecclesiastical institution was then taken over and spread over other institutions which extended even beyond the official state institutions.¹⁶²

The role of the pastor is to conduct the flock towards their heavenly salvation, however with the process of secularisation, salvation changed its meaning and became concerned with worldly phenomena instead. The aim of salvation was not spiritual salvation for the afterlife, but a spiritual salvation in the material life and therefore came to include health, wellbeing, and security among other things.¹⁶³

Agamben quotes Foucault and states that an

'essential trait shared by the pastorate and the government of men is, according to Foucault, the idea of an "economy," that is, an administration of individuals, things, and wealth ordered according to the model of the family. If the pastorate presents itself as an *oikonomia psychon*, an "economy of the souls, " "the essential issue of government will be the introduction of economy into political practice" (ibid ., p. 9 5) . Government is actually nothing other than "the art of

¹⁶¹ Foucault, *Power*, 333.

¹⁶² Foucault, *Power*, 333 – 334.

¹⁶³ Foucault, *Power*, 334.

exercising power in the form [. . .] of economy" (ibid., p. 95), and the ecclesiastic pastorate and political government are both located within an essentially economical paradigm.¹⁶⁴

What Agamben traces and outlines from Foucault's work is the transition from a political paradigm to an economic paradigm in the techniques of government.

Agamben links this change in paradigm with the development of the Trinitarian economy and therefore with the role of the son as being a manifestation on earth of God, thus making him a symbol of immanence. Furthermore, Agamben also looks into the concept of the providential machine which through providence and fate acts as the manifestation of God's will and power on earth, and therefore also a representation of his transcendence and immanence.¹⁶⁵

Thus, the role of government is to guide the individual, the particular, towards becoming a manifestation of the general law which is transcendent, 'Accordingly, the second level presents itself as an execution (*executio*) of what has been arranged and ordered on the first (*ordinatio*).'¹⁶⁶ Providence should be understood as the divine government of the world, one in which 'God as creator faces a corrupted and extraneous nature, which God as savior - who was entrusted with the government of the world-needs to redeem and save for a kingdom that is not, however, "of this world."¹⁶⁷ The aim of God the saviour is to direct human life towards achieving their eternal salvation, but for spiritual salvation to happen God must intervene or act upon the material existence of human life. Bazzicalupo recognises this logic in its secularised version of 'increasing vital wellbeing' which she argues is the contemporary form of the praxis of 'providence and salvation' identified by Agamben. Like Agamben, she argues that it is these principles that provide 'the true legitimization of power'.¹⁶⁸

The Providential Machine discussed by Agamben is comparable to neoliberal governmentality because neoliberal governmentality is also about the individual as being a manifestation of the transcendent. The competitive order which represents the metaphysical dimension of neoliberal thinking is a form of *ordinatio*, and it is the role of every individual to partake of this system and follow this general law, *executio*.

Similarly, as previously identified by Brian Massumi, a key concept of neoliberal thinking is the prioritisation of individual freedom within the limits of the order of things as stipulated by the

¹⁶⁴ Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 110. References and citations are included in the original text and refer to Michel Foucault, 1977-1978 lectures at the Collège de France, *Sécurité, territoire, population*

¹⁶⁵ Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 141.

¹⁶⁶ Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 141.

¹⁶⁷ Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 140.

¹⁶⁸ Bazzicalupo, *Economy as Logic of Government*, 38.

transcendent order. In discussing the providential machine Agamben states that ‘On the contrary, it presupposes the freedom of those who are governed, which manifests itself through the works of the second causes.’¹⁶⁹ Divine government is not despotic and does not impose itself violently onto those it governs, instead they must desire their providence and fate.¹⁷⁰

This direct government that allows for individual freedom is possible because ‘[i]t is by no means a matter of a force that, following a common representation, intervenes from the outside and directs the creatures, like the shepherd's hand leads his sheep. What defines divine government is ...the fact that it fully coincides with the very nature of the things that it directs.’¹⁷¹ This implies that divine government and the self-government of the individual coincide, showing that there is an inherent order that is willingly followed by living beings.¹⁷²

In his analysis, Agamben identifies two aspects which coincide with two key elements of the neoliberal concept of the order of things, the *manus gubernatoris* and *spontaneus, qui sponte fit*¹⁷³ these concepts being comparable to the notions of the invisible hand and the spontaneous order, respectively. Christiaens argues that Adam Smith’s notion of the invisible hand is inspired and taken from providential theology, and that for Smith, the invisible hand is God’s will made through human agents¹⁷⁴. Equally, Hayek’s concept of the spontaneous competitive order, is also a secularised version of the providential theology like the one presented in Agamben’s work.¹⁷⁵

Neoliberal governmentality plays a dual role which may seem contradictory, like the providential machine described by Agamben, on one hand it must allow and create the conditions for the actualisation of the spontaneous order, and on the other it must maximise the freedom of the individual as an economic subject. Neoliberal governmentality governs without governing, it gives freedom of action to its subjects, who, however, must make sure that they make the correct strategic choices if they want to succeed.¹⁷⁶ This shows that what is operating here is a form of self-direction or self-regulation. Neoliberal governmentality is effective because the subject acts as their own warden and self-regulates their behaviour and actions so that they may act in the best interest of their self-entrepreneurship and human capital.

¹⁶⁹ Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 141.

¹⁷⁰ Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 141.

¹⁷¹ Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 132.

¹⁷² Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 132.

¹⁷³ Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 132.

¹⁷⁴ Christiaens, Hayek’s vicarious secularization of providential theology, 78.

¹⁷⁵ Christiaens, Hayek’s vicarious secularization of providential theology, 79.

¹⁷⁶ Read, *A Genealogy of Homo Economicus*, 29.

This paradox is identified by Foucault who argues that the aim of governmentality is ‘the management and organization of the conditions in which one can be free’.¹⁷⁷ This implies that it ‘must produce freedom, but this very act entails the establishment of limitations, controls, forms of coercion, and obligations relying on threats etcetera.’¹⁷⁸ Brown shows that in Hayek’s attempt to negate the sovereignty of the state and the power of law, he locates freedom in ‘the rules of conduct, based on inherited shared principles.’¹⁷⁹ These principles of conduct are freely accepted and followed because they are shared principles that stem from a process of evolution and are held through tradition.¹⁸⁰ Hayek’s logic implies that the necessary condition for a free society is the complete acceptance and adherence to a set of shared principles.

Thomas Lemke argues that the notion of governmentality exposes neoliberalism in having the political aim of designing a social reality that already exists.¹⁸¹ Neoliberal governmentality is also about a politics of truth because it creates new concepts and notions that are presented as factual and true, contributing to the justification of neoliberal policies and their implementation.¹⁸² This process offers the possibility for neoliberalism to draw out and utilise its techniques and technologies of government to create its own forms of subjectivity.¹⁸³ Neoliberal governmentality is less stringent and restrictive than other forms of power, disciplinary power or sovereign power, however in its presumed lack of disciplining the subject’s body or actions, it creates a space of control that is more intense and dense.¹⁸⁴

Furthermore, the liberalisation of the market, through privatisation or through the removal of trade protectionism, implies the forceful redefinition of social realities. Individual workers are disowned of a collective identity and thrust into the role of being a ‘free enterprise’ who must compete with their colleagues and in the process losing any sense of solidarity or collective organisation.¹⁸⁵

¹⁷⁷ Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 63 – 64.

¹⁷⁸ Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 64.

¹⁷⁹ Brown, *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism*, 74.

¹⁸⁰ Brown, *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism*, 74 - 75.

¹⁸¹ Thomas Lemke, “Foucault, Governmentality, and Critique”, *Rethinking Marxism*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 49-64, (Fall 2002), 60.

¹⁸² Lemke, *Foucault, Governmentality, and Critique*, 55.

¹⁸³ Lemke, *Foucault, Governmentality, and Critique*, 59.

¹⁸⁴ Read, *A Genealogy of Homo Economicus*, 29.

¹⁸⁵ Read, *A Genealogy of Homo Economicus*, 30.

4.8 Neoliberal Apparatus

Governmentality, or the government and administration of individual life happens through a network and web of relations of different institutions and processes whose aim is to shape and mould its subjects as required by the structures of power.

This network and process is defined by Foucault as *dispositif* (apparatus) and it is through this ensemble that governmentality functions to create the process of subjectification. Together, these disparate and distinct institutions work and interact together to create a dominant discourse which shapes the lives of the people that are subject to it. It is therefore the role of the apparatus to design the habitus and to shape life into the required form. This process applies to all historical moments, with each one creating their own apparatus depending on their specific needs.¹⁸⁶ This implies that a neoliberal historical moment will demand and create its own apparatus to fulfil its process of subjectification and to fulfil its own needs.

Foucault defines apparatus as,

“a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions - in short, the said as much as the unsaid. Such are the elements of the apparatus. The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements.”¹⁸⁷

Therefore, according to Foucault, apparatus is discursive and non-discursive forms of knowledge, understanding and conceptualisation of the human that determine the trajectory that human (and non-human), life must take. Apparatus may be understood as techniques, technologies and institutions of power that determine the life of its subjects. Apparatus allows for the possibility of subjectification through its three components: knowledge, subjectivity, and power. Together they drive a disciplinarian society that creates the docile bodies that are required for the functioning of the economy.

However, Byung-Chul Han, argues that Foucault, although correct in identifying the role of apparatus in a disciplinary society, which is identifiable with modernity, this does not apply to late modern society which is identified with neoliberal governance.¹⁸⁸ In his work, *The Burnout Society* and *Psychopolitics*, Han argues that Foucault’s concept of apparatus and Agamben’s concept of

¹⁸⁶ Michel Foucault, “The Confession of the Flesh”, in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon Press, 1980), 195.

¹⁸⁷ Foucault, *The Confession of the Flesh*, 194.

¹⁸⁸ Byung-Chul Han, *Psychopolitics*, trans. Erik Butler. (London & New York: Verso, 2017), 24.

the *Homo Sacer* are anachronistic to the realities of late modernity and its associated dominant neoliberal forms of governmentality.¹⁸⁹ Han states that,

Under neoliberalism, the technology of power takes a subtle form. It does not lay hold of individuals directly. Instead, it ensures that individuals act on themselves so that power relations are interiorised - and then interpreted as freedom. Self-optimisation and submission, freedom and exploitation, fall into one. Such engineering of freedom and exploitation, which occurs in order to effect self-exploitation, is what escaped Foucault.¹⁹⁰

Furthermore, he argues that Agamben's thinking based on the figure of the *Homo Sacer*, is anachronistic to late modernity because it is based on notions of state and social sovereignty that are no longer applicable. He reiterates that Agamben's theory, "is burdened by his anachronistic focus on negativity based entirely on *exclusion* and *inhibition*."¹⁹¹

Han takes this stance against Foucault and Agamben because he posits that the neoliberal discourse of freedom permeates every aspect of human life and has transformed society from a 'disciplinary society' to an 'achievement society'.¹⁹² He argues that under neoliberalism, there has been a transition from a society of negativity to a society of positivity. The dominant discourse has transformed itself from one of 'may not' or 'should' to one of 'can'.¹⁹³ The neoliberal discourse of freedom and individualism offer a narrative of empowerment which according to Han, "gives way to a renewed subjugation" and "freedom itself is bringing forth compulsion and constraint."¹⁹⁴

Han also adds that in this dominant discourse of freedom and achievement, a new way of life has been created. People are no longer "subjugated *subjects*, but rather *projects*: always refashioning and reinventing" themselves, and this brings with "a sense of freedom", however this transition from subject to project only brings with new forms "of compulsion and constraint – indeed, to a *more efficient kind of subjectivation and subjugation*."¹⁹⁵ Han reiterates that in the twenty-first century society its members "are no longer, "obedience-subjects" but "achievement-subjects." They are entrepreneurs of themselves."¹⁹⁶

¹⁸⁹ Byung-Chul Han, *The Burnout Society*, trans. Erik Butler. (Stanford, California: Stanford Briefs, 2015) and Byung-Chul Han, *Psychopolitics*, trans. Erik Butler. (London & New York: Verso, 2017).

¹⁹⁰ Han, *Psychopolitics*, 28.

¹⁹¹ Han, *The Burnout Society*, 48.

¹⁹² Han, *The Burnout Society*, 8.

¹⁹³ Han, *The Burnout Society*, 9.

¹⁹⁴ Han, *Psychopolitics*, 1.

¹⁹⁵ Han, *Psychopolitics*, 1. (Emphasis in the original text.)

¹⁹⁶ Han, *The Burnout Society*, 8.

Han's ideas can be compared to Foucault's who states that '*homo oeconomicus*, an entrepreneur of himself, being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of [his] earnings.'¹⁹⁷ He then proceeds to explore the concept of human capital and the notion of investing in oneself as articulated by the neoliberal author Gary Becker.¹⁹⁸ However, this formulation still differs from Han's concept of the achievement society, because the achievement society is a positive society where the mantra is 'Can', Foucault's notion of the entrepreneur of themselves is still formulated in terms of 'should' or 'may not', as means of maximising their and investing in their human capital. This implies that Foucault's formulation is still steeped in the structures of a disciplinary society and not in those of an achievement society.

In his formulation of the *Achievement Society*, based on of *homo liber*,¹⁹⁹ Han is following 'forms of contemporary critique [which] still rely on the dualism of freedom and constraint, consensus and violence'.²⁰⁰ Lemke argues that the concept of governmentality removes these kind of polarities and shows that forms of power and forms of subjectivity are bound together towards the goal of governing life, 'government refers to a continuum, which extends from political government right through to forms of self-regulation'.²⁰¹ Neoliberal governmentality uses 'direct intervention' through 'specialized state apparatuses' and also 'indirect techniques for leading and controlling individuals'.²⁰² Neoliberal governmentality creates 'technologies of the self' by which individuals are directed to work and change not the social structures that have placed them in precarious conditions of living, but to instead work on themselves and to improve themselves.²⁰³ This creates new modes of subjectivity that are based on the notions of human capital and the self as a project.

The critique posited by Han towards Agamben's theory falls short of identifying key concepts from Agamben's work that may be deemed as precedents to Han's own formulation of late modernist society. In his theological reading of the concept of apparatus and governmentality, Agamben offers insights that are comparable to Han's own reading of the achievement society as a means of subjectification through freedom and positivity.

¹⁹⁷ Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 226.

¹⁹⁸ Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 226-227.

¹⁹⁹ Han, *The Burnout Society*, 49.

²⁰⁰ Lemke, *Foucault, Governmentality, and Critique*, 59.

²⁰¹ Lemke, *Foucault, Governmentality, and Critique*, 59.

²⁰² Lemke, *Foucault, Governmentality, and Critique*, 59.

²⁰³ Lemke, *Foucault, Governmentality, and Critique*, 59-60.

In *What is an Apparatus?*, Agamben himself identifies the disciplinary and coercive aspect of the apparatus as an incomplete understanding of the concept. It is this realisation that makes him explore other sources that may provide a more comprehensive reading of the apparatus. To reiterate this, Agamben provides a wider definition of apparatus and writes,

Further expanding the already large class of Foucauldian apparatuses, I shall call an apparatus literally anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviours, opinions, or discourses of living beings. Not only, therefore, prisons, madhouses, the panopticon, schools, confession, factories, disciplines, juridical measures, and so forth (whose connection with power is in a certain sense evident), but also the pen, writing, literature, philosophy, agriculture, cigarettes, navigation, computers, cellular telephones and—why not—language itself, which is perhaps the most ancient of apparatuses²⁰⁴

Therefore, in his articulation of the concept of apparatus, Agamben includes, “The boundless growth of apparatuses in our time corresponds to the equally extreme proliferation in processes of subjectification.”²⁰⁵ This position is comparable to and complimentary to Han’s reading of the institutions that make up the regime of the achievement society, namely, “fitness studios, office towers, banks, airports, shopping malls, and genetic laboratories.”²⁰⁶ Agamben further reiterates that the process of subjectification through the use of apparatus is linked to our search for a personal identity²⁰⁷ and a desire for happiness.²⁰⁸ Both of these aims can also be found in the realities of the late-modern person and their search for recognition and individuality.

Han identifies freedom and the transformation of the human subject into a ‘project’ as the foundation of the achievement society and its forms of subjectification under neoliberal governmentality. Agamben, also identifies these notions in the effectiveness of the monastic rules as forms of apparatus, thus showing that his theological reading of governmentality offers an insightful reading into contemporary social phenomena.

In *The Highest Poverty*, Agamben quotes the rule of Augustine which states that those who choose to follow the rule must do so ‘with joy’ and “not as slaves under the law, but as those who have been set free by grace.”²⁰⁹ Similarly, Agamben also finds that for Candido Mazon the aim of monastic rule was not to impose obligations but to outline the “obligations that they had agreed

²⁰⁴ Agamben, *What is an Apparatus?*, 14.

²⁰⁵ Agamben, *What is an Apparatus?*, 15.

²⁰⁶ Han, *The Burnout Society*, 8.

²⁰⁷ Agamben, *What is an Apparatus?*, 15.

²⁰⁸ Agamben, *What is an Apparatus?*, 17.

²⁰⁹ Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*, 29.

to, given the kind of life that they professed.”²¹⁰ As mentioned previously, in his analysis of monastic rule, Agamben also finds that those who participate in the habitus, way of life, also view themselves as a *propositum*, a project to which they are devoting themselves to achieve.²¹¹

Agamben’s evaluation of apparatus as a theological concept and institution allows for the possibility and potential of formulating an understanding and conceptual framework of neoliberal governmentality and the ways it implements its techniques of subjectification.

Agamben’s reading and development of the concept of apparatus entails not only the possibility of disciplinary power but also of subjectification. In his essay on the apparatus Agamben does not only identify its origins in the religious work of Hegel, but also in Kafka’s short story *In the Penal Colony*.²¹² Kafka’s story revolves around an execution machine that is referred to as ‘an apparatus’ and is used in cases of insubordination. The story shows the effectiveness of this machine because ‘the condemned man looked like a submissive dog that one might have thought he could be left to run free on the surrounding hills and would only need to be whistled when the execution was due to begin.’²¹³ This form of apparatus as an instrument of disciplinary power creates the sort of docile bodies that are required for the seamless functioning of the institution.

However, Agamben does not restrict the apparatus to disciplinary power but associates it with the process of subjectification found in governmentality. Agamben identifies the notion of *dispositio* not only as the ordering of things but also as the process of subjectification and self-government. He identifies in Linneaus, the idea that the *dispositio* is an impression left by God onto his creations, through which he governs them and leads them towards fulfilling their ends and therefore to act in terms of his providential plan.²¹⁴ This implies that for Agamben the process of government happens through the control of subjects via an internalisation of the structures and institutions themselves. Humans follow an order of things, found in nature, which they follow not through external forms of control but through self-government because the very order of things is impressed within them through *dispositio*.²¹⁵ Therefore, *dispositio* may also be read as the manner that self-government and self-regulation happens.

²¹⁰ Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*, 34.

²¹¹ Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*, 15.

²¹² Agamben, *What is an Apparatus?*, 55.

²¹³ Franz Kafka, “In The Penal Colony”, *The Complete Short Stories*, edited by Nahum N. Glatzer, translated by Martin Secker and Warburg Limited (UK: Vintage, 1999), 140.

²¹⁴ Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 278-279.

²¹⁵ Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, 279.

Agamben's use of *dispositio*, although not specifically mentioned by himself, is representative of neoliberal governmentality and its role in shaping the self and controlling the self through the self. Lemke argues that neoliberal governmentality functions using ideological and political-economic agencies that create a system of self-regulation and domination.²¹⁶ A critical aspect which is mentioned by Lemke is the process of governmentality and its apparatuses, he argues that these are not merely about the reproduction of inequalities but are about the 'recoding of social mechanisms' based on 'a new topography of the social.'²¹⁷

This observation is highly pertinent to what Agamben observes in his discussion of capitalist forms of subjectification. Agamben states that 'What defines the apparatuses that we have to deal with in the current phase of capitalism is that they no longer act as much through the production of a subject, as through the processes of what can be called desubjectification.'²¹⁸ The paradox of the neoliberal subject is that if every aspect of one's life is conceived of either as capital or an entrepreneurial opportunity, then there is no definite identity which goes beyond these elements. Furthermore, if the success of an individual, in the competitive order is based on their ability to adapt to changes in the market or their environment, then as Agamben argues, the individual is in a constant process of subjectification and desubjectification.

Agamben associates the process of desubjectification with contemporary technology, whereby he argues that technologies like the cell phones or television, recontextualise human subjects as either a phone number that can always be reached and controlled or as a passive viewer only valuable in terms of being a television rating.²¹⁹ We may argue that Agamben's notion of desubjectification, or the process of adapting according to the inputs of one's environment, as envisioned by Hayek, or one's transformation into a statistic, is comparable to the notion of an 'algorithmic self' as defined by Frank Pasquale:

To negotiate contemporary algorithms of reputation and search—ranging from resumé optimization on LinkedIn to strategic Facebook status updates to OkCupid profile grooming—we are increasingly called on to adopt an algorithmic self, one well practiced in strategic self-promotion. This algorithmic selfhood may be critical to finding job opportunities (or even maintaining a reliable circle of friends and family) in an era of accelerating social change.²²⁰

²¹⁶ Lemke, *Foucault, Governmentality and Critique*, 60.

²¹⁷ Lemke, *Foucault, Governmentality and Critique*, 60.

²¹⁸ Agamben, *What is an Apparatus?*, 20-21.

²¹⁹ Agamben, *What is an Apparatus?*, 21.

²²⁰ Frank Pasquale, "The Algorithmic Self", *The Hedgehog Review*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (2015).

There is a direct link between the concept of the self as human capital and as an enterprise and the self as a space that can be modulated and redesigned for improvement through numbers and codes.

Supiot associates the concept of governance, the art of governing, with the rise of new technologies and the transition from a mechanical conceptualisation of the world to the cybernetic model of the computer. He argues that the rise of computation has reformulated the paradigm of how to organise society from a mechanical one to a computational one.²²¹ In this new model, all members of society are part 'of a programmable system of interacting units adjusting automatically to signal inputs and feedback.'²²² According to Supiot, 'the information revolution' produced a new concept of the human as 'programmable'.²²³ As Coeckelbergh argues, the state and corporations use digital technologies and Artificial Intelligence to guide, watch over and give account about us in their role as 'the new shepherds'.²²⁴

For Supiot, 'governance' rests on the capacity of human beings to adapt their behaviour to changes in their environment, in order to survive.²²⁵ This cybernetic model of human behaviour is similar to Hayek's conceptualisation of how humans will behave in his catalytic order, whereby individuals are to interpret the signs of the market and act accordingly. Here we can therefore identify close similarities between Hayek's concept of the catallaxy and society as a cybernetic system.

Agamben's process of desubjectification can be related to Supiot's and Coeckelbergh's reading of how contemporary forms of apparatus function. What Supiot defines as 'governance' is the process of how the *dispositio* functions for Agamben. For Supiot, 'governance' is the process not of 'subordinating individuals' but of 'programming them'.²²⁶ In such an environment, workers are not disciplined to work, but they are self-motivated to do their best because they want to maximise their financial interest.²²⁷ Individuals adapt and change depending on the responses they receive so that they may optimise their performance, which will improve the overall performance which will be 'measured quantitatively in terms of financial results'.²²⁸

²²¹ Supiot, *Governance by Numbers*, 25-26.

²²² Supiot, *Governance by Numbers*, 25.

²²³ Supiot, *Governance by Numbers*, 24.

²²⁴ Coeckelbergh, *Self-Improvement*, 18.

²²⁵ Supiot, *Governance by Numbers*, 26.

²²⁶ Supiot, *Governance by Numbers*, 29.

²²⁷ Supiot, *Governance by Numbers*, 27.

²²⁸ Supiot, *Governance by Numbers*, 28.

Coeckelbergh defines the contemporary neoliberal subject as a 'quantified self'. Following up on Han's notion of the achievement society, Coeckelbergh, argues that in the self-improvement society exploitation is transformed into self-exploitation.²²⁹ In a market driven system made up of self-employed workers or management through machines (both of these characteristics are found in the gig economy which relies on controlling its 'associates' through mobile apps), 'it seems that we only have ourselves to blame when we exploit ourselves.'²³⁰

In Coeckelbergh's conceptualisation of the quantified self we can see how the process of Agamben's desubjectification happens. Coeckelbergh argues that 'the self we work on and our knowledge of that self are shaped in a very particular way'.²³¹ The data that is collected by new technologies do not only 'collect and analyze personal data' but also formulate and design the self, thus providing an answer to the question of who we are. Algorithms provide us with the knowledge of who we are and therefore posit to know us more than we know ourselves, and furthermore also provide us with guidelines and trajectories on how we should improve ourselves to become better adapted to our realities.²³²

The quantified self or the programmable self, highlight what Agamben identifies as the definition of apparatus as, 'that in which, and through which, one realizes a pure activity of governance devoid of any foundation in being. This is the reason why apparatuses must always imply a process of subjectification, that is to say, they must produce their subject.'²³³ Therefore those processes that are enacted to programme human subjects as neoliberal economic subjects fulfil a role as apparatuses because they are a governance of life which is disconnected from life itself.

The effectiveness of this system relies on the promise of salvation and providence of the neoliberal system and ideology. The slogan of 'there is no alternative' must be understood as the propagation of the message that the only form of salvation is through the adoption of neoliberal policies. Any other forms of 'providence', such as socialist welfare state are heresies, and only under the guidance and programming of neoliberal policies can there be progress, both on an individual and on a global level.

²²⁹ Coeckelbergh, *Self-Improvement*, 54.

²³⁰ Coeckelbergh, *Self-Improvement*, 54.

²³¹ Coeckelbergh, *Self-Improvement*, 54.

²³² Coeckelbergh, *Self-Improvement*, 54-55.

²³³ Agamben, *What is an Apparatus?*, 11.

4.9 Conclusion

The neoliberal project succeeds through the effectiveness of its governmentality. This governmentality produces a neoliberal form of life, the entrepreneur of the self in which the subject is the dominator and the dominated simultaneously. Through a process of *askesis* the neoliberal subject forces themselves to behave and live in a manner that is in conformity with the market mechanisms that govern society. For this reason governmentality is to be understood as a conduct of conduct.

Although other political orders have tried to create their own forms of subjectification, none have succeeded to fulfil this process with the same success and efficiency as neoliberal administrations. Unlike other forms of government that relied on disciplinary power, biopower, or sovereign power, neoliberalism, although it also utilises these forms of power, relies on pastoral power and governmentality as a means of control. These forms of power succeed because they create a paradigm of salvation and liberation as opposed to one of control and authority. Furthermore, unlike other political orders like communism, neoliberal thinking is ingrained in a natural order of things which offers it a metaphysical foundation and justification.

Homo oeconomicus is formulated as the embodiment of human nature and the natural order. The market order as a spontaneous order is a cosmology and therefore a natural order with inbuilt mechanisms that are also reflected in human nature. Systems such as the competitive order are inbuilt within our nature in terms of self-interest and a competitive drive. Thus, neoliberal *askesis* is reinterpreted as a form of conducting ourselves according to our nature. It is important to reiterate once again that as referred to in previous chapters, the notion of Nature in neoliberal thinking is a metaphysical concept that relies on theological notions such as providential design.

I argue that the success of neoliberal governmentality relies on this notion that it is a continuation of what already exists, and not a counter position to it, and that it is proposed as a form of positive project. By utilising pastoral power as its main form of control, neoliberalism is utilising a narrative of salvation (as opposed to a narrative of damnation). Similarly, in a paradigm of an Achievement Society, the discourse is centred around a positive narrative and not a negative one. This positivity leads to forms of persuasion as opposed to coercion.

This quality becomes more pronounced with the emergence of new technologies and the rise of digital devices or smartphones. These devices provide the platform for the development and use of apps or programmes that use human behaviour as the basis for persuasion. These persuasive technologies lead to the creation of an 'algorithmic self' that can be designed according to the needs of the market. Through systems such as nudges or gamification, new technologies like

wearable technology or digital platforms reshape the human experience and self thus creating a new form of neoliberal governmentality.

This conduct of conduct relies on the principle of cybernetics that Hayek himself identifies as a key component towards achieving the market society that neoliberalism envisions. In the upcoming chapter I will explore this new form of governmentality which is referred to as Algorithmic Governmentality. The chapter will explore the development of a ubiquitous form of governmentality that is enabled by new technologies and that defines our current zeitgeist. I argue that the introduction and widespread use of these technologies is directly linked to the concept of cybernetics as developed by Hayek. This neoliberal governmentality 2.0 is therefore an intertwining of pastoral care and technologies of persuasion (and control) that together produce a new form of *homo oeconomicus*.

Chapter 5: Pastoral Technologies

5.1 Introduction

In previous chapters, I have explored the reasons leading to neoliberalism to achieve its dominant status. I argue that neoliberal thinking should be deemed as a form of secularised theological thinking that provides a theological discourse containing the justifications and logic that have become part of the dominant economic and political narrative. Furthermore, neoliberalism also utilises techniques of power to create an optimised subject that can thrive in the market, which in turn allows for the market to succeed.

The market, as a self-regulating or homeostatic system, requires all its parts to behave efficiently for it to achieve its equilibrium. The achievement of this equilibrium can only happen through the active participation of its parts, which includes not only institutions and systems but also the people involved. For the market order to succeed, it requires its participants to follow and abide by the rules of behaviour that allow the market mechanisms, such as supply and demand or price mechanism, to succeed and achieve their results. Hayek could explain this new philosophy of the human by using and referring to upcoming forms of technological thinking, cybernetics. In *The Sensory Order*¹, we therefore find Hayek referring to the work of Norbert Wiener who developed his theory of *Cybernetics: Or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*.²

For Hayek, the 'feedback principle' identified in cybernetics is the same type of mechanism that is required of all economic actors participating in the market order. Refusal to abide by this feedback results in either the individual losing out in the competitive order or if too many actors refuse to act upon the signals of the market (for example to maintain forms of social security like housing, or job security), it may lead to a disequilibrium in the market with all the negative effects this may have.

Hayek's thinking of the market as a catallaxy and its internal mechanisms is a form of technological thinking because he is applying 'technological theory...to the analysis of human-machine complexes.'³ This mode of thinking uncovers the various forms of convergence that exist

¹ Friedrich August Hayek, *The Sensory Order, An Inquiry into the Foundations of Theoretical Psychology*. (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1952), 95 & 126.

² Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics: Or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The M.I.T. Press, 1985).

³ Carl Mitcham, *Thinking through Technology, The Path between Engineering and Philosophy*. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 204-205.

between economic thinking and technological thinking, and how, within neoliberal thought, everything is reduced to a form of scientific thinking that relies on principles that are deemed outside of human control. It is because of this convergence that I argue that the epitome of Hayek's neoliberal thought is to be found in the emergence of contemporary Cyberlibertarianism.

In this chapter, I will be showing that the culmination of Hayekian economic and political thought is found in contemporary cyberlibertarian figures who, as an example, have come to prominence with the rise of Big Tech and their ability to infiltrate the halls of power through their support of the current U.S. administration.

I claim that in this technolibertarian ideology, based on a minimal state and the dominance of the market and technological solutions, we can trace forms of providential thinking as I have identified in the market order visualised by Hayek. Furthermore, I argue that in the same manner that the market order requires a form of subjectification, this is also apparent in the technoutopianism espoused by contemporary economic and political ideologues. I shall also proceed to identify the theological underpinnings of this discourse and how it relies on notions of the deterministic designs of providence and salvation.

The central thrust of this chapter is to illustrate how cybernetic thinking in the context of new technologies such as wearable technologies, phone apps, and other forms of ubiquitous technologies is a form of pastoral power as identified by Foucault. I propose that what Foucault would have identified as 'technologies of the self' are to be conceived of as 'pastoral technologies.' I proceed to argue that the success of neoliberalism is not by using technology as a form of disciplinary or surveillance power, but as a form of pastoral function. Neoliberal politics has become the dominant paradigm through its ability to offer salvation by moulding its subjects into forms of life that will make the market order succeed, which in turn will allow them to succeed. This, I argue, is the nature of the market as a self-regulating system.

In discussing the role of new technologies and neoliberal economy, there is a focus on the extraction of data as a raw material, the increase in inequality through inbuilt bias, or the manipulation of users and audiences through misinformation and disinformation. In this context, digital technologies are being associated principally with surveillance and control.

Within this framework, literature has focused on two forms of power: disciplinary power and biopolitics. Seminal works such as Shoshana Zuboff's *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*⁴

⁴ Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*, (London: Profile Books, 2019).

propose a reading of the rise of Big Tech as reliant on forms of surveillance, or a digital panopticon akin to the concepts of surveillance and discipline found in Foucault. Similarly, Virginia Eubanks, with her book *Automating Inequality*⁵ underscores how the development and implementation of artificial intelligence programmes have led to stronger forms of disciplinary power and the ability to enact more efficient forms of biopolitical control over disadvantaged segments of the population.

In *The Burnout Society*, Byung-Chul Han⁶ coins the term ‘The Achievement Society’ to refer to the power of neoliberalism to make people act in the manner it wants by persuading them that this is their personal goal. This concept is a direct result of the competitive order established and enabled by the market order. However, Han still associates this new form of control to biopolitics, namely Agamben’s concept of *homo sacer*. Although Han is developing a concept that is based on a positive connotation and messaging, he does not associate the achievement society with pastoral power. When exploring the concept of the neoliberal subject, Caroline Alphin⁷ focuses on notions of biopolitics and necropolitics. When developing her theory of the ‘the self-monitoring cyborg’, she does so in the context of ‘Populations of individuals have instrumentalised self-cultivation, a notion and practice that is often still imagines as something that stands outside of work time and capital time, in order to maximise their human capital and live intensely.’⁸ Once again, reference is made to surveillance and disciplinary power leading to control of the population, biopower, but there is no mention of pastoral power.

In *Self-Improvement*,⁹ Mark Coeckelbergh discusses the use of digital technologies and artificial intelligence in shaping and forming human behaviour in the name of self-improvement and growth. Although the paradigm he uncovers is similar to what I have been researching and discussing in my research, in his argument he links this phenomenon to Foucauldian hermeneutics of the self.¹⁰ Whilst I am in agreement with this positioning, I argue that Coeckelbergh’s theory does not explain the structures and institutions that drive and motivate the process itself.

⁵ Virginia Eubanks, *Automating Inequality: How High-Tech Tools Profile, Police, and Punish the Poor*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2018).

⁶ Byung-Chul Han, *The Burnout Society*, trans. by Erik, Butler, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2015).

⁷ Caroline Alphin, *Neoliberalism and Cyberpunk Science Fiction, Living on the Edge of Burnout*, (New York & London: Routledge, 2021).

⁸ Alphin, *Neoliberalism and Cyberpunk Science Fiction*, 42.

⁹ Mark Coeckelbergh. *Self-Improvement: Technologies of the Soul in the Age of Artificial Intelligence*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022).

¹⁰ Coeckelbergh. *Self-Improvement*, 13-18.

In his theory on self-improvement and technologies of the self, Coeckelbergh correctly states that “in modern times these practices of self-care and self-improvement are no longer connected to withdrawal from the world or directed to life in another world. Instead, the focus is on this life and on the here and now.”¹¹ Additionally, he argues that “(t)he shepherd model is rejected”¹² leading to a reliance on individual autonomy, however “this autonomy is an illusion, since today the state and corporations still exercise the disciplining powers Foucault talked about – now by using digital technologies, including AI.”¹³

Whilst I agree with his assessment that notions of self-care and self-improvement are relegated to the material plane, I disagree with the notion that the shepherd model is rejected, and that digital technologies and artificial intelligence rely on disciplinary power. If we accept the premise that every individual is an entrepreneur of the self because they are part of the competitive order, then individual autonomy is an illusion because all actions are dictated by one’s competitiveness in this order. It is thus the competitive order that dictates one’s actions or behaviour and not the disciplinary powers per se.

I propose that pastoral power offers the required justification and logic that addresses how people move towards a process of self-improvement via technology. My argument is that self-improvement does not contain the necessary intrinsic value to motivate people towards undergoing the process. The process of self-improvement is justified because it is considered as a step towards positioning oneself in a better place in the competitive order and furthermore, it is deemed as a means of achieving the form of salvation required by a market order.

Furthermore, the shepherd model is not rejected but has transitioned into another form. Whilst the pastoral figure is associated with an actual person or role, under a neoliberal system in which individual actions are coordinated by a decentralised order, the market becomes the pastor or shepherd that guides and directs those who are participating in it, ergo everyone. Thus, the shepherd figure has not been rejected but replaced by a system that guides and shows the way through market signals. The market is the shepherd. Success is not the result of one’s autonomous choices, but by positively responding and acting upon the signals of the market. The market system is the feedback loop that we are part of and which we respond to, and this is explored in the discussion on cybernetics. In this system of digital, and information technologies, including some forms of artificial intelligence, are not merely economic tools or resources but are

¹¹ Coeckelbergh. *Self-Improvement*, 17.

¹² Coeckelbergh. *Self-Improvement*, 17.

¹³ Coeckelbergh. *Self-Improvement*, 18.

an inherent part of the market order itself. They are part of the feedback loop that we are reliant upon to succeed in the market order.

Although in his lectures on neoliberalism, Foucault proposes and develops his theory of governmentality¹⁴, I still maintain that pastoral power is best suited towards explaining the mechanisms of power of neoliberalism especially within the context of the dominance of digital technologies. Pastoral power should be considered both as a conceptual precursor to governmentality and as a technology of governmentality because it uses social and interdependent relations to create connections between governmental discourse and its subjects.¹⁵

I adopt a position in which social media and digital technologies are considered the epitome of this erasure of boundaries between spaces and moreover, pastoral power provides an understanding of the rise and proliferation of certain practices which are justified by neoliberal economic reasoning. Maurizio Lazzarato shows how pastoral power successfully provides a conceptual explanation for the erasure of the separation between public and private sphere¹⁶ showing the type of relations of power that are developed in a neoliberal economic system. This erasure of the separation between the two spheres is tackled by Diana Stypinska who applies pastoral power to the widespread use of social media, interpreting activity on these platforms as a secularised intensification of pastoral practices and defining it as a form of confession.¹⁷ The pastoral paradigm renovates itself into a secularised technologically driven version that completes the process of the economisation of life.

The success of neoliberalism as a framework of thought is its focus on salvation of the individual as opposed to forms of control, discipline, or biopolitics. These forms of power play a role in maintaining the dominance of neoliberal structures however my position is that they do not explain the spread and the wilful use of these technologies by billions of users. My argument is that the rise of ubiquitous digital technologies without any discernible resistance from the public, as well as the seamless manner that it percolated into the neoliberal framework, can only be explained in terms of a promise for salvation and success. This commitment is at the centre of

¹⁴ Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics, Lectures at the Collège de France 1978-1979*, trans. by Graham Burchell, (New York: Picador, 2003), 242-245.

¹⁵ Graham P. Martin and Justin Waring, "Realising governmentality: Pastoral power, governmental discourse and the (re)constitution of subjectivities" in *The Sociological Review*, Vol. 66(6) 1292–1308. (Sage:2018). 1298.

¹⁶ Maurizio Lazzarato, "Pastoral Power Beyond Public and Private", *Open! Platform for Art, Culture & Public Domain*, (23rd April 2010)

¹⁷ Diana Stypinska, "Pastorate Digitalized: Social Media and (De)Subjectification", *Theory, Culture and Society* p. 1-22 (2024),

the providential nature of technological optimism, and the providential design of the market as a spontaneous order.

5.2 The Californian Ideology

In identifying the theological nature of neoliberal thinking, this thesis has problematised and evaluated the role of providential design in Hayek's work. The notion of the market as a form of spontaneous order relies on an intrinsic positive outcome that is produced by the mechanisms inbuilt in it. Like a Hegelian dream, Hayek's market coordinates actions and decisions towards the achievement of positive economic and social results. Therefore, if left to perform without human intervention or planning, the market will produce a providential outcome leading to the flourishing of those who participate in it.

It is critical to underline that in Hayek, this providential design found in naturally occurring spontaneous orders or catallaxy goes beyond the economic sphere is part of his understanding of humanity as a species. For Hayek, all social phenomena, and civilization itself are to be considered as forms of knowledge that we have stumbled upon, and learnt to utilise but do not understand.¹⁸ He vehemently argues that systems like the price mechanism are not designed by humans and humans have only succeeded in practicing it and by doing so achieved features of contemporary civilization such as division of labour and coordination in the use of resources for productive outputs.¹⁹ He adds that there is no human alternative that has produced the positive outcomes that these naturally occurring systems have created such as, "the extent to which the individual can choose his pursuits and consequently freely use his own knowledge and skill."²⁰

However, there is still a caveat for the success of this system, it relies on society acting and behaving according to the mechanisms that they do not understand but have 'decided' to use as a community. As Hayek, states, "[t]he whole acts as one market"²¹ thus highlighting that everyone is expected to behave and act in the requisite manner for civilization to progress. This dimension conveys the deterministic role of the market as formulated by Hayek.

The economy, *oikonomia*, is thus a deterministic force that directs the action and very nature of humans thus creating a process of subjectification to create economic subjects, *homo oeconomicus*, or in our case, a neoliberal subject. Humans are therefore determined in their

¹⁸ Friedrich August Hayek, "The Use of Knowledge in Society", *The American Economic Review*, 35, no.4 (1945): 528.

¹⁹ Hayek, "The Use of Knowledge in Society", 528.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Hayek, "The Use of Knowledge in Society", 526.

decisions and actions because they must abide by the rules of the mechanisms that ‘steer’ civilization, and more critically humans are determined in their fates because the outcomes of the system are outside of their control and are dictated by the mechanisms themselves. This form of determinism is equivalent to the one professed by theological providential design.

The economic optimism of free market economics has coupled itself with the techno-optimism that has arisen from the development of computer and information technologies. This has created a providential thinking that has brought together two forms of deterministic forces, market determinism and technological determinism, with this amalgamation being embodied by the cybernetic visions that will be explored later in this chapter.

Technological determinism is one of the main paradigms that informs philosophical conceptualisations of technology and its role in society. For relevance to this research, technological determinism is here being understood as technology is a means of driving social change and imposes a form of conceptualisation of the world. This leads towards perceiving technology not merely as a scientific or technical advancement but as a form of social and political progress. Langdon Winner refers to this mentality as ‘the technological mystique’ and describes it as, “the tendency to believe that progress in technology amounts to progress for mankind in all its endeavors.”²² This notion that technological progress is equated to social progress can be traced in the policies of various authors²³ and politicians.²⁴ This also implies that technologies are only considered as successful if they proceed to create critical social changes.²⁵

Within such an intellectual context the claims made by Agamben²⁶ and Esposito²⁷ on technology are pertinent and grounded. Both authors define technology as a form of apparatus, *dispositif*, that has the ability to change and mould human behaviour. Both authors argue that technology creates a process of subjectification in which individuals are captured without escape or remedy.²⁸ This position adopts a technological determinist view about the role of technology in the shaping and conditioning of the human subject. Furthermore, this claim (although formulated

²² Langdon Winner, “Cybernetics and Political Language”, *Berkley Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 14 (1969): 12.

²³ Winner, “Cybernetics and Political Language”, 12.

²⁴ Sally Wyatt, “Technological Determinism is Dead; Long Live Technological Determinism” in *Philosophy of Technology: The Technological Condition, an Anthology*, ed. Robert C. Scharff & Val Dusek, (UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 458.

²⁵ Wyatt, “Technological Determinism is Dead”, 458.

²⁶ Giorgio Agamben, *What is an Apparatus? And Other Essays* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2009), 21.

²⁷ Roberto Esposito, *Two: The Machine of Political Theology and the Place of Thought* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 27.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

under a biopolitical discourse instead of a pastoral discourse) is supported by the discussion on cybernetic systems that are evaluated in this chapter.

One of the key aspects of the emergence of technological determinism is its adoption of neoliberal thinking as its own. In this scenario, freedom is restricted to economic freedom and thus there is no contradiction in the espousing of technological advancement as social progress, and the role of technology as an apparatus. This is represented by what Richard Barbrook and Andy Cameron refer to as *The Californian Ideology*, which they argue, “simultaneously reflects the disciplines of market economics and the freedoms of hippie artisanship. This bizarre hybrid is only made possible through a nearly universal belief in technological determinism.”²⁹ This new ideology has brought together technological optimism and economic libertarianism to redefine individual freedom as, “the liberty of individuals within the marketplace”³⁰, only this time it is an electronic marketplace.³¹

Barbrook and Cameron’s text was written in 1996, a period when smartphones did not exist, and the domestic use of the internet was still growing, however they succeeded in identifying the main tenets and principles that were already evident at the time and have come to dominate our contemporary zeitgeist. In the vision of the tech luminaries of the Californian Ideology, “everybody will be hip and rich”³², and through new technologies, “the liberal ideal of the self-sufficient individual”³³ will be achieved. This vision came to dominate our contemporary discourse and has become the providential plan of the twenty-first century. The underlying aspect of this social imaginary is an unfettered believe in the free market.

The notions of a limited state and a global free market as developed by Hayek and his peers is the foundation of the techno-optimism of the Californian Ideology which has been adopted globally. Cyberspace has become an extension and replication of the free market and thus become part of the catallaxy described by Hayek. Engineers and software developers have sought to, “create a ‘free market’ within cyberspace, such as encryption, digital money, and verification procedures.”³⁴ New information technologies offer libertarian possibilities such as the reduction of the power of the state and, “social, political and legal power structures will wither away to be

²⁹ Richard Barbrook and Andy Cameron, “The Californian Ideology.” *Science as Culture* Vol. 6 No. 1, (1996):50.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Barbrook and Cameron, “The Californian Ideology.”, 45.

³³ Barbrook and Cameron, “The Californian Ideology.”, 58.

³⁴ Barbrook and Cameron, “The Californian Ideology.”, 53.

replaced by unfettered interactions between autonomous individuals and their software.”³⁵ The principles of the free market and free market relations are mirrored in the engineering and programming of the new digital technologies.

The Californian Ideology is, therefore, a precursor to, or an exposition of the cyberlibertarian views that came to dominate current political discourse. Cyberlibertarianism is the convergence of neoliberal free market thinking and the technological determinism of tech-optimism.³⁶ Under these auspices, new innovations in digital technologies, “will liberate humankind by generating unprecedented levels of wealth.”³⁷ This mode of thinking exhibits a trust in the providential role of digital technologies to generate wealth and positive outcomes.

Thus, it is evident that the success of cyberlibertarianism is found in its pastoral message, whereby it places itself as the guide that will save humanity. Unlike, other forms of power or discourse such as disciplinary power, pastoral power produces a narrative of salvation, a discourse of optimism, not of negativity. The premise of pastoral power is freedom and the potential to succeed. This too is imbued in the agenda of cyberlibertarianism.

Like Hayek’s philosophy, cyberlibertarianism justifies its abhorrence towards the state and government because they are viewed as means of control and a limitation on individual freedom. “The experiential realm of digital devices and networked computing offers endless opportunities for achieving wealth, power and sensual pleasure. Because inherited structures of social, political, and economic organization pose barriers to the exercise of personal power and self-realization, they simply must be removed.”³⁸

This view places this new political ideology at par with Hayek’s contempt for all forms of centralised or governmental planning which are perceived as forms of constraint and as illiberal. They are deemed as antithetical to the freedom and potential of the individual to succeed and achieve their self-fulfilment. Under these auspices the aim of the law is to establish negative freedom in the form of free choice and the pursuit of self-interest with the guiding principle not being the constitution or the republic but the spontaneous order of the free market.³⁹ People are no longer considered as members of the republic, but are subjects of a normative order that they

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Langdon Winner identifies this convergence in his essay on cyberlibertarianism. Langdon Winner, “Cyberlibertarian Myths and The Prospects for Community” *ACM SIGCAS Computers and Society*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (1997): 14-19.

³⁷ Winner, “Cyberlibertarian Myths and The Prospects for Community”, 15.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Vatter, ‘Foucault and Hayek: Republican Law and Liberal Civil Society’, 178.

depend upon, the market order.⁴⁰ Like cyberlibertarianism Hayek's reasoning is anti-republican and aims for the liberation of the individual from the constraints of human made organisations like political institutions and their jurisprudence.

It is therefore evident that the values promulgated by these new techno-economic visions or society are based on notions of pastoral power that are secularised versions of the Christian plan of salvation whereby it has been replaced by notions such as "health, wellbeing...[and] security."⁴¹

5.3 The Road to Salvation

One of the principle aspects of a neoliberal (and libertarian) political vision is the limitation of the state and therefore, of its laws. However, this requires a replacement if order and the proper functioning of society are to be maintained. Thus, one of the key aspects is the transition from a legal system to a system of norms.⁴² These normative structures exist beyond the scope or limits of the state⁴³, leading to a self-regulated society that organises itself around an internal normativity.⁴⁴ This internalised structuring and self-regulation is equivalent to a cybernetic system which regulates itself through inherent mechanisms which operate according to the feedback information it receives. Furthermore, for a normative order to function without enforcement it requires some form of voluntary uptake from its participants. Here, is located the role and purpose of pastoral power.

Pastoral power manifests itself through the production of self-regulation and self-direction through a process of knowledge and individualisation. As discussed in the previous chapter of this thesis, pastoral power is presented as preceding governmentality as a means to establishing a conduct of conducts.

This conduct is about instituting an economy of souls, of conducting or guiding souls towards their salvation. In the chapter I also emphasise that pastoral power moves beyond laws and punishment and functions by directing human behaviour through knowledge and guidance of the inner self. Thus salvation has been relocated to the material world as opposed to the spiritual world, leading to the creation of new forms of holiness or salvation in the form of human capital and the enterprise of the self. Therefore, this research posits that the enterprise of the self is a

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power" in *Power: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984: Volume Three*, ed. James D. Faubion (UK: Penguin Books, 2020), 334.

⁴² Vatter, 'Foucault and Hayek: Republican Law and Liberal Civil Society', 165.

⁴³ Vatter, 'Foucault and Hayek: Republican Law and Liberal Civil Society', 164.

⁴⁴ Vatter, 'Foucault and Hayek: Republican Law and Liberal Civil Society', 171.

secularised version of the pastoral practices utilised to achieve the salvation of the individual soul and the flock.

In this contextual reading, *homo oeconomicus* is considered as a believer, in the free market and its mechanisms, who embarks on forms of ‘spiritual’ growth to achieve their salvation, i.e. success in the competitive order. As discussed previously in this work, in the neoliberal mindset economic and financial success are equivalent to moral success. This implies that in a neoliberal framework the role of the pastor is to drive towards successful self-entrepreneurship which leads to economic success and thus salvation. Thus, pastoral power is not a political institution but part of *oikonomia* or the administration and ‘governance in all spheres of life, beginning with man’s rule over his body and self.’⁴⁵ The role of pastoral power as part of *oikonomia* as opposed to being part of politics, is critical because it exposes the fracture between politics and economics, leading to the prioritisation of the former, in neoliberalism. This process is equivalent to the distinction and separation of the society of believers, *ecclesia*, from the polis or the political state witnessed in the growth of early Christianity.⁴⁶

Pastoral power is therefore identifiable with the neoliberal system of thinking because it is an administration of life which exists outside of the polis, or state. The chapter on the *Theological Dimension of Neoliberal Thinking* discusses how with the emergence of the Christian tradition the management of life and conduct became part of the remit of the *ecclesia* which provided access to salvation, instead of the polis.

Leshem argues that the *ecclesia*, especially with the emergence of canon law, is independent from the polis, but more crucially it is the *ecclesia* that determines how people should conduct themselves if they want to achieve salvation.⁴⁷ Although Church and State were already considered separate entities the codification of Canon Law further institutionalised this separation because two formal and separate codes, with clear jurisdictions were established. Progressively this leads to a repositioning of institutions, whereby the political becomes subservient and subordinate to the economy.⁴⁸ From this development in Christian society and doctrine, emerges the salvific role of the market, which as a spontaneous order that exists independently from other socio-political institutions, offers individuals the ability to achieve their

⁴⁵ Leshem, *The Origins of Neoliberalism*, 156.

⁴⁶ Leshem, *The Origins of Neoliberalism*, 156.

⁴⁷ Leshem, *The Origins of Neoliberalism*, 156 – 157.

⁴⁸ Leshem, *The Origins of Neoliberalism*, 157.

salvation not through legal provisions (since these are state sanctioned) but through the conduct of those who participate in the market *homo oeconomicus*.

It is therefore this logic of salvation, represented by pastoral power, that provides for the justification not only to separate the market from the political, but to also provide it with legitimacy and prioritisation over the political. The logic of neoliberalism is a logic of salvation.

This logic of salvation can only happen if individuals submit to the mechanisms of the market instead of submitting to the law of the state. This reasoning is found in the practice of pastoral power that is antithetical to republican thinking which is centred on the enactment of law, whilst pastoral power is about submission and the government of life.⁴⁹ Within such a logic resides the central principle of pastoral power, that the flock fully submits to the will of the pastor, “one “lets” one’s needs be “taken care of” by a normative order that transcends the individual and on which the individual must depend.”⁵⁰ This form of providential thinking is prevalent in Hayek’s conception of the market as a *catallaxy* which according to him spontaneously coordinates the actions and decisions of economic subjects to achieve the best possible outcome. This mode of thinking is explored throughout this thesis. Furthermore, the mechanism required for this providential design based on full submission is equivalent to a cybernetic process that Hayek identifies and is analysed in the next part of this chapter.

The concept of cybernetics traces its origins in the notion of *kybernetes*, which refers to the pilot or steersman. Foucault distinguishes this concept from that of the pastor, using this distinction to argue that pastoral power traces its roots in the Judeo-Christian tradition and not in the Greco-Roman one.⁵¹ Vatter interprets this emphasis as the basis for Foucault’s position that the steersman is representative of political or sovereign power whilst the pastor represents government over life.⁵² In his lectures, *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault states that the figure of the ruler as steersman presents a function of government as a rule over the ship. The function of the ruler is to steer, guide, or control the ship towards safety. The control is over the state ship, but not upon the citizens themselves.⁵³ The “object of government” is the state itself.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Vatter, ‘Foucault and Hayek: Republican Law and Liberal Civil Society’, 172.

⁵⁰ Vatter, ‘Foucault and Hayek: Republican Law and Liberal Civil Society’, 173

⁵¹ Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 122-123.

⁵² Vatter, ‘Foucault and Hayek: Republican Law and Liberal Civil Society’, 172 - 173.

⁵³ Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 122-123.

⁵⁴ Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 123.

Foucault contrasts this metaphor to that of the pastor whose purpose is not the administration of the state but that of the people. The role of the pastor is the “government of men”.⁵⁵ Thus for Foucault, the steersman has power over people only indirectly, in lieu of them boarding the ship.⁵⁶ This is in contrast to pastoral power which governs life directly and whose aim is to “direct souls”⁵⁷

Foucault’s position that the steersman’s power over the sailors and passengers is merely indirect and that the object of government is the ship (state) and not the people on board is problematic. This is more evident when we consider Cyril of Alexandria’s discussion on pastoral authority in which he also refers to the figure of the *kybernetes*. In Cyril of Alexandria the helmsperson takes economic decisions such as the removal of cargo for the sake of safety on the seas.⁵⁸ The helmsperson as representation of the pastoral economy, the economy of souls, acts in a “prudent and calculated” manner for the sake of the whole enterprise, the ecclesia which is represented by the ship.⁵⁹ This means that unlike Foucault’s observation where he argues that the helmsperson represents political power, in Cyril of Alexandria the pastoral or economic logic is also a form of *kybernetes*.⁶⁰

Furthermore, I state that Foucault’s interpretation is problematic because of his position that the *kybernetes* role is to govern the ship and not the people. I am critical of this stance because for the pilot to successfully navigate the ship to safety they have to issue orders and commands which have to be obeyed. Should there be difficulties at sea, the pilot has the authority to govern the crew and passengers on board the ship, such as the distribution of tasks and allocation of food and water. As also described by Plato in *The Republic*, failure to follow these orders results in the sinking of the ship and therefore loss of life. This means, that as shown by Cyril of Alexandria’s analogy, pastoral power too is a form of *kybernetes*, or arguably the helmsperson or pilot of the ship is also a form of pastor since his aim is to guide the behaviour of those on board so that he may lead them to safety and salvation.

Additionally, I argue that the steering of the ship is restricted towards the possibility of acting in terms of cargo, crew and passengers, but not on the ship itself. The ship, like the economy follows

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Leshem, *The Origins of Neoliberalism*, 143.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ It is also evident that the logic utilised by Cyril’s helmsperson is equivalent to the logic of the free market as formulated by Hayek. As discussed previously in this research, Hayek’s free market will allow for the possibility of individual sacrifices for the benefit of the system as a whole. Market mechanisms have the function of providing a general improved outcome, as we also see in Cyril’s conception of pastoral economy as described by Leshem.

its own mechanics and the aim of the pilot is to understand and react to these mechanics and to govern those onboard to act accordingly so that the ship may sail towards its destination. As described by Leshem, in Cyril of Alexandria safety from the storm is guaranteed by acting on the crew and passengers onboard and not on the ship itself.⁶¹ This is comparable to Hayek's understanding of a free economy as opposed to a planned economy. A planned economy would attempt to alter the ship itself, whilst in a free economy the conditions on the ship are adapted to the manoeuvres of the ship.

The figure of the helmsperson is also similar to the figure of the pastor, since both figures can only lead their wards to safety by conducting them towards a safe destination. They do not have the authority or power to change the conditions and circumstances that are imperilling their crew or flock. Thus, I argue that although the cultural origins of the two representations are different, they are both still representative of pastoral power and in both representations the object of government is the life of the people and not the institution. After all, if pastoral power is about one's full submission to someone else⁶² then this submission is not only found in the relationship between the flock and the shepherd but also between those onboard the ship and the pilot since they fully rely on him to arrive to destination safely.

Submission is a central characteristic of pastoral power and reveals the relationship that exists between the flock and the pastor. "Obedience is a virtue" and "permanent state", only this subjugation to the will of the pastor can lead to the salvation of the individual.⁶³ Paradoxically this submission is what allows for the achievement of freedom since those who obey are unburdened from worry and concern, knowing that their needs are provided for and that through their submission they have succeeded in saving themselves. This is similar to the freedom of the neoliberal subject who is willingly placing their material and economic salvation in the hands of the market order. This creates a system whereby salvation is not the prerogative of the whole but is also provided to and made accessible to the individual thus exposing the unique characteristic of pastoral power, its power of individualisation.

5.4 Pastoral Power

In assessing the forms of power prevalent in a market order, pastoral power is the form that is the one that represents and embodies the characteristics of the market as a spontaneous order as

⁶¹ Leshem, *The Origins of Neoliberalism*, 143.

⁶² Vatter, 'Foucault and Hayek: Republican Law and Liberal Civil Society', 173

⁶³ Michel Foucault, "Politics and Reason" in *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977-1984*. Edited by Lawrence D. Kritzman. Translated by Alan Sheridan. (New York: Routledge, 1988), 69.

envisioned by Hayek. The application of pastoral power reasserts the mechanisms and hierarchies of the neoliberal system as developed by Hayek and implemented over the decades. Unlike sovereign power, pastoral power does govern the economy but the people participating in it, its object of government is the life of the people. However, unlike biopower, it is not concerned with the population as a whole entity but it concerns itself with the individual.

Pastoral power is about the economy of souls, it is concerned with the conduct and fate of every individual irrespective of their political status or identity. In associating pastoral power with the establishment of the ecclesia, then we are also recognising that the flock moves beyond and outside of political borders or state sovereignty. The ecclesia is an institution that brings together individuals from different states and whose allegiance is to the ecclesia and not the sovereign power that they form part of. This quality of transcending the limitations of national and sovereign borders is an aspect of the free market as envisioned by its proponents and taken to be as a matter of fact.⁶⁴

However, the market as a spontaneous order does not merely transcend state borders, it transcends all human boundaries because it is part of the existential fabric of being human and exists outside of human control and human design. This kind of depiction is also attributable to the ecclesia, or the society of souls since they are brought together not by human or political institutions but by a transcendental entity, God, which like the market exists outside of the human grasp.

These elements are recognised in Foucault's discussion on pastoral power when he states that, "[t]he shepherd wields power over a flock rather than a land" and that the flock should be considered as a gathering of "dispersed individuals."⁶⁵ These two characteristics are also found in Hayek's market as a spontaneous order. As discussed earlier the market order is not tied to a state or a territory but is a social institution that emerges from the actions and choices made by society. Furthermore, the market has the ability to coordinate and bring together in the name of trade and commerce, different individuals and people to form a market. As a spontaneous order the market coordinates the actions and decisions of the different economic players as a decentralised and uncontrolled institution. Thus, it is evident that Hayek's market is the pastor of the neoliberal system, and not the state.

⁶⁴ This is evidenced in Lippman's description of a the sources and supply chain of the items that make up a typical breakfast. Lippmann, *The Good Society*, 30.

⁶⁵ Foucault. "Politics and Reason", 61.

The free market also has the inherent ability, through its design and purpose of coordinating actions through its mechanisms, to address the needs of all individuals in the same way that the pastor provides for all members of the flock. The salvific theme of pastoral power is based on the role of “the shepherd [who] sees that all sheep, each and every one of them, is fed and saved.”⁶⁶ Also, like the market whose aim is to produce economic wealth and growth the aim of the pastor is to lead the flock “to good grazing ground”.⁶⁷

However, pastoral authority is not as benign as has been presented till now. As Foucault mentions, “[t]he shepherd’s power implies individual attention paid to each member of the flock.”⁶⁸ This implies that pastoral technology requires a process of individualisation through which every individual is known and identified.⁶⁹ This kind of power relationship leads to the production of forms of surveillance or monitoring, similar but not the same as found in disciplinary power.

For the shepherd to succeed in saving and caring for the flock he has to keep watch.⁷⁰ “He pays attention to them all and scans each one of them. He’s got to know his flock as a whole, and in detail.”⁷¹ This implies that the basis of pastoral power is the monitoring and surveillance of individuals so that it can provide for them.

Although this reality can be found in planned economies or what Lippmann refers to as the providential state,⁷² this quality is also found in the neoliberal free market, whereby companies and service providers require the information and data of individual customers and consumers. With the use of this data they can predict, forecast, and act upon market trends, thus enabling them to react to the signals of the market as expected by Hayekian economic thinking. Moreover, companies use their knowledge of the individual so that they can target them singularly in a more effective manner. These fundamental aspects of pastoral power are enabled through the development of contemporary technologies that have the ability to provide the individualised data required by companies for these purposes.

This individualised monitoring happens in the context of private relationships between individuals or between individuals and institutions.⁷³ This is a “molecular” kind of power relations

⁶⁶ Foucault. “Politics and Reason”, 62.

⁶⁷ Foucault. “Politics and Reason”, 62.

⁶⁸ Foucault. “Politics and Reason”, 63.

⁶⁹ Foucault. “Politics and Reason”, 62.

⁷⁰ Foucault. “Politics and Reason”, 62.

⁷¹ Foucault. “Politics and Reason”, 62.

⁷² Lippmann, *The Good Society*.

⁷³ Lazzarato. *Pastoral Power Beyond Public and Private*, 4.

in which the life of people is monitored for the purpose of guidance.⁷⁴ This process of conducting others' lives is not only about business and customer relations but is the foundational element of neoliberalism and the development of *homo oeconomicus*. The ontology and identity of *homo oeconomicus* is unified with the mechanisms and processes of the market, and for the market to prosper it requires all of its adherents to behave as expected and required. This implies that in a market driven social reality every individual has to conduct themselves according to the market order in the form of the competitive order, price mechanisms, and supply and demand requirements. Salvation is achievable only in these terms and pastoral power allows for the possibility of guiding everyone towards achieving these goals.

The success of every individual is measured and quantified in a context of "merits and faults"⁷⁵ that can be accounted for in a personalised ledger. "Today the economy of merits and faults, the direction of everyday conduct and subjection are still the motor of practices and discourses that are deemed to individualize, control, regulate and order the behaviour of those that are governed in work, schooling, health, consumption and communication, and so forth."⁷⁶ Every aspect of the life of *homo oeconomicus* is thus an economic matter that must be conducted for the purposes of improving their position in the competitive order. This form of power is totalising because it seeps into all the facets of life and as claimed by Foucault, during their entire life.⁷⁷

5.5 Cybernetics

In the neoliberal zeitgeist where the principal driving force is the competitive order driven by the laws of supply and demand, with human capital as the currency defining worth and mobility. Paired together, competition and human capital transform the human, rendering it an object of the exigencies of the market. In this scenario the entrepreneur of the self must invest in the correct technologies and information systems to increase their worth and competitiveness. In an ironic transition, the entrepreneur of the self loses their autonomy, and their key to success is to respond in a timely and efficient manner to the signals of the cybernetic system of the market.

The development of automation and information technologies in the twentieth century led authors like Norbert Wiener and William Ross Ashby to develop theories of cybernetics as a form of theory of control in human psychology and behavioural studies. They both deem cybernetics as a form of autonomous control system that is applicable to both machines and living

⁷⁴ Lazzarato. Pastoral Power Beyond Public and Private, 4.

⁷⁵ Lazzarato. Pastoral Power Beyond Public and Private, 3

⁷⁶ Lazzarato. Pastoral Power Beyond Public and Private, 3

⁷⁷ Foucault, The Subject and Power, 333.

organisms, including complex beings like humans. This theoretical vision has inspired fields such as behavioural economics and influenced the work of Hayek who refers to cybernetics both in the context of the functioning of the market as a spontaneous order, but also in the manner that humans should respond to signals stemming from their environments, most notably the market. As discussed in previous chapters of this thesis, one of the main concerns in Hayek's theory is the question of knowledge. For Hayek, the market order as a catallaxy is superior to all forms of planned economies because humans lack the capacity to know and understand all the necessary information and knowledge. Centralised, or planned economies are therefore impossible because they lack the capacity to take into consideration all the necessary information and required knowledge of the consequences of their choices. This limitation is avoided if we rely on a free market that functions as a decentralised and autonomous system that coordinates the actions and decisions of all its participants through natural laws of the market. Equilibrium and stability therefore only exist if the catallaxy is allowed to without human intervention, hence the logical argument for the justification of a free market.

As shown before this reliance on the market as a source and processor of knowledge is a key aspect of Hayek's and neoliberal economic and political thinking. This research also identifies this mode of thinking as a form of secular theological thinking since it follows the same logic of negative theology and the requirement for having faith in God but replaces God with the market.

This shows that for Hayek the question of cybernetics is principally a question of knowledge which then evolves into a theory of control and behaviour. Thus, in Hayek, as in other authors who discuss the topic, cybernetics is an epistemological theory.⁷⁸ This is exemplified by the contexts in which Hayek discusses the notion of cybernetic systems as a form of feedback loop and the communication of information. (Hayek primarily makes use of cybernetics as a concept the essays *Economics and Knowledge* (1937), and *The Use of Knowledge in Society* (1945) and in his book, *The Sensory Order* (1952).⁷⁹ Hayek recontextualises the economic mechanisms, and social phenomena, in terms of epistemological issues, thus justifying his theory of the spontaneous order as an epistemological unifying theory.

⁷⁸ Mitcham. *Thinking through Technology*, 204.

⁷⁹ Friedrich August, Hayek, "Economics and Knowledge", *Economica*, Volume 4, number 13, 1937, p 33-54. "The Use of Knowledge in Society", *The American Economic Review*, Volume 35, issue 4, 1945, p 519-530. *The Sensory Order: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Theoretical Psychology*. (Chicago Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1952).

The strength of cybernetics as a theoretical framework is its ability to explain all types of phenomena be they natural or human.⁸⁰ This provides cybernetics with the possibility of acting as a totalising theory or method from which a totalitarian form of political thinking can be extrapolated and justified. Thus, cybernetics offers the necessary ‘metaphysical’ system required for the development of an ideology that seeks jurisdiction on every aspect of life as seen with the rise of neoliberal political thinking.

The totalising nature of cybernetic thinking exposes the contradictions in Hayek’s neoliberal project which espouses the maximisation of individual freedom, as does libertarian politics, but adopts a cybernetic model to explain the role of individuals within the market system. The intrinsic nature of cybernetics as a model of control is traceable in its etymology, *kybernetes*, which means pilot, steersman or as used by Plato in the dialogue, *Alcibiades*, as governance of people, exhibiting the limits of freedom under a cybernetically designed neoliberal form of governance.

A key aspect of cybernetic thinking is the element of control; the foundation of cybernetic theory is the conceptualisation of the production of ‘regular or ordered behavior’⁸¹ and the reduction of decision-making and actions to ‘determinate behavior’.⁸² This implies that any politico-economic discourse based on an understanding of the economy, or all other institutions, as a cybernetic system are oriented towards identifying ways of controlling human behaviour to create the required outcome.

5.6 Cybernetics as Government

In developing *The Cybernetic Hypothesis*, Tiqqun argue that cybernetics is “a new technology of government,”⁸³ and that, “the cybernetic hypothesis is thus a political hypothesis.”⁸⁴ In his critique of cybernetics, Robert McClintock refers to it as an ideology, inspired to do so by the very claims made by major proponents of cybernetic theory like Wiener and Ashby.⁸⁵ In his own work, Ashby proposes the application of cybernetics as means of explaining and solving ‘psychological, social, economic’ issues that arise in our contemporary and complex societies.⁸⁶

⁸⁰ Mitcham. *Thinking through Technology*, 205.

⁸¹ Mitcham. *Thinking through Technology*, 206.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Tiqqun, *The Cybernetic Hypothesis*, trans. by Robert, Hurley (South Pasadena, California: Semiotext(e), 2020), 13.

⁸⁴ Tiqqun, *The Cybernetic Hypothesis*, 25.

⁸⁵ Robert McClintock, *Machines and Vitalists: Reflections on the Ideology of Cybernetics*, *The American Scholar*, Spring, 1966, Vol. 35, No. 2 (USA: Phi Beta Kappa Society, 1966), 249-257.

⁸⁶ William Ross Ashby, *An Introduction to Cybernetics*. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1957), 6.

Tiqqun place cybernetic discourse within the tradition of nineteenth century scientific discourse that modelled the world either as a mechanical model or as a vitalist/organicist model.⁸⁷ Although cybernetics may portray itself as a form of mechanistic thinking, Tiqqun and McClintock both argue that cybernetics offers a model that is amenable to both scientific paradigms because it interprets all beings, organic or machine, to be considered as a 'system'⁸⁸ or 'feedback loop'.⁸⁹ McClintock even compares the cybernetic model to Jakob Johann von Uexküll's model of the function circle which explains how organisms function and act.⁹⁰ In such a context cybernetics is not merely a descriptive method but becomes an inscription of how systems should work and function.

In the same way that Foucault identifies the development of biopolitics from the development of the biological sciences in the eighteenth century⁹¹, theorists have identified the role of cybernetics as a political model within the nineteenth century debate on whether life is organised around vitalist forces or mechanical forces. Even the theory of spontaneous order, in Hayek can be traced to this debate since he too is attempting to explain the emergence and organisation of complex systems like society and the market within this dual tradition.

Thus, in the same manner that biopolitics creates a politics of the species or society as a collective and living body,⁹² cybernetics creates a politics around the notion of humans as machines and society and its institutions like the economy, as a system. Tiqqun identifies two fundamental principles of the political agenda of cybernetics as a political system. "The first aims at *making living beings into a mechanics*, at mastering, programming, determining humans and their life, society, and its 'future'." "The second aims at *imitating the living with machines*, first as individuals, and this leads to the development of robots and artificial intelligence: next as collectives, and this involves the setting of information into circulation and the construction of networks."⁹³ The political ramifications are made most evident in the work of Karl Wolfgang Deutsch, who identified and formulated the use of cybernetics for government in his book, *The Nerves of Government*.⁹⁴ For Deutsch, the aim of government is to administer and manage

⁸⁷ Tiqqun, *The Cybernetic Hypothesis*, 41.

⁸⁸ Tiqqun, *The Cybernetic Hypothesis*, 41.

⁸⁹ McClintock, *Machines and Vitalists*, 249-257.

⁹⁰ McClintock, *Machines and Vitalists*, 251-252.

⁹¹ Michel Foucault, *Society Must be Defended, Lectures at the Collège de France 1975-1976*, trans. by David, Macey, (New York: Picador, 2003), 242-245.

⁹² Foucault, *Society Must be Defended*, 242.

⁹³ Tiqqun, *The Cybernetic Hypothesis*, 41-42. (Italics in the original text.)

⁹⁴ Richard Wolfgang Deutsch, *The Nerves of Government: Models of Political Communication and Control*. (New York: Free Press, 1963).

society based on the feedback and information it receives, and it must act promptly and effectively to ensure that equilibrium is maintained.⁹⁵ For Tiqqun, Deutsch's concept of government is the materialisation of Adam Smith's 'invisible hand'⁹⁶ whose aim is to maintain equilibrium,⁹⁷ like Hayek's catallaxy is about market equilibrium.

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri state that, "Just as modernisation did in a previous era, postmodernisation or informatisation today marks a new mode of becoming human. Where the production of soul is concerned, as Musli would say, one really ought to replace the traditional techniques of industrial machines with the cybernetic intelligence of information and communication technologies."⁹⁸ For Hardt and Negri, information and communication technologies redefine the human and humanity itself⁹⁹ creating a new type of subject.

Hardt and Negri, argue that the Soviet economic and political model failed because it relied of forms of surveillance and disciplinary power whereas in the west the narrative was based on notions of personal and individual freedom leading to the creation of information and cybernetic systems that are embedded in the individual subjectivities of its subjects.¹⁰⁰ For them, these feedback loops allow for the progression of 'Empire' a global capitalist system which relies on decentralised form of power that operates through networks.

Thus, for them the contemporary economic model is successful because it controls human actors via the use of, "Interactive and cybernetic machines become a new prosthesis integrated into our bodies and minds and a lens through which to redefine our bodies and minds themselves. The anthropology of cyberspace is really a recognition of the new human condition."¹⁰¹ Additionally, N. Katherine Hayles, argues that cybernetics with its notion of feedback loops challenges the liberal humanist version of the human. In a cybernetic system the human subject is part of an information flow that is 'not only within the subject, but also between the subject and the environment.'¹⁰²

⁹⁵ Charles Lewis Taylor, *A Life of Productivity: Karl W. Deutsch, Pioneer in the Theory of International Relations*, ed. by Charles Lewis Taylor and Bruce M. Russett. (Switzerland: Springer, 2020), 36.

⁹⁶ Tiqqun, *The Cybernetic Hypothesis*, 30.

⁹⁷ Winner, *Cybernetics and Political Language*, 3.

⁹⁸ Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri, *Empire*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000), 289.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 277-279

¹⁰¹ Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 291.

¹⁰² N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman, Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press:1999), 2.

In a competitive order, economic actions are not merely actions in business or finance, but every action and decision taken in life. Homo Economicus is a totalising notion in which every aspect of life is redefined as an economic decision leading to the notion of the entrepreneur of the self as identified by Foucault in his lectures on the Birth of Biopolitics. Tiqqun extend this position by arguing that, “What Foucault’s audience is said to know and very well, and what he chooses not to explain, is that by the end of the twentieth century, the image of piloting, that is, of management, has become the cardinal metaphor for describing not just politics but also every human activity.”¹⁰³ Cybernetics is a dominant paradigm that moulds every aspect of human life because all of them are deemed as part of, or a contributing factor to the success of the market.

Even before the proliferation of digital devices and the introduction of digital technologies into every aspect of our lives, most notably with the spread of technological innovations such the Internet of Things, there was a recognition that we were entering a new age of politics and political administration. Inspired by Marshall McLuhan’s concept of the ‘electric age’, Langdon Winner states that, “[a]s politics more and more becomes an activity in which men and machines participate hand-in-circuit, it is not surprising that a cybernetic theory based on ‘information’ should begin to seem plausible.”¹⁰⁴ This intuition thus supports this thesis’ claim that under contemporary politico-economic conditions, the neoliberal subject is a form of cyborg in which the technological and the organic merge. Through technology, the human subject becomes entrenched in the feedback loop of the market.

5.7 Pastoral Technologies

New technologies follow the paradigm of the pastorate and the promise of salvation through knowledge of the self and self-exposure. Coupled with notions of cybernetics, contemporary society has created technologically driven systems based on the extraction and relay of individualised information, which produce new subjects. I refer to these as pastoral technologies and argue that they provide the tools to redesign the self as a neoliberal self, embedded in the cybernetic loop of the free market system.

Social change driven by technology is a stalwart of technological determinism and is the foundation for the creation of technologies that are aimed at reshaping the human psyche and the manner it relates to the world.

¹⁰³ Tiqqun, *The Cybernetic Hypothesis*, 29-30.

¹⁰⁴ Winner, *Cybernetics and Political Language*, 3.

This technological determinism is found in Heidegger's concept of *gestell* (enframing) which he develops in his essay *The Question Concerning Technology*, he explains that the essence of modern technology is its ability to transform the relationship between humans and the world, by reducing or enframing everything as a form of standing reserve (resource). This quality of technology can transform the phenomenological relation or experience between humans and the world, leading to a transformation that may be considered outside of human control.¹⁰⁵ Although Heidegger is not discussing information or digital technologies, he is discussing technology as a whole, which includes all technological forms, and furthermore, the application of his theory is evident in the role played by these specific technologies.

We can attribute Heidegger's identification of the process of transforming the world into a store of standing reserve to the current activities of tech corporations to use digital technologies for the extraction of data. Under current practices, all digital platform users are enframed as standing reserve because of their value as producers of data. This also leads towards a re-evaluation of the manner in which we interact with the world and in our life decisions, because digital platforms have the ability to govern them through the processing of our data via algorithms.

This is shown in the discussion on "algorithmic governmentality" whereby the process is built upon the collection of big data, the processing of data leading to knowledge production, and then leading to formulating and enacting action on individual behaviours.¹⁰⁶ These technologies create forms of personalisation and the possibility of designing prompts that drive individuals to act.¹⁰⁷ These prompts conduct behaviour through a form of obedience that does not even require the formation of a desire.¹⁰⁸ The neoliberal subject conducts their life according to the messaging and signals they receive from the system.

Pastoral power requires knowledge of the individual which it extracts via processes of exposure. However it does not merely collect this information but it transforms it into discourse and manipulates it.¹⁰⁹ Desires are no longer owned by the subject, but are instead appropriated and

¹⁰⁵ Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, (New York: Harper Perennial, 2013), 3-35.

¹⁰⁶ Antoinette, Rouvroy & Thomas, Berns, 'Algorithmic Governmentality and Prospects of Emancipation Disparateness as a Precondition for Individuation Through Relationships?' Translated by, Liz, Carey-Libbrecht, *Réseaux*, Vol.1 No 177, p.163-196 (2013), 166-169.

¹⁰⁷ Rouvroy and Berns, *Algorithmic Governmentality*, 176.

¹⁰⁸ Rouvroy and Berns, *Algorithmic Governmentality*, 176.

¹⁰⁹ Stypinska. "Pastorate Digitalized", 7.

altered so that the individual accepts to follow the needs of the market. Self-exposure is not a process of self-knowledge but a means towards subordination.¹¹⁰

Authors such as Ori Schwarz state that this new algorithmic reality is leading to the production of a “post-choice society” in which all choices are predicted and made for individuals by predictive technologies embedded in all our digital products.¹¹¹ For Schwarz this marks a break from the neoliberal doctrine which is based upon the notion of choice and a redefinition of freedom in terms of the possibility to choose.¹¹² Therefore, for him arguments such as those presented by Rouvroy and Stypinska do not necessarily represent a neoliberal frame of thought.

However, I claim that within neoliberalism the freedom of choice that it represents is contradictory in itself and that it may be deemed as illusionary. For the neoliberal subject to succeed they must make sure that they choose and act in accordance with the signals of the market.

This implies that in reality, decisions are formulated and conducted by these mechanisms and not by the individual making or enacting them. The only leeway is the possibility of disregarding these signals, which will only result in the inability to succeed. Even if we accept the notion of the neoliberal subject as an entrepreneur of the self, they still need to make optimal choices in terms of market and competitive value. This further reinforces the notion that the neoliberal market system is a form of pastoral doctrine since the individual must surrender their individuality and convert themselves into a new subject.

Therefore, in such an infrastructure, algorithms are merely replicating the pastoral apparatus that already exists and the functions of neoliberalism. This is more pronounced if we consider new persuasive technologies as having the ability to make better choices for us because they know us better than we know ourselves, and have better knowledge of the market. In such instances, the neoliberal subject is relinquishing the responsibility of choosing to more knowledgeable technologies. This, after all, is the predicament offered by Hayek when arguing that planned economies cannot succeed because humans have limited knowledge, and therefore the market as a spontaneous order should be allowed to function because it contains and processes this knowledge that we lack.

¹¹⁰ Stypinska. “Pastorate Digitalized”, 6.

¹¹¹ Ori, Schwarz, “The Post-Choice Society: Algorithmic Prediction and the Decentering of Choice.” *Theory, Culture & Society*, 1-19 (2025).

¹¹² Schwarz. “The Post-Choice Society”.

Knowledge is at the core of pastoral practices. To conduct all individuals towards salvation, the pastor needs a profound and intimate knowledge of each one. “[H]e must know what goes on in the soul of each one, that is, his secret sins, his progress on the road to sainthood.”¹¹³ This knowledge is revealed by the individuals themselves following a process of self-examination.¹¹⁴ It is the duty of every believer to go through a process of self-examination not to achieve self-mastery but as a means of obtaining the necessary self-knowledge which they can share with the pastor.¹¹⁵ Thus, self-examination allows for the unveiling of the depths of one’s soul, which allows the pastor to provide the required guidance and direction.¹¹⁶

Therefore, the process of pastoral power is to create a dynamic that brings together “total obedience, knowledge of oneself, and confession to someone else.”¹¹⁷ Pastoral power can only be exercised if it has knowledge of “the inside of people’s minds”, “exploring their souls,” and “making them reveal their innermost secrets.”¹¹⁸ Furthermore, it also has the ability to direct the believer’s conscience.¹¹⁹

The effectiveness of pastoral power over other forms of power, like legal or sovereign power, is that it becomes part of life itself and actively participates in the production of one’s truth about themselves.¹²⁰ This explains the ability of this form of power to mould and transform individuals into new subjects. This process of subjectification uses self-examination and self-exposure, not as a means to establish and strengthen the self, but as a technique to convert it into a new subject.¹²¹ Techniques of self-examination and self-exposure are not utilised to strengthen the sense of self or to achieve self-governance, but as a means of subordination to the will of the divine to have access to happiness and salvation.¹²²

This process of subjectification is also present in neoliberalism when the self of the entrepreneur of the self is not an object of “self-love” but a “subject who operationalizes the logic of the

¹¹³ Foucault. “Politics and Reason”, 69.

¹¹⁴ Foucault. “Politics and Reason”, 69-70.

¹¹⁵ Foucault. “Politics and Reason”, 70.

¹¹⁶ Foucault. “Politics and Reason”, 70.

¹¹⁷ Foucault. “Politics and Reason”, 70.

¹¹⁸ Foucault. “The Subject and Power”, 333.

¹¹⁹ Foucault. “The Subject and Power”, 333.

¹²⁰ Foucault. “The Subject and Power”, 333.

¹²¹ Stypinska. “Pastorate Digitalized”, 5-6.

¹²² Stypinska. “Pastorate Digitalized”, 6.

market.”¹²³ There is no difference between a discourse of subjectification based on obedience or based on freedom (as promulgated by neoliberalism), the function and aim are the same.¹²⁴

The neoliberal pastorate is a secularised version of the Christian pastorate, which utilises the same paradigms and techniques but also has access to new and possibly more effective technologies. Digital technologies, bolstered by new developments such as the Internet of Things and the growth and spread of artificial intelligence, magnify and intensify the pastoral techniques of self-examination and self-exposure or confession, creating a society of transparency in which our inner selves are exposed and openly observable. This transparency allows for the possibility of control or conduct of conduct as envisaged by the pastorate. Through these technologies new forms of *askesis* are developed, new forms of self-discipline whose purpose is to increase and augment one’s human capital and productive output. These apps and technologies to provide behavioural changes masked as wellbeing choices but which in fact as self-entrepreneurial decisions such better sleep for a more productive day, improved health for improved efficiency and focus, and so on. These pastoral practices lead to the formation of neoliberal *askesis* whose aim is to keep the neoliberal subject focuses on their productive role. This replicates the habits and *askesis* of monastic orders whose aim was to direct the self to focus on prayer and God. Through these efforts , we may therefore interpret today’s technologies, which are owned and utilised by neoliberal institutions as forms of pastoral technologies.

Pastoral technologies create a paradigm of transparency that moves beyond mere surveillance or discipline. In this new reality, “freedom and control become indistinguishable”¹²⁵ and “[w]e are confronted with a technology of power that does not negate or suppress our freedom but that exploits our freedom. This is what has created the current crises of freedom.”¹²⁶ This leads to the establishment of a procedure by which “the subject becomes responsible for realizing its own subjectification.”¹²⁷ The desire to self-expose and achieve full transparency has transformed us into the very same neoliberal *dispositif* that captures us.¹²⁸

The pastorate provides a narrative of salvation and is based on a discourse of care and providence. Neoliberalism’s power is also based on a positive and providential tone. It derives its

¹²³ Stypinska. “Pastorate Digitalized”, 10.

¹²⁴ Stypinska. “Pastorate Digitalized”, 10.

¹²⁵ Byung Chul Han, “Inside the Digital Panopticon” in *Capitalism and the Death Drive*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2021).29.

¹²⁶ Han. “Inside the Digital Panopticon”, 30.

¹²⁷ Stypinska. “Pastorate Digitalized”, 6.

¹²⁸ Stypinska. “Pastorate Digitalized”, 15.

power over people not through repression or prohibition but on seduction.¹²⁹ Similarly, neoliberalism's pastoral technologies achieve their goals "not by making people obey it but by making people like it. By consuming and communicating, even by clicking the 'like' button, we submit ourselves to this form of rule."¹³⁰

With the commercialisation and spread of wearable technologies like smartwatches and smartphones, tracking devices that can monitor and store our most intimate and personal data have become commonplace. Many people willingly use self-surveillance to gather information about themselves, to self-examine, increase their self-knowledge, and through the processing of their data, they are guided towards improving themselves. Tracking devices and their data processing capacities change the way we view ourselves and our bodies.¹³¹ The process of self-knowledge and self-examination leads to the creation of a new form of subjectivity and relation to the self.

The user becomes part of a feedback loop; they produce the data, which is monitored and collected by the tracking devices, then presented as a form of self-knowledge, offering guidance on how to improve and regulate our behaviour for self-improvement.¹³² This kind of transparency brings about a compulsion towards conformity¹³³ since everyone is attempting to bring themselves within the parameters suggested to them by the algorithms of the device.

This contemporary technological pastorate takes the form of socio-cybernetics. Socio-cybernetics interprets the individual as "*a locus of feedbacks*" that regulates itself.¹³⁴ This produces the kind of self-regulation professed by pastoral power by creating a "self-disciplined personality."¹³⁵ Thus, it is evident that cybernetic systems provide the technique for the achievement of pastoral power to enact the self-regulation required by neoliberalism from its transformed subjects.

Apps and tracking devices act as regulatory technologies that fulfil the governing function of the pastorate. These technologies allow for the organisation and management of life in terms of times and schedules that are set and enforced via nudges or reminders. This feedback architecture

¹²⁹ Han. "Inside the Digital Panopticon", 30.

¹³⁰ Han. "Inside the Digital Panopticon", 30.

¹³¹ Hong, *Technologies of Speculation*, 166.

¹³² Hong, *Technologies of Speculation*, 166.

¹³³ Han. "Inside the Digital Panopticon", 29-30.

¹³⁴ Tiqqun, *The Cybernetic Hypothesis*, 52. (italics in original text)

¹³⁵ Tiqqun, *The Cybernetic Hypothesis*, 52.

embodies the spirit of the rules enacted by monastic orders to organise the life and spiritual practices of their members.

The continuation of the temporal scansion, interiorized in the form of a *perpensatio horarum*, a mental articulation of the passing of the hours, here becomes the element that permits it to act on the life of the individual and the community with an incomparably greater efficacy than the Stoic and Epicurean care of the self could achieve. And if we are perfectly accustomed to articulate our existence according to times and hours and to consider even our interior life as a linear and homogeneous course of time and not as an alternation of discrete and heterogeneous unities to be measured according to ethical criteria and rites of passage, we must not forget that it is in the cenobitic *horologium vitae* that time and life were for the first time intimately superimposed to the point of nearly coinciding.¹³⁶

Fitness apps, time management apps, or similar programmes measure, quantify, and organise the habits and practices of their users, creating a new form of cyborg life in which human actions are coordinated by artificial intelligence, hence merging the human and the artificial. Users seek these technologies to increase their human capital and to improve themselves, leading to better opportunities in the competitive order.

The architecture of these technologies reflects the mechanisms and structures of the market and competitive order, since these are the environment inhabited by their users. Thus, like the rules of a monastic order, the apps act as *regulae*, directing and organising the individual's life. This further emphasises the role of obedience for the proper functioning of pastoral technologies.

The effectiveness of pastoral power as a means of control is the ability it holds to produce a subject that self-controls, self-regulates, and self-imposes upon itself the rules and conformity required by the market system. As a cybernetic loop, the market sends out its signals via price changes or diminishing demand, and the market believer will respond by changing their actions and decisions according to these signals. This means that the neoliberal subject regulates their actions and decisions according to the mechanisms of the market, thus making the market a source of conduct of conducts, that is, a pastor.

Cybernetic techniques, applied via the implementation of pastoral technologies, create a new form of neoliberal life. Homo oeconomicus under neoliberal conditions of the twenty-first century is re-established as a form of cyborgian being whose self is an amalgam of the biological and the technological, of the organic and the economic.

¹³⁶ Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*, 24.

5.8 Neoliberal Forms of Being

The neoliberal pastorate is premised on its ability to guide towards the achievement of salvation. Like other forms of eschatological thinking, this philosophy is based on the conception of transformation or a transcendence from one state to another improved state of being. This religious doctrine has been replaced by secular equivalents that still sustain an eschatological worldview by replacing God with other figures, such as technology or artificial intelligence.¹³⁷

With the prospects and capability of new technologies, neoliberal subjectification has the potential of repositioning *homo oeconomicus* as a newly transformed being that is separate from other forms of life. The competitive order and market order recontextualise human life to such a degree that they allow for the creation of new forms of life that are distinct and unique to neoliberalism. “The rationality of the cosmos-be it natural or divine-is superhuman,”¹³⁸ providing it with the authority and power to lead human life and not allowing mastery over their own fate.¹³⁹ The total immersion of the individual in the market order creates a symbiotic relation that redefines the characteristics of being human.

This contextualisation follows in the footsteps of Foucault’s problematisation of the “technologies of the self”.¹⁴⁰ This debate explores the processes leading to the creation of identity and the subject; it asks, “What are we today?” positing how techniques of the self, borrowed from antiquity, led to the production of our identities.¹⁴¹ Although Foucault is asking these questions in the context of the rise of the state, the same issues and interrogations apply to the rise of the market order and the neoliberal organisation of society.

Neoliberalism, through its technologies of the self and dispositifs extends its logic to engulf and absorb all who participate in it, thus creating forms of life that embody its values and institutions,

it is possible to analyze political rationality, as it is possible to analyze any scientific rationality. Of course, this political rationality is linked with other forms of rationality. Its development in large

¹³⁷ This type of logic explains why many adherents of techno-utopian movements such as transhumanism are also technolibertarians and staunch advocates of the free market. This is also evident in other philosophies such as effective altruism and longtermism. refer to, Timnit Gebru and Émile P. Torres. “The TESCREAL Bundle: Eugenics and the Promise of Utopia Through Artificial General Intelligence”, in *First Monday*, vol. 29, no. 4 (2024).

¹³⁸ Gentili, *The Age of Precarity*, 101.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ Michel, Foucault. “The Political Technology of Individuals.” in *Power, Essential Works of Foucault 1954-84: Volume Three*. Ed. by James D. Faubion. (UK: Penguin Books, 2020), 403-417.

¹⁴¹ Foucault. “The Political Technology of Individuals.”, 403-404.

part is dependent upon economical, social, cultural, and technical processes. It is always embodied in institutions and strategies and has its own specificity.¹⁴²

Thus by observing and evaluating the central driver of neoliberalism, the market, it is also possible to conceptualise how the market shapes life itself. The same mechanisms which control and manage the market, also apply to human life leading to the reshaping and moulding of life according to these rules. Therefore, we can observe how price mechanism or supply and demand also becomes the main influence in the formation of neoliberal forms of life. These forms of life become the embodiment of market drivers.

Agamben distinguishes between two forms of life, *zoē* and *bios*, the former referring to natural life common between all beings, and the latter is qualified life.¹⁴³ *Bios*, refers to way of life, or the manner that institutions shape and direct human life and taking a specific form.¹⁴⁴ Agamben discusses this distinction between natural life and qualified life in terms of sovereign power, however the notion of *bios* also explains the processes enacted by other political structures including neoliberal ones like the market.

Notions of a good life, define what life should be,¹⁴⁵ thus producing a process of subjectification since life is deemed to be meaningful if it achieves the qualifications that fall under the prescribed understanding of a good life. Thus, from a neoliberal perspective *bios* is understood in terms of notions of human capital and the entrepreneur of the self. A good life is one that is successful in the competitive order, achieving their self-interests and economic success.

Unlike Agamben's reading in terms of sovereign power though, under neoliberalism, what constitutes a qualified life is not determined by the state but the economy, or the market. It is the market as a spontaneous order that determines the *bios* and what this constitutes. It is the market that governs and judges human life. Exposure to threats and the possibility of death is therefore, no longer the remit of the sovereign but is instead of the economy. Market dynamics have the potential to expose and endanger human life based on the decentralised coordination of the market as a spontaneous order. Thus, the economy has the purpose of producing different forms of *bios*, either in the form of good life or what Agamben refers to as *bare life*.

Thus, the role of pastoral power becomes that of saving human life from the possibility of being reduced to expendable life. To safeguard themselves from this threat, individuals must therefore

¹⁴² Foucault. "The Political Technology of Individuals.", 416.

¹⁴³ Giorgio, Agamben. *Homo Sacer, Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), 9.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Giorgio, Agamben. *Homo Sacer*, 10.

obey and submit themselves to the market order, and make sure that they respond properly to the signals of the market. In this framework, freedom comes to imply avoidance of danger which can only happen via wilful obedience and self-regulation.

All of this is part of the neoliberal reality of the economisation of life, whereby all aspects of life are “intelligible only through the logic of the market.”¹⁴⁶ This produces a reality in which “nearly all modes of living, which makes a population, and its space and time, intelligible via competition and the market.”¹⁴⁷ Through the logic of market and competition, neoliberalism uses techniques that produce different forms of life, including forms of *bare life*. In a competitive order there are both winners and losers. Whilst the state may engage in practices of decision making on people’s lives, neoliberalism through its subjectivities or systems of valuation also has this kind of power to decide on life itself.¹⁴⁸

Caroline Alphin presents the argument that neoliberalism enacts biopolitical or necropolitical systems leading to the creation of bare life or expendable life. She situates the production of bare life through practices of precarity and the creation of working poor. These policies are enacted in the name of cost cutting and competition.¹⁴⁹

However, I maintain that unlike other political systems or ideologies whose biopolitical predicament rests on the production of *bare life* as a mainstay of their agenda and mission, in neoliberalism bare life is not a biopolitical product but a epiphenomenon of its pastorate. Forms of life that are exposed to danger and precarious living are not the consequence of direct action but the indirect result of the neoliberal logic and the market order. Therefore, the notion of *bios* and *bare life* are useful concepts for understanding the type of qualified life produced by neoliberal systems, however they must be recontextualised within a pastoral framework and not a biopolitical one.

In Hayek’s formulation of the market as catallaxy, there are winners and losers, the winners achieving the good life whilst the losers epitomise *bare life*.

We shall later describe it as the game of catallaxy. It proceeds, like all games, according to rules guiding the actions of individual participants whose aims, skills, and knowledge are different, with the consequence that the outcome will be unpredictable and that there will regularly be winners and losers. And while, as in a game, we are right in insisting that it be fair and that nobody cheat, it would be nonsensical to demand that the results for the different players be just. They will of

¹⁴⁶ Alphin. *Neoliberalism and Cyberpunk Science Fiction*, 3.

¹⁴⁷ Alphin. *Neoliberalism and Cyberpunk Science Fiction*, 3.

¹⁴⁸ Alphin. *Neoliberalism and Cyberpunk Science Fiction*, 79.

¹⁴⁹ Alphin. *Neoliberalism and Cyberpunk Science Fiction*.

necessity be determined partly by skill and partly by luck. Some of the circumstances which make the services of a person more or less valuable to his fellows, or which may make it desirable that he change the direction of his efforts, are not of human design or foreseeable by men.¹⁵⁰

As described in this passage, there is no direct action to create precarious life. The production of this form of life is the consequence of the actions of the individual who lacked the skill to compete or the knowledge to make the proper decisions, or the result of misfortune. There is no imposition of conditions or the enforcement of policies whose aim is to produce *bare life* for targeted individuals or parts of the population.

However, it is evident that in a system that disavows social justice and is reticent on the provision of welfare, that the production of inequality and precarious lives is inevitable, thus the argument predicating the role of pastoral power in neoliberalism is challenged.

I still maintain that although neoliberalism eliminates the possibility of a welfare system and of distributive justice, it still relies on pastorate notions. As illustrated by Hayek, “*The Good Society is one in which the chances of anyone selected at random are likely to be as great as possible.*”¹⁵¹ A neoliberal system provides care and salvation by offering the opportunity to everyone to participate in the market and to succeed. If one is willing to submit to the market, and to respond as best as they can, then they have the opportunity and the possibility of achieving their salvation and live the good life. This is, after all, the premise of the American dream and the groundwork for the Californian ideology and cyberlibertarian aspirations.

5.9 The Neoliberal Cyborg

The archetypical *bios*, or qualified life, of neoliberalism is the entrepreneur of the self. To thrive in the catallaxy Hayek’s *Homo Oeconomicus* has to find ways to increase their chances to succeed through processes of self-improvement and by finding means to access more information. To flourish in the market order, access to the information provided by price changes, sources of supply and demand, or resource outlay is key.¹⁵² “Competition operates as a discovery procedure not only by giving anyone who has the opportunity to exploit special circumstances the possibility to do so profitably, but also by conveying to the other parties the information that there is some such opportunity.”¹⁵³ The increase in skill and information can therefore improve one’s chances

¹⁵⁰ Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty Vol.2*, 70.

¹⁵¹ Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty Vol.2*, 132. (Italics in the original text.)

¹⁵² Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty Vol.2*, 117.

¹⁵³ Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty Vol.2*, 117.

on the market (these are determining factors but not absolute, since, as Hayek repeatedly states, luck plays a crucial role too)¹⁵⁴, providing an edge in the competitive game.

This leads to the development of means that can provide an advantage over others in the competitive system of the market, leading to the creation of technological products that aid in the provision of self-improvement and access to better sources of and processing of information. These technological products in the form of apps, platforms, artificial intelligence, and other digital technologies provide their users with the promise of achieving the qualified life of the entrepreneur of the self who makes it on the market.

All of these technologies function and follow the logic of pastoral technologies, they rely on forms of self-exposure and confession by collecting our most intimate data or by having us expose ourselves publicly by sharing our data and information (on social media platforms we are expected to confess publicly to achieve a following which increases our social capital); tracking apps provide the tools for self-examination and guidance towards bettering ourselves, and various artificial intelligence products that are being developed aim to provide us with profound knowledge about ourselves and via algorithms conduct us towards the self- entrepreneurial success.

The technologically enhanced pastoral power of neoliberalism is evident in the notion of self-monitoring and self-surveillance. Through the use of wearable technology, home monitors, smartphone apps and the realisation of the internet of things, every individual has the ability to capture a picture of their “everyday health, happiness, or productivity.”¹⁵⁵ These technologies lead individuals towards being “highly invested in their life” and driving them to devote themselves “to maximizing their human and social capital.”¹⁵⁶ The accessibility to this self-knowledge is perceived as a means of increasing one’s competitive edge and is therefore part of the existence of the neoliberal entrepreneur of the self.

I present these technologies as forms of pastoral technologies because they are developed and adopted in the pursuit of self-knowledge for the sake of guidance and conduct. “[T]he pursuit of self-knowledge reshapes self-knowledge in data’s own image”¹⁵⁷ resulting in a reality in which these technologies “advise, correct, and even overrule individuals about their own self-knowledge.”¹⁵⁸ Thus, with the help of these technologies, “individuals model themselves...based

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Hong, *Technologies of Speculation*, 77.

¹⁵⁶ Alphin. *Neoliberalism and Cyberpunk Science Fiction*. 44.

¹⁵⁷ Hong, *Technologies of Speculation*, 77.

¹⁵⁸ Hong, *Technologies of Speculation*, 78.

on the logic of the market, information, and machinic systems.”¹⁵⁹ Qualified life under neoliberalism follows the rules of the market and competition by submitting itself willingly to a technological overseer that has the power to reshape this life according to these rules.

These dynamics are reminiscent of Gilles Deleuze’s notion of “Societies of Control”.¹⁶⁰ For Deleuze, civil power transforms itself into a lay priest who exercises a form of power similar to the pastoral power identified by Foucault.¹⁶¹ Through a modulating principle, individual behaviour is changed and adjusted according to the market's needs, such as promoting rivalry between colleagues as healthy competition that breeds motivation.¹⁶² In this environment, every person redefines themselves according to these control mechanisms, paving the way for new conditions such as a permanent state of training to stay ahead of others.¹⁶³ This socio-technological reality is only made possible through the emergence of new computer technologies that allow for an open system of control that is not restricted by space or time.¹⁶⁴

The application and widespread use of these technologies illustrate the kind of cybernetic thinking that has come to dominate the neoliberal age. In a technologically driven age, machinic intelligence is perceived as superior to human intelligence, and therefore, its decisions are also better. This perception stems from the esteem held for the objective knowledge and objective decision-making associated with technoscience.¹⁶⁵ This judgment is reinforced by the fact that machinic intelligence has access to more information and processing power than human intelligence and is therefore deemed to have superior capabilities.¹⁶⁶

This value judgment on technology uncovers the mutual relation that exists between market logic and technological thinking. The market as a catallaxy, as envisioned by Hayek, embodies this very same quality. This inherent relation is evident in Gentili’s discussion on Hayek’s catallaxy, whereby he states that “the order of the neoliberal market must appear impersonal, neutral and impassive.”¹⁶⁷ However, more crucially, the market must be perceived as adhering to a rationality, some form of inbuilt design that produces an “unquestionable and unequivocal judgment.”¹⁶⁸

¹⁵⁹ Alphin. *Neoliberalism and Cyberpunk Science Fiction*. 41.

¹⁶⁰ Gilles, Deleuze, “Postscript on the Societies of Control”, *October* Vol . 59, (Winter, 1992), 3-7.

¹⁶¹ Deleuze, “Postscript on the Societies of Control”, 5.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Deleuze, “Postscript on the Societies of Control”, 7.

¹⁶⁴ Deleuze, “Postscript on the Societies of Control”.

¹⁶⁵ Hong, *Technologies of Speculation*, 78.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Dario Gentili, “The Order of the Cosmos: From Harmony to Governance by Algorithm.” *Electra, The Numbers edition*, no.15, 51-61 (2021), 56.

¹⁶⁸ Gentili. “The Order of the Cosmos”, 56.

With the rise of neoliberalism came a prioritisation of a “machinic rationality, composed of formal, algorithmic rules for processing information”¹⁶⁹ as the epistemic model to be prioritised.

Decision making is no longer the prerogative of the human mind but is instead delegated to instruments that know us better than ourselves and that make decisions based on “the epistemic virtues of accuracy and objectivity,” interwoven with the values of “individual empowerment, spirituality, and the care of the self.”¹⁷⁰ As Gentili reiterates, the algorithmic design of the market and the technologies that emerged from it learn “from the behaviours and conduct of individuals,” improving its efficiency and decision-making potential through their interactions with humans.¹⁷¹

As stated previously in this chapter, this form of power is different from the power wielded by the sovereign, and therefore does not rely on coercion¹⁷² or disciplinary power. Instead, through a promise of “personal empowerment”¹⁷³ individuals willingly submit themselves to the “insights” that upturn our own ideas about ourselves.¹⁷⁴ Like the pastor, these technologies have an intimate and individualised knowledge of each person leading to a process of complete openness and an unveiling of the depths of one’s soul.¹⁷⁵ In the same manner that the believers know themselves through the pastor, in contemporary society, “my epistemic relation to “myself” becomes rerouted and externalized.”¹⁷⁶

This intimacy is so profound and embedded that it creates a fusion between the person, the technology, and the social context; the market, and competitive orders. This makes neoliberal forms of life a kind of cyborg being that fits Donna J. Haraway’s definition of cyborg as “a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality.”¹⁷⁷ The pastoral technologies discussed in this chapter make possible this new form of being or ontology. Haraway predicted that miniaturisation, the development of artificial consciousness, the mobile and portable nature of these technologies, and the coding that changes human behaviour would produce cyborg lives.¹⁷⁸ In our market cybernetic system and technology-driven reality, “[t]he cyborg is our ontology.”¹⁷⁹ This implies that neoliberal forms of life, or the neoliberal *homo*

¹⁶⁹ Hong, *Technologies of Speculation*, 78.

¹⁷⁰ Hong, *Technologies of Speculation*, 79.

¹⁷¹ Gentili. “The Order of the Cosmos”, 56.

¹⁷² Gentili. “The Order of the Cosmos”, 56.

¹⁷³ Hong, *Technologies of Speculation*, 79.

¹⁷⁴ Hong, *Technologies of Speculation*, 79.

¹⁷⁵ Foucault. “Politics and Reason”, 69-70.

¹⁷⁶ Hong, *Technologies of Speculation*, 79.

¹⁷⁷ Donna J. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, (London: Free Association Books, 1991), 149.

¹⁷⁸ Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, 153 – 154.

¹⁷⁹ Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, 150.

oeconomicus, are hybrid beings whose identity and sense of self are fully integrated and formed by the information and perceptions provided by the market and the technologies that replicate its normative order.

This research disputes the emancipatory potential Haraway associates with the notion of the cyborg. The neoliberal cyborg does not have access to the means of self-construction because, as discussed previously in this thesis, the market is outside human control, and the market provides the signals and information that form the neoliberal subject. Furthermore, the algorithms and technologies that inform and shape one's self-knowledge are designed to replicate the market's cosmology and to further the agenda of the competitive order.

5.10 Conclusion

Self-monitoring and self-surveillance open up the possibility for the revaluation and redefinition of the self. Desires, intentions, and beliefs¹⁸⁰ are remoulded according to the exigencies of the market. The devaluing of human intelligence¹⁸¹ allows for a transition of decision-making power. As Foucault's discussion of the pastorate shows, the pastor has the authority and power to make decisions, and the flock only follows. This is evident in the neoliberal zeitgeist, whereby all decisions are to be made by the market with the aid of machine intelligence.

The neoliberal subject is not a free and rational subject, but a submissive individual who can only succeed by obeying the market and by attempting to use their skills and knowledge to place themselves in an advantageous position in the competitive order. Forms of neoliberal life are governed by a logic of competition¹⁸² which defines them and categorises them. The qualification between the good life and the precarious (bare) life is not determined by the individual but by how effectively they respond to or adapt to the market signals.

Under neoliberal governments, society is transformed into an *ecclesia*, a flock of believers that are obedient and comply with the will and law of the market. The market as a catallaxy has its rationality and design, and those subjected to it must willingly follow this rationality. The neoliberal subject is part of the network, the cybernetic system through which the catallaxy coordinates all activities. Thus, in a paradoxical twist, the entrepreneur of the self has no authority over themselves, but is merely entrepreneurial in terms of deciding whether to abide by

¹⁸⁰ Hong, *Technologies of Speculation*, 27.

¹⁸¹ Hong, *Technologies of Speculation*, 27.

¹⁸² Alphin. *Neoliberalism and Cyberpunk Science Fiction*. 45.

the mechanisms of the market. The individual's freedom is whether to accept the plan of salvation offered to them or not.

General Conclusion

This thesis has aimed to explore neoliberalism within the parameters of economic theology and establish the implications of such a reading. The primary purpose of this research is to present the argument that the success and widespread adoption of neoliberal concepts globally is the direct result of neoliberalism establishing itself as the natural way of things.

The enterprise of the market and associated activities are presented as natural and part of the order of things. Hayek's conceptualisation of the market as a *catallaxy* institutes the market as an integral component of the world. The market is not a human construct and exists outside human control, positioning humans as subservient to the market and its mechanisms.

The institutional dominance of the market arises from an evolutionary process through which humans, by their choices, have opted for the market to serve as the guiding system of human society. Similar to all other systems, whether natural or otherwise, the market possesses the capacity to coordinate, regulate, and organise. Therefore, the market, as articulated by Hayek, systematizes reality by arranging it according to pre-established market principles, such as the price and the supply and demand mechanisms. These organising models are referred to as the market order and the competitive order, both of which are inhabited by *homo oeconomicus*. This indicates that the market, functioning as a catallaxy, establishes itself as a cosmos, implying that the neoliberal vision is a cosmology.

This makes neoliberalism a totalitarian form of thinking because it is totalising. Its vision encompasses all aspects of reality. It has determining power over all the characteristics of human life, influencing both the public and private spheres. This quality of neoliberalism is congruent with Benjamin's claim that capitalism is a religion. A religion has a theological framework, dogmas, faith, and rituals, which provide the structure for designing and implementing laws and norms. The normative order of a religion defines both the public and the private, the social and individual. This research shows how neoliberalism created a secular version of all these, allowing it to shape and mould society and the individual.

Based on its secular theology and doctrinal structures, neoliberalism's religious paradigm is rooted in Hayek's approach and neoliberal theory. Unlike Friedman, Hayek is critical of the predictive powers of economics as a science.¹ For Hayek, humans have limited knowledge and cannot predict market outcomes as Friedman proposes.² Adopting Friedman's position risks

¹ Biebricher, *The Political Theory of Neoliberalism*, 110 & 122.

² Biebricher, *The Political Theory of Neoliberalism*, 122.

creating a science divested from the truth and detached from reality.³ For Hayek, knowledge of the market as a spontaneous order aims to understand its general patterns and system.⁴ The aim is not to predict individual and particular outcomes but to nourish the environment for the market to thrive.⁵ The role of politics is to provide this context; going further than that is ill-advised and counterproductive.

This implies that policymakers must have faith in the market's processes. Exposing everyone to the market's flows and mechanisms puts everyone in a vulnerable situation, which is made more precarious by the lack of a safety net enacted by the state. This vulnerability is further accentuated by the competitive order, an essential component of Hayek's neoliberal theory. These processes lead to the establishment of neoliberal forms of life.

These considerations have established the central question of this thesis: "How does neoliberal economic theology produce neoliberalised forms of life?"

The first hurdle was identifying and establishing a fixed concept of neoliberalism that is suitable for establishing a foundation. Following an extensive reading of primary and secondary literature, this research identified the following key characteristics that define neoliberalism.

1. Neoliberal thinking is not based on political values but on applying an economic vision. This economic vision leads to a political project to bring this vision to fruition.
2. Freedom is the value that dominates all neoliberal discourse and narratives. However, this freedom is redefined as economic freedom and the primacy of the free market. Other forms of civil rights are secondary to the free enterprise and property rights.
3. Deregulation and privatisation are the core strategies of neoliberal political projects and policymaking. These policies aim to establish, strengthen, or protect the free market.
4. The neoliberal state is a minimal state whose primary function is to maximise freedom regarding free enterprise and property rights. This implies dismantling the welfare state and relinquishing the state's social duties and roles. The primary focus of sovereignty is the maximisation of economic growth and competitiveness. Sovereignty is redefined in terms of the authority to take decisions that increase the competitiveness of the state on the world market. This includes but not restricted to policies such as tax exemptions to attract foreign direct investment or forms of citizenship by investment.

³ Biebricher, *The Political Theory of Neoliberalism*, 111.

⁴ Biebricher, *The Political Theory of Neoliberalism*, 132.

⁵ Biebricher, *The Political Theory of Neoliberalism*, 132.

These foundational principles are at the heart of neoliberal policymaking and are implemented in varying degrees by administrations that adopt a neoliberal economic and political vision. Some administrations may opt to provide incentives for home ownership by reducing tax rates or offering tax incentives, instead of providing social housing. Authoritarian states will not improve access to civil rights and political freedom, but will provide entrepreneurial opportunities and encourage private enterprise. The prerogative is economic freedom and the free market in all of these instances.

In tandem, these elements lead to the production of neoliberal realities like personal accountability and responsibility. Freedom implies responsibility; thus, increased freedom leads to increased responsibility. Individual failure is not the responsibility of the state or society, but of the individual. This implies that social responsibility and forms of welfare provision are considered illegitimate. The state does not have the right to redistribute wealth via taxation, as this is regarded as a breach of property rights and an encroachment on individual freedom.

These core principles provide the foundation for developing a neoliberal theology and normative order. They provide the nexus for producing a moral discourse in which individual responsibility and self-enterprise are the defining moral qualities and judgments. *Homo Oeconomicus* as entrepreneur of the self, is therefore also a moral category under the stewardship of neoliberalism. Consequently, we can establish that the production of neoliberal forms of life is embedded in the moral categories that emerge from neoliberalism's core tenets.

Economic theology secularises the theological concepts underlying economic theory and makes them more concrete through naturalisation. Whereas political theology produces the sovereign state, economic theology produces the naturalised conditions for the government of life. Neoliberal moral categories and moral discourse represent the government of life enacted via economic theology. They provide the vocabulary for the enactment of neoliberal governmentality. Notions like guilt or debt represent the process of subjectification implemented by the various types of apparatus.

Like political theology, economic theology also attaches itself to the sacred and claims an eschatological truth. This thesis emphasises the domain of salvation in neoliberal discourse and how it claims jurisdiction over this sphere via its pastoral role. Through its pastoral power, neoliberalism manifests the real-life consequences of economic theology. The market acts as the guide that takes all the flock towards their salvation if they pledge their obedience to it.

This thesis proposes that the market takes the role of pastor and that market mechanisms act as pastoral techniques. The principal claim is that neoliberalism's success results from its use of pastoral power and the pastorate as its dominant discourse. Through the pastorate, neoliberalism promises a way towards success and salvation.

Unlike other forms of power, like disciplinary power or biopower, pastoral power is founded on a positive and liberating message. This stance is evident in neoliberal thought, with its discourse of individualism, freedom, and personal success. Neoliberal policies curtail the state and increase individuals' negative and entrepreneurial freedom. This freedom, which achieves its potential within the free market, leads to individual fulfilment, economic success, and strong property rights. This narrative promises access to financial success unhindered by state regulations, taxation, or wealth redistribution.

Neoliberal pastoral power derives its authority from its market optimism. The free market doctrine is imbued with providential discourse and a focus on general outcomes like economic growth. This is exemplified by the notion that the market knows best and that competition produces innovation, cheaper prices, efficiency, and increased productivity. Therefore, the neoliberal pastorate exists due to the providential thinking permeating free market theory and its teleology of general benevolence.

This narrative has come to dominate political vision and strategy, whereby success is defined in terms of gross domestic product and economic growth. Governments derive their legitimacy only insofar as they guide citizens' efforts towards achieving these economic goals.

This thesis's argumentation structure and logic reflect the outlined development from providential thinking to the pastorate. There is an identifiable process starting from neoliberal theological thinking and ending with the creation of new forms of life that reflect this theological thinking and its normative order. This thesis contributes to the existing body of knowledge by identifying and formulating this process.

Hayek's notion of the market as a *catallaxy* establishes the market as a principium, a fundamental principle that underlies and informs all the other parts of the system. The market as a cosmology implies that market forces and inherent mechanisms order all aspects of reality and existence.⁶ The market, as a *catallaxy*, spontaneously coordinates all activities in a decentralised manner. This implies that the systems it employs are beyond human comprehension, and all that

⁶ Gentili, "The Order of the Cosmos", 52 & 55.

can be done is to believe and accept this order of things. This produces faith in the market as a principle, the foundational truth every person must abide by.

As discussed in the second chapter of this thesis, the unknowable nature of the market produces a form of negative theology. There is a complete acceptance of the market order and its mechanisms, curtailing any attempts to control or plan the market. This *acceptance* leads to an internalisation of the system, with individuals accepting that they are part of this market order and have no control over its procedures. Furthermore, the process of internalisation and acceptance also implies that the market order and its rules become part of one's identity and way of being. Due to this, the market is articulated as a normative order and value system.

This internalisation reproduces market rules and logic within the individual, leading them to interpret themselves through this logic and determine their actions according to it. As Foucault states, obedience becomes a virtue, producing a system of self-regulation and self-management.⁷ Close adherence to the laws of the market is rewarded with the possibility of succeeding in the competitive market and achieving financial and personal security. In this logic, the good life is equated with economic stability, which supersedes all other considerations. This furthers the reality of neoliberal politics, whereby economic policy dictates political and social policy.

In *The Use of Knowledge in Society*,⁸ Hayek describes economic behaviour as “rapid adaptation to changes in the particular circumstances of time and place,”⁹ and those making the decision do not require knowledge of all the circumstances or effects of this decision.¹⁰ For Hayek, the economic actor is not a knowledgeable participant but merely someone to whom the necessary information was communicated.¹¹ The market functions as a decentralised knowledge system that communicates the required information via communication mechanisms such as the price system.¹²

Hayek declares, “The result of every step in the course of the actions will, as it were, be evaluated against the expected results, and any difference will serve as an indicator of the corrections

⁷ Foucault, “Politics and Reason”.

⁸ Friedrich August, Hayek. “The Use of Knowledge in Society” in *The American Economic Review*, Vol. 35, No.4, (September, 1945), 519-530.

⁹ Hayek. “The Use of Knowledge in Society”, 524.

¹⁰ Hayek. “The Use of Knowledge in Society”, 524-525.

¹¹ Hayek. “The Use of Knowledge in Society”, 525.

¹² Hayek. “The Use of Knowledge in Society”, 525.

required.”¹³ The Hayekian *homo oeconomicus* is part of a cybernetic system whose role is limited to following the feedback it receives.

This is evident in his assertion that, “[t]he price system is just one of those formations which man has learned to use...after he stumbled upon it without understanding it.”¹⁴ Hayek is critical of the notion of rational or conscious direction. Economic actors must trust the market system and follow its indications.¹⁵ The ideal for Hayek is to achieve a means, “to provide inducements which will make the individuals do the desirable things without anyone having to tell them what to do.”¹⁶ In this sense, *homo oeconomicus* is redefined as a form of cyborg fully embedded in the market system who responds without questioning or rationalising. The aim is that all parties, buyers or sellers, act in service of the system’s needs, leaving minimal space for the existence of a conscious subject that can change their minds.¹⁷ The neoliberal pastorate expects this kind of obedience.

The development and widespread use of new data-driven technologies enhance this complete immersion of the subject within an information system like the market. Wearable technologies and smartphones implement and reinforce the cybernetic worldview proposed by Hayek. The fifth chapter discusses the role of these technologies as pastoral technologies whose claim to fame is their promise to get to know us and decide for us what we need to become better versions of ourselves. The caveat is that we have not agreed on the normative values built into their programme and code, but by the corporation or entity that developed it. These codes replicate the value system of contemporary neoliberal society, and their interpretation of better versions of ourselves is based on notions of neoliberal subjectivity. This produces forms of algorithmic governmentality that aim to create new means of subjectification.

In this new reality, the human subject delegates personal choice to digital technologies that replicate and substantiate the values and worldview of the market system. The subject internalises the information systems Hayek identifies in the market order via the proliferation of technologies that read, interpret, and redesign all aspects of our lives. These new technologies further the economisation of life and reinforce the economic theological dimension of neoliberalism.

¹³ Hayek, *The Sensory Order*, 95.

¹⁴ Hayek. “The Use of Knowledge in Society”, 528.

¹⁵ Hayek. “The Use of Knowledge in Society”, 527.

¹⁶ Hayek. “The Use of Knowledge in Society”, 527.

¹⁷ Mirowski, Philip. *Machine Dreams, Economics Becomes a Cyborg Science*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 239.

The interlinked relationship between economic thinking and technology is evident in the development of new algorithms and their functionalities. Phenomena such as the nudge exemplify how behavioural economics produces the intellectual framework for ideating and developing new types of technologies. Scholars in behavioural economics have discussed the concept of nudge theory, which is presented as a form of libertarian paternalism.¹⁸ A nudge aims to intervene subtly and influence the subject's choices and behaviour.¹⁹ The purpose is to guide the subject towards improving their choices, such as opting for healthier alternatives.²⁰ Behavioural or consumer choices are determined by the architecture and the environment one inhabits, informed by a supposedly paternalistic agenda, making it a form of pastoral technology.

The tech industry has adopted the nudge as a behavioural concept. They have designed apps that replicate nudge architecture in their algorithms and designs. Nudge - Your Workplace App, developed and launched by Axonify Incorporated, promises to “keep you up-to-date and in-the-loop on new information. And every time you read and respond to an announcement, survey, or quiz, you’ll earn points. Be sure to answer all of your Nudges to climb to the top of the scoreboard!”²¹ The description of this app illustrates how new digital technologies are replicating the normative order and logic of the market.

These technologies are not designed with surveillance as their primary function but as forms of pastoral power that imbue the subject with the values and habits that lead to success. The aims of these new technologies reinforce the competitive order that is at the core of the market system. Through gamification, competition is not presented as work but as a game, thus embedding work ethic and human capital production in every aspect of the private sphere. This aspect is reminiscent of the concept of *Opus Dei*, explored in the fourth chapter, which explores how every aspect of human life is considered labour and a form of investment to achieve future salvation.

The neoliberal *homo oeconomicus* is a totalising form of life. Everything is considered part of the market, and each component can determine one’s positioning within the competitive order. Entrepreneurship of the self produces a process of subjectification in which nothing is excluded from the jurisdiction of the market. The free market has the authority to claim all, effectively making it a form of Leviathan as discussed in the second chapter of this thesis.

¹⁸ Masyhuri, Muhammad. “Nudge Concept and its Controversy - The Behavioural Economics Applications”, *Journal of Business Management and Economic Development*. Vol . 1, No. 03, (September 2023), 379-393.

¹⁹ Muhammad. “Nudge Concept and its Controversy”, 380.

²⁰ Muhammad. “Nudge Concept and its Controversy”, 384.

²¹ Axonify Incorporated, description of Nudge - Your Workplace App found on the Google Play Store.

This research establishes how neoliberalism relies on a theological paradigm for its success. This paradigm frames the market as a *deus absconditus*, a hidden god whose hand guides every individual's activities to benefit the whole system. The market is designed as a providential machine whose purpose is to create a general positive outcome, even if this may require the sacrifice of some individuals. The market as a principium implies that all aspects of life are founded and designed as part of it.

Since the market is a *deus absconditus*, human life is considered a form of labour or *Opus Dei*. Submission and obedience to the market order are the prerequisites to salvation; thus, as part of the market, everyone must abide by the inherent rules of the market. The market leads towards salvation via pastoral techniques, making it a secularised version of the holy shepherd who leads the flock towards good (heavenly) pastures. In conclusion, the market is a secularised version of a hidden omniscient god who has authority over all life.

These reflections demonstrate the validity of economic theology as an appropriate conceptual framework for explaining the neoliberal zeitgeist that has dominated political discourse over the past five decades. By applying Agamben's concepts, this thesis argues that neoliberal politics represents a form of economic theology, wherein the political paradigm views all social and political issues as managerial decisions.²² This managerial thinking seeps into all facets of our lives, reducing our private and public activities to investments or economic practices. This redefines all human activities as forms of labour, *Opus Dei*,²³ implying that all human endeavours must contribute to the progress of the market order.

Agamben's work on monastic orders²⁴ provides the necessary metaphor to illustrate how life is governed through subjectification under an economic theological paradigm. Neoliberal government, like monastic life, regulates and reframes every element of one's life.²⁵ This regulatory function is further enhanced by using and applying digital technologies like tracking devices, which transform life into unpaid labour through data collection, redirect our efforts, and alter our behaviour to make us successful entrepreneurs of the self. Even our most intimate and private activities, like sleep or nutrition, are monitored and regulated, which is reminiscent of the monastic practices analysed by Agamben.

²² Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*.

²³ Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*.

²⁴ Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*.

²⁵ Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*.

The application of secularised religious notions supports the premise that neoliberalism, predicated on the supremacy of the market, is a religion that transforms everyone, willingly or unwillingly, into members of its church. In the same manner that baptism or holy office produce new forms of life, neoliberalism, through its techniques and technologies, has the potential to create its forms of life in the mould of *homo oeconomicus*.

Neoliberalism as a religion, has the power and authority of judgment, leading to categorising between the saved and the damned. Those who are saved achieve a good life of financial and personal stability; the others are condemned to live a form of precarious life, bare life, in which economic and personal instability become their permanent condition. Neoliberalism passes its judgment through policy instruments and techniques through which “economic dependency and moral failure become entangled in the form of debt, producing a melancholic condition in which governments and societies unleash hatred and violence upon members of their own populations.”²⁶ This reality accentuates Stimilli’s theory on debt and life under neoliberalism, where she shows how debt and guilt shape modern life and subjectivity, and that neoliberalism is a religion of debt.²⁷

Avenues for Future Research

This research has identified and explored various themes influenced and shaped by neoliberal theory. The dominance of free market doctrine and the redefining of the human as *homo oeconomicus* have left an indelible impact on most aspects of life. This implies that other research fields linked to this thesis require future consideration. This thesis may be the foundation for these research themes, leading to more specialised and profound evaluations.

Contemporary neoliberalism is dominated by technological innovation and development. The fifth chapter touches upon this theme when discussing pastoral technologies. The role of pastoral power in the context of digital technologies is a field that requires more development. As illustrated by my review, most theorists focus on other forms of power, such as surveillance techniques and disciplinary power. However, I maintain that pastoral techniques are the mainstay of new technologies and that their popularity and success are based on a secular search for meaning and guidance. Therefore, this research path should be undertaken and developed further.

²⁶ Davies. “The New Neoliberalism”, 130.

²⁷ Stimilli, *Debito e Colpa*.

This thesis identifies the rise of cyberlibertarian politics as a direct consequence of Hayek's formulation of the market as a spontaneous order and his cybernetic thinking. Cyberlibertarian politics has become a mainstay in the Western political arena, with proponents of this ideology emerging in various countries. The normalization of right accelerationist discourse, primarily associated with Nick Land, has further accentuated this political model. This new political grouping impacts contemporary politics and redefines society according to market dogmas and neoliberal values like personal accountability. This warrants more research and evaluation, potentially predicting future iterations and consequences of this new political vision.

Additionally, as a direct result of complementing and further developing the theological theme of this research, I wish to explore and evaluate the eschatological discourse of neoliberalism. The purpose is to accentuate further the pastoral role of neoliberal thinking and how this is reinforced through a form of eschatology and possible messianism. Hayek and his counterparts have developed their theories in opposition to and as a counter-thesis to other systems of thought like socialism, communism, or Keynesianism. They aimed to propose neoliberalism as a new world vision following World War II's destruction and the emergence of the Cold War. This implies that they envisioned a new world order shaped by market realities. This eschatological thinking would complement the providential discourse evidenced by this research and would emphasise the religious thinking of neoliberal theory and practice.

Final remarks

The aims and content of this thesis are relevant to the contemporary zeitgeist. Although some have declared the end of the neoliberal world order due to the fragmentation of the global market into spheres of influence, and the implementation of tariffs, stricter border controls, and migration restrictions,²⁸ neoliberalism still maintains hegemonic power over policy and politics.

The themes of competition and market attractiveness have come to dominate political discourse. Political vision is reduced to economic vision, showing that economic theology has become the dominant paradigm.

Governments administer the state in a corporatist style with the primary goal of increasing their competitiveness and improving their standing in the international competitive order. As is evident in the current policies of the Starmer administration in the United Kingdom, economic considerations outweigh social policy, leading to budgetary cuts in welfare and social spending. This replicates the austerity measures implemented during the 2008 and 2012 financial crises,

²⁸ Harris. "The Post-Neoliberal Imperative"; Späth. *Trend Report 10: The End of an Era*.

whose sole aim was to save the markets and the banking system. Similarly, the French government has proposed plans to increase the retirement age, again indicating a prioritisation of the economy over well-being and quality of life. These administrations justify their policies by arguing that they need to improve the competitiveness and entrepreneurial attractiveness of the country.

The need to be competitive also explains an inability to implement environmental protection measures, climate change initiatives, or enforce agreements such as the Paris Agreement, due to economic and trade considerations, demonstrating that neoliberal free market thinking dominates all decisions. The position adopted by states is to allow market mechanisms to dictate which energy sources, modes of transport, and other consumer choices are to be prioritised instead of imposing regulations. This implies that renewable energy sources must compete with fossil fuels in the energy market.

This resistance to international agreements and harmonisation uncovers the coexistence of neoliberalism and nationalism.²⁹ Neoliberal agendas are quick to adopt nationalist discourse and values, as these guarantee an opposition to forms of international regularisation or harmonisation.³⁰ These pundits deem proposals for policies for international tax harmonisation as contrary to neoliberal principles because they impose a redistribution of wealth and are anti-competitive.³¹ A defence of free trade and capital mobility is reframed as a discourse of national sovereignty and authority.³² This reframing explains how nationalist and right-wing politics, which are seemingly reactionary to neoliberalism, merge with free market policies to create the phenomena that we are experiencing with the second Trump administration.

The role of national and individual competition also shapes the development of emergent technologies, such as artificial intelligence, which are shaped not only by scientific or technical factors but by market dynamics, competition, and economic factors. Artificial intelligence products are substituting human employees and providing cost-saving opportunities for companies. The innovation and production of hardware and software in these fields are being prioritised and have become part of national agendas and treated as national security assets, both for commercial and military reasons. In this scenario, artificial intelligence is another tool to outperform others and be more competitive.

²⁹ Adam, Harmes. "The Rise of Neoliberal Nationalism", *Review of International Political Economy*, Vol . 19, No.1 (February 2012), 59-86.

³⁰ Harmes. "The Rise of Neoliberal Nationalism", 79-80.

³¹ Harmes. "The Rise of Neoliberal Nationalism", 80-81.

³² Harmes. "The Rise of Neoliberal Nationalism", 79-80.

Market considerations have captured knowledge production and the creative industries. Contemporary academia has adopted an entrepreneurial model that has reduced academics to entrepreneurs of the self who either live in conditions of precarity, have to live by the mantra of publish or perish, or spend more time and energy on self-promotion than research. This applies to forms of research or creative activities.

These considerations show how the notions and themes covered in this thesis apply to all aspects of contemporary life, exposing how neoliberalism has reshaped and redefined all our institutions.

Bibliography

Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer, Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998.

Agamben, Giorgio. *Remnants of Auschwitz, the Witness and the Archive*. Translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen. New York: Zone Books, 1999.

Agamben, Giorgio. *Potentialities, Collected Essays in Philosophy*. Edited and translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999.

Agamben, Giorgio. *Means Without Ends, Notes on Politics*. Translated by Vincenzo Binetti & Cesare Casarino. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

Agamben, Giorgio. *Profanations*. Translated by Jeff Fort. New York: Zone Books, 2007.

Agamben, Giorgio. *What is an Apparatus?*. Translated by David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009.

Agamben, Giorgio, "Introductory Note on the Concept of Democracy", In *Democracy, In What State?*, edited by Amy Ellen. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011.

Agamben, Giorgio. *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*. Translated by Lorenzo Chiesa and Matteo Madarini. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2011.

Agamben, Giorgio. "Se la Feroce Religione del Denaro Divora il Futuro", *La Repubblica*, (February 16, 2012) <https://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2012/02/16/se-la-feroce-religione-del-denaro-divora.html>.

Agamben, Giorgio. *The Highest Poverty: Monastic Rules and Form-Of-Life*. Translated by Adam Kotsko. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013.

Agamben, Giorgio. *Creazione e Anarchia, L'opera nell'eta` della religione capitalista*. Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 2018.

Agamben, Giorgio. "Capitalismo comunista" in *Una Voce, Rubrica di Giorgio Agamben*, December, 15, 2020. <https://www.quodlibet.it/giorgio-agamben-capitalismo-comunista>.

Althusser, Louis. *On The Reproduction Of Capitalism: Ideology And Ideological State Apparatuses*. London, UK: Verso Books, 2014.

- Alloa, Emanuele. 'Suum Cuique, Capitalismo, Cibernetica, Teologia' in *Teologie e Politica, Genealogie e Attualita'*. Edited by Elettra Stimili. Macerata: Quodlibet, 2019.
- Alphin, Caroline. *Neoliberalism and Cyberpunk Science Fiction, Living on the Edge of Burnout*. New York & London: Routledge, 2021.
- Arendt, Hannah. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. UK: Penguin Classics, 2017.
- Aristotle. *Politics*. Translated by Ernest Barker. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Ashby, William Ross. *An Introduction to Cybernetics*. London: Chapman and Hall, 1957.
- Barbrook, Richard and Cameron, Andy. "The Californian Ideology." *Science as Culture* Vol. 6 No. 1, (1996):50, doi:10.1080/09505439609526455.
- Bazzicalupo, Laura. "Economy as Logic of Government". *Paragraph* Vol. 39, No. 1. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44016399>
- Beck, Naomi. *Hayek and the Evolution of Capitalism*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2018.
- Becker, Gary Stanley. 'The Age of Human Capital' in *Education in the Twenty-first Century*. Edited by Edward P. Lazear. Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 2002.
- Benjamin, Walter. Translated by Rodney Livingstone. Edited by Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings. *Walter Benjamin, Selected Writings, Volume 1, 1913-1926*. Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, England: Harvard University Press, 1996.
- Berardi, Franco "Bifo". *The Soul At Work, From Alienation to Autonomy*. Translated by Francesca Cadel and Giuseppina Mecchia. South Pasadena: Semiotext(e), 2009.
- Biebricher, Thomas. *The Political Theory of Neoliberalism*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018.
- Bolt Company, "10 hacks to keep your Bolt driver rating high (and 3 reasons why customers give 1-star ratings)", *Bolt Blog*, published on 24th January 2019. Accessed 28th December 2024. <https://bolt.eu/en-ke/blog/keep-your-driver-rating-high/>
- Bonefeld, Werner. "Democracy and Dictatorship: Means and Ends of the State" in *Critique*, Vol. 34, No.3, Routledge, (2006): 237-252. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03017600600994661>.
- Bonini, Tiziano and Treré, Emiliano. *Algorithms of Resistance: The Everyday Fight Against Platform Power*. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: MIT Press, 2024.

Bradley, Arthur. "Symposium on Elettra Stimilli's Debt and Guilt: A Political Philosophy – Introduction." *Political Theology*, Vol. 24, No. 4, 401–404, Routledge, 2023.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1462317X.2022.2143135>

Brazys, Sam and Hardiman, Niamh "The 'PIIGS' acronym had a clear negative impact on the response of financial markets to the "PIIGS countries' during the crisis" in The London School of Economics and Political Science Blog, 12th December 2014,
<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2014/12/12/the-piigs-acronym-had-a-clear-negative-impact-on-the-market-treatment-of-the-piigs-countries-during-the-crisis/>.

Bröckling, Ulrich. "Human Economy, Human Capital, A Critique of Biopolitical Economy" in *Governmentality, Current Issues and Future Challenges*. Edited by Ulrich Bröckling, Susanne Krasmann & Thomas Lemke. New York: Routledge, 2011.

Bröckling, Ulrich. *The Entrepreneurial Self, Fabricating a New Type of Subject*. Translated by Steven Black. Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2016.

Brown, Brown. "American Nightmare: Neoliberalism, Neoconservatism, and De-Democratization." *Political Theory*, Vol. 34, No.6, (December 2006), 690-714.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/20452506>

Brown, Wendy. *Undoing the Demos. Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*. Brooklyn, New York: Zone Books, 2015.

Brown, Wendy. *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism: The Rise of Antidemocratic Politics in the West*. New York: Wellek Library Lectures, Columbia University Press, 2019.

Christiaens, Tim. "The crypto-theology of Friedrich Hayek" in: *The Routledge Handbook of Economic Theology*. Edited by Schwarzkopf. S, 367-376. London & New York, Routledge, 2019a.

Christiaens, Tim. "Hayek's vicarious secularization of providential theology". *Philosophy and Social Criticism*. Vol.45 No.1, 71-95. (Sage Publishers, 2019b).
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0191453718768360>

Christian Reformed Church. *The Heidelberg Catechism*. 2011.
<https://www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/confessions/heidelberg-catechism>

Clemens-Carl Härle, 'Religione Senza Religione' in *Il Culto del Capitale, Walter Benjamin: Capitalismo e Religione*, ed. Dario Gentili, Mauro Ponzi e Elettra Stimilli. Macerata, Quodlibet, 2014.

- Coeckelbergh, Mark. *Self-Improvement: Technologies of the Soul in the Age of Artificial Intelligence*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2022.
- Connolly, William E. *Capitalism and Christianity, American Style*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008.
- Cooper, Melinda. *Life as Surplus, Biotechnology and Capitalism in the Neoliberal Era*. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2008.
- Cornelissen, Lars. "How can the people be restricted?": the Mont Pèlerin Society and the problem of democracy, 1947–1998". *History of European Ideas*, Vol. 43 No. 5, 507-524. (2017a). <https://doi.org/10.1080/01916599.2017.1365745>
- Cornelissen, Lars. "The Secularization of Providential Order: F. A. Hayek's Political-Economic Theology". *Political Theology*, Vol.18, No.8, 660-676. (2017b). <https://doi.org/10.1080/1462317X.2017.1325990>
- Cristi, F.R. "Hayek and Schmitt on the Rule of Law" *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue canadienne de science politique*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Sep., 1984): 521-535. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008423900031899>.
- Dale, Gareth. "'Our world was made by nature': constructions of spontaneous order," *Globalizations*, Vol. 15 No. 7: 924-940, (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2018.1498172>
- Dardot, Pierre and Laval, Christian. Translated by Gregory Elliott. *The New Way of the World: On Neoliberal Society*. London and New York: Verso, 2017.
- Davies, William, "The New Neoliberalism", *New Left Review*, 101, (Sept/Oct 2016): 121-134, <https://newleftreview.org/issues/ii101/articles/william-davies-the-new-neoliberalism>.
- Davies, William. *The Limits of Neoliberalism, Authority, Sovereignty and the Logic of Competition*. London: Sage Publications, 2017.
- Dean, Mitchell. *Governmentality, Power and Rule in Modern Society, Second Edition*. London: Sage, 2010.
- Dean, Mitchell, "Rethinking Neoliberalism," *Journal of Sociology*, 50(2), (2014): 150-163. Sage Publishers.
- Dean, Mitchell, "What is Economic Theology? A New Governmental-Political Paradigm?," *Theory, Culture & Society* (0),0, (2018): 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276418787622>.

Deleuze, Gilles, "Postscript on the Societies of Control", *October* Vol . 59, (Winter, 1992), 3-7.
<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=01622870%28199224%2959%3C3%3APOTSOC%3E2.0.CO%3B2-T>

Deutsch, Richard Wolfgang. *The Nerves of Government: Models of Political Communication and Control*. New York: Free Press, 1963.

Diggins, John Patrick. "From Pragmatism to Natural Law: Walter Lippmann's Quest for the Foundations of Legitimacy." *Political Theory*, Vol . 19, No.4. 1991.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/192056>

Edwards, Sebastian. *The Chile Project: The Story of the Chicago Boys and the Downfall of Neoliberalism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023.

Einar, Dag Thorsen and Lie, Amund. *What is Neoliberalism?*, Oslo: University of Oslo (2007)
<https://pdf4pro.com/view/what-is-neo-liberalism-1ca490.html>.

Escobar, Arturo. *Encountering Development. The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton, USA: Princeton University Press, 1995.

Esposito, Roberto. *Two: The Machine of Political Theology and the Place of Thought*. Translated by Zakiya Hanafi. New York: Fordham University Press, 2015.

Eubanks, Virginia. *Automating Inequality: How High-Tech Tools Profile, Police, and Punish the Poor*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2018.

Farrant, Andrew, McPhail, Edward & Berger, Sebastian. "Preventing the "Abuses" of Democracy: Hayek, the "Military Usurper" and Transitional Dictatorship in Chile?" *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 71(3), (2012): 513-538. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1536-7150.2012.00824.x>.

Feber, Michel. "Disposing of the Discredited" in *Mutant Neoliberalism, Market Rule and Political Rupture*. Edited by William Callison and Zachary Manfredi. USA: Fordham University Press, 2020.

Federici, Silvia. *Caliban and the Witch, Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*. New York: Autonomedia, 2014.

Ferguson, Niall. *The Ascent of Money. A Financial History of the World*. UK: Penguin Random House, 2019.

Fisher, Mark. "What is Hauntology?", *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 66, No.1 (2012) California: University of California Press: 16-24. <https://filmquarterly.org/2012/10/01/fall-2012-volume-66-number-1/>.

Fisher, Mark. *Ghost of My Life. Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures*. Hampshire, UK: Zero Books, 2014.

Fleming, Peter. *The Death of Homo Economicus. Work, Debt and the Myth of Endless Accumulation*. London: Pluto Press, 2017.

Foucault, Michel. "The Confession of the Flesh". *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. Edited by Colin Gordon. Translated by Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, Kate Soper. New York: Pantheon Press, 1980.

Foucault, Michel. "Politics and Reason" in *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977-1984*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. Edited by Lawrence D. Kritzman. New York: Routledge, 1988.

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*. Translated by Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage Books, 1990.

Foucault, Michel. *Society Must be Defended, Lectures at the Collège de France 1975-1976*. Translated by David Macey. Edited by Mauro Bertani, Alessandro Fontana, François Ewald & David Macey. New York: Picador, 2003.

Foucault, Michel. *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College de France 1977-1978*. Translated by Graham Burchell. Edited by Arnold I. Davidson. New York: Palgrave, 2007.

Foucault, Michel. *The Birth of Biopolitics, Lectures at the Collège de France 1978-1979*. Translated by Graham Burchell. Edited by Arnold I. Davidson. New York: Picador, 2008.

Foucault, Michel. *Power: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984: Volume Three*. Edited by James D. Faubion. UK: Penguin Books, 2020.

Friedman, Milton. *Neoliberalism and its Prospect*. USA: Farmand, 1951.

Fukuyama, Francis. *The End of History and the Last Man*. England: Penguin Books, 2012.

Fukuyama, Francis. *Identity, Contemporary Identity Politics and the Struggle for Recognition*. London: Profile Books, 2018.

Nicholas Gane. "Competition: A Critical History of a Concept". *Theory, Culture & Society* Vol. 37, No.2, 31–59. (Sage Journals, 2020). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276419878247>

- Gentili, Dario. *Crisi come arte di governo*. Macerata: Quodlibet, 2018.
- Gentili, Dario. *The Age of Precarity: Endless Crisis as an Art of Government*. Translated by Stefania Porcelli with Clara Pope. London and New York: Verso, 2021.
- Gentili, Dario. "The Order of the Cosmos: From Harmony to Governance by Algorithm." *Electra, The Numbers edition*, no.15, 51-61, 2021.
- Goodchild, Philip. "Exposing Mammon: Devotion to Money in a Market Society". *Wiley Periodicals and Dialog* 47-57, Wiley, 2013.
- Götz, Norbert. "'Moral economy': its conceptual history and analytical prospects", *Journal of Global Ethics*, Vol . 11 No.2, 147-162 (2015). <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449626.2015.1054556>
- Graeber, David. *Debt, The First 5,000 Years*. Brooklyn and London: Melville House, 2011.
- Gray, Rosie. "Behind the Internet's Anti-Democracy Movement", *The Atlantic*, February 10, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/02/behind-the-internets-dark-anti-democracy-movement/516243/>.
- Han, Byung-Chul. *The Burnout Society*. Translated by Erik Butler, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2015.
- Han, Byung-Chul. *Psychopolitics*. Translated by Erik Butler. London & New York: Verso, 2017.
- Han, Byung-Chul. "Inside the Digital Panopticon" in *Capitalism and the Death Drive*. Translated by Daniel Steuer. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2021.
- Harari, Yuval Noah. *Money*. London: Vintage, 2018.
- Haraway, Donna J. *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. London: Free Association Books, 1991.
- Hardt, Michael & Negri, Antonio. *Empire*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000.
- Harmes, Adam. "The Rise of Neoliberal Nationalism", *Review of International Political Economy*, Vol . 19, No.1 (February 2012). 59-86. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23145991>
- Harris, Jennifer, M. "The Post-Neoliberal Imperative, Contesting the Next Economic Paradigm", *Foreign Affairs*, May/June issue (2025).
- Hartwich, Oliver. *Neoliberalism: The Genesis of a Political Swearword*. New South Wales: The Centre for Independent Studies Limited, 2009.

- Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Hayek, Friedrich August. "Economics and Knowledge", *Economica*, Volume 4, No.13, 1937, p 33-54. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2548786>
- Hayek, Friedrich August, "The Use of Knowledge in Society", *The American Economic Review*, Vol. 35, No. 4, (September 1945), 519-530. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1809376>
- Hayek, Friedrich August. *Individualism and Economic Order*. Chicago, Illinois, US: Chicago University Press, 1948.
- Hayek, Friedrich August. *The Sensory Order. An Inquiry into the Foundations of Theoretical Psychology*. Chicago, Illinois, US: Chicago University Press, 1952.
- Hayek, Friedrich August,. The Legal and Political Philosophy of David Hume. *Il Politico*, Vol. 28, No. 4, 691-704, Rubettino Editore, December 1963. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43205956>
- Hayek, Friedrich August. "The Principles of a Liberal Social Order", *Il Politico*, Vol . 31, No.4, Rubettino, (December 1966) :601-618. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43206528>.
- Hayek, Friedrich August. *The Confusion of Language in Political Thought*. London: Institute of Economic Affairs, 1968.
- Hayek, Friedrich August. *The Constitution of Liberty*. Chicago, USA: University of Chicago Press, 1978.
- Hayek, Friedrich August. *Law, Legislation and Liberty, Volume3. The Political Order of a Free People*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979.
- Hayek, Friedrich August. "The Fatal Conceit, The Errors of Socialism", in *The Collected Works of Friedrich August Hayek*. London: Routledge,1988.
- Hayek, Friedrich August. *Law, Legislation and Liberty: A new statement of the liberal principles of justice and political economy, Volumes 1 to 3*, London: Routledge,1998.
- Hayek, Friedrich August. *Economic Freedom*. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1991.
- Hayek, Friedrich August. *The Road to Serfdom*. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Hayek, Friedrich August. *The Constitution of Liberty*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.
- Hayles, N. Katherine. *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1999.

Heidegger, Martin. *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2013.

Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Hong, Sun-Ha. *Technologies of Speculation, The Limits of Knowledge in a Data-Driven Society*. New York: New York University Press, 2020.

Ingham, Geoffrey. *Money. Ideology, History, Politics*. UK: Polity Press, 2020.

Irving, Sean. "Limiting democracy and framing the economy: Hayek, Schmitt and Ordoliberalism", *History of European Ideas*, Vol.44, No.1, 113-127, UK: Routledge, (2018): 113-127. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01916599.2017.1381856>.

Kafka, Franz. "In The Penal Colony". *The Complete Short Stories*. Edited by Nahum N. Glatzer. Translated by Martin Secker and Warburg Limited. UK: Vintage, 1999.

Kirk, Neville. 'EP Thompson's moral economy and legacy'. *Economic and Industrial Economy*. Vol . 46, No.1, 27-48. (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0143831X241304912>

Kirkland, Scott.A. "Hayekian Neoliberalism as Negative Political Theology". *Political Theology*. Vol. 21, No.7, 623-633 . (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1080/1462317X.2020.1800197>

Klein, Naomi. *The Shock Doctrine, The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. Great Britain: Penguin Books, 2008.

Kotsko, Adam. *Neoliberalism's Demons. On the Political Theology of Late Capital*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018.

Land, Nick. "The Dark Enlightenment", *The Dark Enlightenment*, (2013). <https://www.thedarkenlightenment.com/the-dark-enlightenment-by-nick-land/>.

Landa, Ishay. *The Apprentice's Sorcerer, Liberal Tradition and Fascism*. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012.

Lazzarato, Maurizio. " Pastoral Power Beyond Public and Private". *Open! Platform for Art, Culture & Public Domain*. (23rd April 2010). <https://www.onlineopen.org/pastoral-power>

Lazzarato, Maurizio. Translated by Joshua David Jordan. *The Making of the Indebted Man*. Amsterdam: Semiotext(e), 2012.

Lemke, Lemke. "Foucault, Governmentality, and Critique", *Rethinking Marxism*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 49-64. (Fall 2002). <https://doi.org/10.1080/089356902101242288>

Lemke, Thomas. *BioPolitics: An Advanced Introduction*. New York & London: New York University Press, 2011.

Lepanjuuri, Katriina, Wishart, Robert, and Cornick, Peter. *The Characteristics of those in the Gig Economy, Final Report*. United Kingdom, Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy, February 2018.

Leshem, Dotan. *The Origins of Neoliberalism, Modeling the Economy from Jesus to Foucault*. New York, Columbia University Press, 2016.

Lippmann, Walter. *The Good Society, An Inquiry into the Principles of*. Boston, Little, Brown, and Company, 1938.

Lipmann, Walter. *Essays in The Public Philosophy*. Boston & Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1955.

Lorey, Isabel. *State of Insecurity: Government of the Precarious*. Translated by Aileen Derieg. London & New York: Verso Books, 2015.

Luban, Daniel. "What Is Spontaneous Order?". *American Political Science Review*, Vol.114, no. 1, 68-80, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055419000625>

Martin, Graham, P. and Waring, Justin. Realising governmentality: Pastoral power, governmental discourse and the (re)constitution of subjectivities in *The Sociological Review*, Vol. 66(6) 1292–1308. Sage: 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038026118755616>

Marwege, Rebecca Sophie. "Hobbes' God Is Hidden and Idle". *Political Theology*, Vol.23, no.8, 768–81. (Taylor and Francis Online: 2021). <https://doi.org/10.1080/1462317X.2021.1970091>

Marx, Karl. *Capital, A Critique of Political Economy, Volume 1*. Translated by Ernest Mandel. London: Penguin Classics, 1990.

Marx, Karl and Engels, Friedrich. *The Communist Manifesto*. London: Arcturus Publishing Ltd, 2018.

Massumi, Brian. *Ontopower: War, Powers, and the State of Perception*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2015.

Masyhuri, Muhammad. "Nudge Concept and its Controversy - The Behavioural Economics Applications", *Journal of Business Management and Economic Development*. Vol . 1, No. 03, 379-393 (September 2023). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59653/jbmed.v1i03.183>

Mavelli, Luca. "Neoliberalism as Religion: Sacralization of the Market and Post-truth Politics", *International Political Sociology*, 14, 57-76, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ips/olz021>

Mausfeld, Rainer. Translated by Daniel Wollschläger, "Why do the lambs remain silent? On democracy, psychology, and the ruling elite's methods for managing public opinion as well as public indignation." (22, June, 2015). <https://www.uni-kiel.de/psychologie/mausfeld>.

McCarragher, Eugene. *The Enchantments of Mammon: How Capitalism became the Religion of Modernity*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019.

McClintock, Robert. Machines and Vitalists: Reflections on the Ideology of Cybernetics, *The American Scholar*, Spring, 1966, Vol. 35, No. 2, USA: Phi Beta Kappa Society, (1966), 249-257. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41209364>

Mirowski, Philip. *Machine Dreams, Economics Becomes a Cyborg Science*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Mirowski, Philip. "Postface: Defining Neoliberalism", *The Road to Mont Pelerin: The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective*. Edited by Philip Mirowski & Dieter Plehwe. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2009.

Milanovic, Branko. "The Clash of Capitalisms. The Real Fight for the Global Economy's Future." *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 99, no.1 (January-February, 2020): 10-37.

Mitcham, Carl. *Thinking through Technology, The Path between Engineering and Philosophy*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994.

Nelson, Robert H. *Economics as Religion, from Samuelson to Chicago and Beyond*. University Park, USA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014.

Newheiser, David. "Why the World Needs Negative Political Theology," *Modern Theology*, Vol. 36, No.1, 5-12 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1111/moth.12579>

Newman, Saul. *Political Theology, A Critical Introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. Translated by Douglas Smith. *On the Genealogy of Morality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Norman, Jesse *Adam Smith, What He Thought and Why it Matters*. UK: Penguin Books, 2019.

Noys, Benjamin. *Malign Velocities, Accelerationism and Capitalism*. Winchester, UK and Washington, USA: Zero Books, 2014.

OECD, "Productivity, human capital and educational policies", Accessed 13th December 2022, <https://www.oecd.org/economy/human-capital/>

Owen, David. *Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morality*. Stocksfield: Acument, 2007.

Pasquale, Frank. "The Algorithmic Self". *The Hedgehog Review*. Vol. 17, No. 1 (2015). https://digitalcommons.law.umaryland.edu/fac_pubs

Petrosino, Silvano, *Elogio dell'uomo economico*. Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 2013.

Polanyi, Karl. *The Great Transformation, The political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1944.

Preterossi, Geminello. *Teologia Politica e Diritto*. Bari-Roma: Editori Laterza, 2022.

Priestland, David. *Merchant, Soldier, Sage. A New History of Power*. London, UK: Penguin Books, 2013.

Prozorov, Sergei. *Agamben and Politics, A Critical Introduction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014.

Ramey, Joshua. "Neoliberalism as a Political Theology of Chance: The Politics of Divination". *Palgrave Communications*. (Palgrave, 2015). <https://doi.org/10.1057/palcomms.2015.39>

Read, Jason. "A Genealogy of Homo-Economicus: Neoliberalism and the Production of Subjectivity". *Foucault Studies*, No 6, pp. 25-36. (February 2009) DOI: 10.22439/fs.v0i0.2465

Remington, Thomas F. "Ordoliberalism Revisited", *Changing Societies & Personalities*, Vol. 6, No. 1, (2022), 10-34. <https://doi.org/10.15826/csp.2022.6.1.161>

Roberts, Ron. *Psychology and Capitalism: The Manipulation of Mind*. Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2015.

Rose, Marika. "After the Eschaton: *The Prince of This World* Book Event", *An und für sich*, (April 27, 2017) <https://itself.blog/2017/04/27/after-the-eschaton-the-prince-of-this-world-book-event>.

Rouvroy, Antoinette & Berns, Thomas. 'Algorithmic Governmentality and Prospects of Emancipation Disparateness as a Precondition for Individuation Through Relationships?'. Translated by Liz, Carey-Libbrecht. *Réseaux*, Vol.1 No 177, p.163-196 (2013). https://shs.cairn.info/article/E_RES_177_0163?lang=en

Scheuerman, William E. *The End of Law: Carl Schmitt in the Twenty-First Century*. London, UK: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2019.

Schmitt, Carl. *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*. Translated by George Schwab. Chicago, Illinois, US: Chicago University Press, 2006.

Schmitt, Carl. *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes: Meaning and Failure of a Political Symbol*. Translated by George Schwab and Erna Hilfstein. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2008.

Schmitt, Carl. *Dictatorship*. Translated by M. Hoelzl and G. Ward. Oxford, UK: Polity Press, 2013.

Schwarz, Ori. "The Post-Choice Society: Algorithmic Prediction and the Decentering of Choice." *Theory, Culture & Society*, 1-19 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1177/02632764251322062>

Simmel, Georg. *Philosophy of Money, third edition*. London and New York: Routledge, 2004.

Sixsmith, Ben. "Is this Mencius Moldbug's moment? The neoreactionary blogger has resurfaced with a new essay", *The Spectator, USA*, (September 28, 2019). <https://spectator.us/mencius-moldbug-moment/>.

Slobodian, Quinn. *Hayek's Bastards: The Neoliberal Roots of the Populist Right*. UK: Allen Lane, 2025.

Smith, Adam. *The Wealth of Nations*. New York: The Modern Library, 1937.

Smith, Neil. "The Revolutionary Imperative", *Antipode*, Vol . 41 No. S1. New York: City University of New York, (2009): 50-65.

Späth, Johannes.. *Trend Report 10: The End of an Era, The Decline of Neoliberalism and the Emerging Interregnum*. Vienna, Austrian Institute for International Affairs, 2025.

Spieker, Jörg. "Defending the Open Society: Foucault, Hayek, and the Problem of Biopolitical Order". *Economy and Society*. Vol.42: No. 2, 304-321. (2012). <https://doi.org/10.1080/03085147.2012.687929>

Srnicek, Nick. *Platform Capitalism*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2017.

Stiglitz, Joseph E. "The End of Neoliberalism and the Rebirth of History", *Social Europe*, (November 26, 2019). <https://www.socialeurope.eu/the-end-of-neoliberalism-and-the-rebirth-of-history>.

Stimilli, Elettra. *Il Debito del Vivente. Ascesi e Capitalismo*. Macerata: Quodlibet, 2011.

Stimilli, Elettra. *Debito e Colpa*. Roma:Ediesse, 2015.

Stimilli, Elettra. "Religion and The Spontaneous Order of The Market: Law, Freedom, and Power Over Lives". *European Journal of Social Theory*, Volume 22(3), 399-415. Sage Publishers, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431018803705>

Stypinska, Diana. "Pastorate Digitalized: Social Media and (De)Subjectification", *Theory, Culture and Society*, p. 1-22, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02632764231216896>

Supiot, Alain. *Governance by Numbers: The Making of a Legal Model of Allegiance*. Translated by Saskia Brown. Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2017.

Taylor, Charles Lewis. *A Life of Productivity.: Karl W. Deutsch, Pioneer in the Theory of International Relations*. Edited by Charles Lewis Taylor and Bruce M. Russett. Switzerland: Springer, 2020.

Tellmann, Ute. "The Economic Beyond Governmentality, The Limits of Conduct". *Governmentality, Current Issues and Future Challenges*. Ed. Ulrich Brockling, Susanne Krasmann & Thomas Lemke. New York & London: Routledge, 2011.

Thiel, Peter. "Education of a Libertarian", *Cato Unbound, A Journal of Debate*, (April, 13, 2009) <https://www.cato-unbound.org/2009/04/13/peter-thiel/education-libertarian>.

Thompson, E.P.. "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century". *Past & Present*. No. 50, 76-136, Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1971. <https://doi.org/10.1093/past/50.1.76>

Tiqqun. *The Cybernetic Hypothesis*. Translated by Robert Hurley. South Pasadena, California: Semiotext(e), 2020.

Torres, Émile P.. "The TESCREAL Bundle: Eugenics and the Promise of Utopia Through Artificial General Intelligence", in *First Monday*, vol. 29, no. 4 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v29i4.13636>

Vatter, Miguel. "Foucault and Hayek: Republican Law and Liberal Civil Society. " *The Government of Life: Foucault, Biopolitics, and Neoliberalism*. Edited by Vanessa Lemm and Miguel Vatter. 163-184. New York: Fordham University Press, 2014.

Weber, Max. Translated by Talcott Parsons. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. London and New York: Routledge Classics, 1992.

Whyte, Jessica. "The Invisible Hand of Friedrich Hayek". *Political Theory*, Vol.47 No.2, 156-184, (Sage Publishers, 2019). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0090591717737064>

Wiener, Wiener. *Cybernetics: Or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The M.I.T. Press, 1985.

Winner, Langdon. "Cybernetics and Political Language", *Berkley Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 14 (1969). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41035143>

Winner, Langdon. "Cyberlibertarian Myths and The Prospects for Community" *ACM SIGCAS Computers and Society*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (1997): 14-19. <https://doi.org/10.1145/270858.270864>

Wolin, Sheldon "Inverted Totalitarianism, How the Bush regime is effecting the transformation to a fascist-like state", *The Nation*, May, 1, 2003, <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/inverted-totalitarianism/>.

World Bank. "About the Human Capital Project", accessed 21st December 2022, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/human-capital/brief/about-hcp#:~:text=The%20World%20Bank%20Group%20announced%20the%20Human%20Capital%20Project%20in%202017>

World Bank. "Human Capital Project Frequently Asked Questions", accessed on the 21st December 2022, https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/human-capital/brief/the-human-capital-project-frequently-asked-questions?cid=GGH_e_hcpexternal_en_ext#HCI17.

Wyatt, Sally. "Technological Determinism is Dead; Long Live Technological Determinism" in *Philosophy of Technology: The Technological Condition, an Anthology*, ed. Robert C. Scharff & Val Dusek. UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2014.

Yarvin, Curtis. "The Clear Pill, Part 1 of 5: The Four-Stroke Regime", *The American Mind*, (September 27, 2019). <https://americanmind.org/essays/the-clear-pill-part-1-of-5-the-four-stroke-regime/>.

Zartaloudis, Thanos. "Government/Oikonomia", in *The Agamben Dictionary*. Edited by. Alex Murray & Jessica Whyte. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011.

Zuboff, Shoshana. *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*, London: Profile Books, 2019.