

ISTANBUL BİLGİ UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE PROGRAMS
PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIAL THOUGHT MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAM

FOUCAULT, NEOLIBERALISM, FREEDOM

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ISTANBUL

2021

Foucault, Neoliberalism, Freedom

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Tezin Onaylandığı Tarih: 07.06.2021

Toplam Sayfa Sayısı:

Anahtar Kelimeler (Türkçe)

- 1) Neoliberalizm
- 2) Özgürlük
- 3) Demokrasi
- 4) Bioiktidar
- 5) Şirket Özne

Anahtar Kelimeler (İngilizce)

- 1) Neoliberalism
- 2) Freedom
- 3) Democracy
- 4) Biopower
- 5) Enterprise Subject

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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to investigate the neoliberal rationality and the ideas and principles of the neoliberal truth games as presented by Michel Foucault in his writings and the changes that these ideas and principles have undergone since the birth of neoliberalism. Michel Foucault explored the truth regime of neoliberalism in his lectures at College de France, particularly in *Society Must be Defended*, *Security, Territory, Population* and *The Birth of Biopolitics*. The principles of political economy, competition and enterprise subject have played a defining role in the constitution of subjectivity and of the society of neoliberalism; the ideal of individualistic freedom has been exploited by the truth regime of neoliberalism to create governmentelizable individuals who have lost their faith of and means for collective freedom. I argue that the principles and ideas of the neoliberal rationality have lost their relevance in today's society with neoliberalism's ever-increasing demand for sacrifice from the individual. Another world is not only possible but as we are bearing witness with the Covid-19 pandemic, it is urgently and unquestionably required.

Keywords: Neoliberalism, Freedom, Enterprise Subject, Democracy, Biopower, Truth Games

ÖZET

Bu tez çalışmasında neoliberal rasyonalite ve neoliberal hakikat oyunlarına temel olan fikir ve ilkelerin Michel Foucault tarafından ortaya konduğu şekilde araştırılması ve bu fikir ve ilkelerin neoliberalizmin doğuşundan bugüne geçirdiği değişim sürecinin mercek altına alınması hedeflenmiştir. Michel Foucault College de France'da verdiği derslerde ve özellikle *Toplum Savunulmalı, Güvenlik, Toprak, Nüfus ve Biopolitikanın Doğuşu*'nda neoliberal hakikat rejimini araştırmıştır. Politik ekonomi, rekabet ve şirket özne ilkeleri neoliberal toplum ve özneliliğin kurulmasında belirleyici bir rol oynamıştır; bireysel özgürlük ideali neoliberal hakikat rejimi tarafından kolektif özgürlüğe olan inancını kaybetmiş yönetilebilir bireyler yaratmak için kullanılmıştır. Bu tez, neoliberalizmin bireylerden her geçen gün artan fedakarlık talebi karşısında neoliberal rasyonalitenin fikir ve ilkelerinin bugünün toplumu açısından geçerliliğini yitirdiğini savunmaktadır. Farklı bir dünya mümkündür ve Covid-19 pandemisiyle tanık olduğumuz üzere ivedilikle ve kesinlikle gereklidir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Neoliberalizm, Özgürlük, Şirket Özne, Demokrasi, Bioiktidar, Hakikat Oyunları

1. INTRODUCTION

Michel Foucault gave lectures at the Collège de France between the years of 1971-1984 under the chair of *The History of Systems of Thought*. His lectures were later compiled from recorded tapes and published as a series of books posthumously. Foucault's three consecutive lectures at the Collège de France, *Society Must Be Defended* (1975-76), *Security, Territory, Population* (1977-78) and *The Birth of Biopolitics* (1978-79) focus on the transformation of governmental practices in the West since the classical age. Foucault remarked that he would have liked to change the title of his lectures at Collège de France called "Security, Territory and Population" to "History of Governmentality" and that his aim is to study "the art of government" throughout history with its institutions, processes, techniques and the apparatus of knowledge-power.

Foucault first introduced the concepts of "biopower" and "biopolitics" in the final chapter of the introductory volume of *History of Sexuality* which was published in 1976. He remarked that at the end of the eighteenth century, there emerged a new technology of power, which he referred to as "biopolitics" and which focused on optimization of "the state of life" through regulatory controls over the population. In *Birth of Biopolitics*, Foucault explored the technologies of power of the neoliberal model, which was starting to gain widespread recognition at the time.

Foucault's lectures at the Collège de France and his account of the liberalism and neoliberalism have been widely discussed following their publication. Many books have been written to explore the different aspects of Foucault's views on neoliberalism and controversial arguments have been presented to answer the question of whether or not Foucault had become a supporter of neoliberalism in his final years. Some like Daniel

Zamora and Michael Behrent, authors of *Foucault and Neoliberalism* claim that Foucault endorsed the principles of neoliberalism such as the destruction of the welfare state and the building of a government rationality based on political economy and the economic interests. Some like Pierre Dardot, Christian Laval and Wendy Brown find that Foucault's analysis of neoliberalism clearly reveals that he is looking for an alternative to neoliberalism with an in-depth awareness of the changes in society that led to the rise of neoliberalism.

This thesis does not aim to assess if Foucault endorsed any of the ideas of neoliberalism; it is rather an effort to explore how Foucault understood and interpreted the reasons behind the rise of neoliberalism by casting light onto the regime of truth of neoliberalism. It is striking to observe how Foucault's account of the neoliberalism as a new rationality of government is in alignment with many of the ways in which neoliberalism would unfold after his death in 1984 to our day.

Foucault's analysis of neoliberalism is in fact part of a much bigger project that we can trace throughout the works of his life, namely a combination of the analysis of practices of power, the analysis of the constitution of the subject, a history of truth and the study of the rationalization of governmental practice:

“What I have been trying to look at since 1970-71 is the “how” of power. Studying the “how of power”, or in other words trying to understand the mechanisms by establishing two markers, or limits; on the one hand, the rule of right that formally delineate power, and on the other hand, at the opposite extreme, the other limit might be the truth-effects that power produces, that this power conducts and which, in their turn, reproduce that power. So we have the triangle: power, right, truth”. (Foucault 2003b, 24)

The principle of observation in Foucault's analysis of neoliberalism, like in the rest of his work, is to abandon anthropological and/or transcendental universals, established assumptions and concepts. His starting point of analysis is the observation of practices, the workings of the discursive and nondiscursive practices, which form an "apparatus" (or "dispositif") and of the subjectivation of people in their daily experiences.

"Instead of starting with universals as an obligatory grid of intelligibility for certain concrete practices, I would like to start with these concrete practices and, as it were, pass these universals through the grid of these practices... I start from the theoretical and methodological decision that consists in saying: Let's suppose that universals do not exist. And then I put the question to history and historians: How can you write history if you do not accept a priori the existence of things like the state, society, the sovereign, and subjects?" (Foucault 2008, 3)

Foucault refuses to accept the universal concepts of traditional political philosophy such as state, society, sovereignty or power. As a thorough nominalist, he claims that concepts are nothing but names given to bundles of relations and that no entity has a substance or a single origin. So power, too, does not have a substance or an original source. Neither does it consist of a hierarchical structure, separating those with power from those without it. It is diffused in the society and is part of all relationships.

"Power is not founded on itself or generated by itself... There are not first of all relations of production and then, in addition, alongside or on top of these relations, mechanisms of power that modify or disturb them... Mechanisms of power are an intrinsic part of all these relations and, in a circular way, are both their effect and cause." (Foucault, 2007, 17)

In line with his nominalism, Foucault further claims that the state does not have an essence either, and it is not a source of power by itself. It is the “the effect, the profile, the mobile shape of a perpetual stratification (*étatisation*) or stratifications, in the sense of incessant transactions which modify, or move, or drastically change, or insidiously shift sources of finance, modes of investment, decision-making centers, forms and types of control, relationships between local powers, the central authority and so on”. (Foucault 2008, 77) Foucault asserts that an inquiry into the state can only be based on the observation of the real-life relations that define the government and the analysis of how the government rationalizes and conceptualizes itself in self-reflection.

Foucault’s approach to power and to state is a fundamental shift from any analysis of governmental reason that was made at the time. It takes the form of a reductive nominalism and a revolt against all prior studies that are based on universals and that strived to find an all-encompassing system of thought. As he wrote about himself in the *Cambridge Companion to Foucault*: “It is no longer a question of basing philosophy on a new cogito, or of developing a system of things previously hidden from the eyes of the world, but rather of interrogating the enigmatic gesture – a gesture that may be characteristic of Western society – through which true discourses (thus also those of philosophy) are constituted, with their familiar power.” (Foucault 1994, p. 314)

Foucault seeks alternative routes of progress in the political domain and attacks the phenomenological and Marxist traditions of thought. He criticizes socialism and all the political arguments that surround socialism because they have become more concerned with adherence to some text than with real-life practices. It is this self-limiting approach that is based on a priori concepts with a circular reference to itself that Foucault is fighting against.

“With regard to all forms of socialism, of every socialism implemented in policy, we should not ask what text it refers to, whether or not it betrays the text, whether or not it conforms to the text, or whether it is true or false. We should simply and always ask socialism: So, what is this necessarily extrinsic governmentality that makes you function and only within which you can function?” (Foucault 2008, 94)

Foucault argues in his essay titled “Subject and Power”, that the individual is a subject in the two different meanings of the word ‘subject’: through subjectification as one accepts being a subject of the political government and its regime of truth and through subjectivation as one internalizes the regime of truth in one’s self-conscience and chooses to wear one of the identities presented by the truth games.

In an interview conducted in June 1976 and published in Alessandro Fontana and Pasquale Pasquino, which was named “Truth and Power”, Foucault asserts:

“Each society has its regime of truth, its “general politics” of truth – that is, types of discourse it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances that enable one to distinguish true and false statements; the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true... There is a battle “for truth” or at least “around truth” - it being understood once again that by truth I mean not “the ensemble of truths to be discovered and accepted” but, rather, “the ensemble of rules according to which the true and false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true”... “Truth” is linked in a circular relation with systems of power that produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which induces and which extend it – a “regime” of truth... The problem is not changing people’s

consciousnesses – or what’s in their heads – but the political, economic, institutional regime of the production of truth.” (Foucault 2003d, 316-17)

The regime of truth constitutes the human being as the subject of knowledge, the subject of power, an ethical subject as well as a subject of the governmental authority. In this process of subjectification, the regime of truth constitutes a set of possible experiences and the individual takes the subject position of these experiences and of the identity that they constitute. The individual’s acceptance of belonging to a certain identity brings forth one’s practice of the technologies of government on oneself.

“This form of power that applies itself to immediate everyday life categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him that he must recognize and others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power that makes individuals subjects. There are two meanings of the word “subject”: subject to someone else by control and dependence, and ties to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power that subjugates and makes a subject to”. (Foucault 2003c, 130)

In 1984, Foucault wrote an entry for the *Dictionnaire des Philosophes* about himself under the pseudo-name of Maurice Florence. In the article, Foucault claims that the subject is posited as an object of knowledge through “games of truth” which determine “the rules according to which what a subject can say about certain things depends on the question of true and false.” (Foucault 2003e, 2) Foucault describes his ongoing project as “the study of the constitution of the subject as an object for himself” or as the history of “subjectivity” which he defines to be “the way in which the subject experiences himself in a game of truth where he relates to himself.” (Foucault 2003e, 2) Foucault defines games of truth as ‘veridictions.’ And veridictions, according to this definition, are “to be understood as the

forms according to which discourses capable of being deemed true or false are articulated with a domain of things.” (Foucault 2003e, 2) Given the meaning of the term ‘veridiction’, it seems to be used here to underline that discourses ‘tell the truth’ about the domain of things they are articulated with. In the constitution of experiences, therefore, games of truth are the various ways in which certain discourses capable of being true or false are articulated or connected with clusters of ways of being (domains of things) in order to tell the truth about them.

Truth games are intertwined with modes of government and together they define how the subject becomes an object in the eyes of oneself and of others. Foucault claims that the forms and procedures of government serve *to conduct the conduct of others* and shape the behavior of individuals not by brute force but by creating the possibilities for the subject to relate to oneself and to others.

Foucault argues that modern governmental rationality, or governmentality, similar to pastoral power, uses techniques of both individualization and totalization in governing individuals. In his essay titled “The Subject and Power”, Foucault describes pastoral power as the form of power which originated earlier than Christianity and later became incorporated into modern governmentality. Pastoral power is a special form of power in that it allows for certain individuals to serve others as pastors and to direct individuals not by commanding them but by offering salvation in return for the knowledge of their innermost secrets. With the separation of government from religious power in the eighteenth century, modern governmentality found alternative ways to incorporate the technologies of pastoral power in its methods. Power of pastoral attributes was diffused throughout society and with different institutions and officials. Like pastoral power, the power of modern governmentality is ‘salvation-oriented’, it is ‘individualizing’, it demands sacrifice in all areas of life and it is exercised on each individual through “a production of truth – the truth of the individual

himself.” (Foucault 2003c, 132) Today’s society and the Covid-19 crisis reflect the dire consequences of the regime of truth that allowed for technologies of government that incorporated individualizing and totalizing practices.

The opening sentences of *the Birth of Biopolitics* juxtaposes two quotations that Foucault uses to put forth the approach he would use in the analysis of neoliberalism. Instead of “Acheronta movebo” (If I can’t raise higher powers, I will raise hell), says Foucault, “I prefer the theme for this year’s lectures” as “Quieta non movere” (Let sleeping dogs lie). (Foucault 2008, 1) It is not being for or against neoliberal rationality but rather looking at the history of governmentality that constitutes the area of interest in Foucault’s work. “Experience has taught me” he had said in a lecture at Stanford University, “that the history of various forms of rationality is sometimes more effective in unsettling our certitudes and dogmatism than is abstract criticism.” (Foucault 2003a, 200). Foucault investigates how neoliberalism became the accepted rationality for governmental practice. Rationality of a governmental practice entails not only how the governing powers rationalize themselves but also how people come to accept the rationality of government as a desired set of norms and practices. “We are obliged to produce the truth by the power that demands truth and needs it in order to function” says Foucault. (Foucault 2003b, 24) Neoliberalism is built on its own regime of truth which tells the citizens of the neoliberal period the truth about themselves. Exploration of the games of truth of neoliberalism can cast some light onto the reasons behind the rise of neoliberalism to power and open new roads for another world and alternative experiences of subjectivity.

Foucault claims that the question of our relationship to truth always remains “behind the text”, it is hidden in our language and in the normative suggestions of the times; it determines our thoughts, beliefs and our relation to ourselves. Our perception of ourselves is constructed with the norms that we are taught since the day we are born. Throughout the history of

mankind, there have prevailed different systems of truth or what Foucault calls “regimes of truth”. There are regimes of truth of science and of different ideologies. Foucault’s many publications along with his courses at the Collège de France comprise not the history of truth but the history of the regimes of truth or the history of power as it produces discourses of truth.

“A regime of truth, is that which constrains individuals to truth acts, that which defines, determines the form of these acts and establishes their conditions of effectuation and specific effects... It is the set of processes and institutions that more or less forcefully bind or oblige individuals to comply with decisions that emanate from a collective authority within the framework of territorial units in which this authority exercises a right of sovereignty.” (Foucault 2014, 93-4)

Our relation to truth has changed over the course of history. An inquiry into the games of truth of different periods opens up the possibility for understanding both the structures of power of the time as well as the subjectivity of the people insofar as the truth is produced and reproduced in their relationship to themselves as their values, judgements and perception of themselves and of others.

Foucault argues that games of truth alter their course over time, which manifests itself in the rationality of government and the rules of right that legitimize the government of the time. The regime of truth together with its institutions, norms, processes and practices constitute “the apparatus of knowledge-power” which produces the governing truth of the period, defining not only what is right and wrong but what exists and does not exist; it “marks out in reality that which does not exist and legitimately submits it to the division between true and false.” (Foucault 2008, 19)

A regime of truth does not force the truth onto people; it creates the necessary conditions for the acceptance of a certain game of truth as reality, it establishes the desired norms, the disciplines of knowledge, the possibilities of practice and the subjective experience in their relationship with themselves and with truth.

Foucault investigates the history of governmentality and of neoliberalism as the conduct of people's conduct through the regime of truth. Neoliberalism has constructed its games of truth with the prevalence of the doctrine of political economy and the incorporation of economic rationality into the subjective experience of the people. Modern governmentality with its pillars of competition, productivity, enterprise and individualism can be readily observed in the subjectivity and ethics of today.

As Johanna Oksala writes in her essay titled "Neoliberalism and Biopolitical Governmentality:

"Neoliberalism functions as an apparatus of knowledge and power: it constructs a particular kind of social and political reality. We have come to understand the world around us in a distinctive way through the matrix of neoliberalism, and this framework delimits our political rationality as well as our implicit self-understanding... Instead of treating neoliberalism as an ideological mask for a hidden truth we should respond to it on the level of production of truth" (Oksala 2013, 54)

Foucault argues that freedom is the precondition for the existence of power. "There is no power without potential refusal or revolt" (Foucault 2003a, 201) For a subject to become a subject of government, he needs to have the freedom to choose to submit to government. The power of neoliberalism was derived from its promise of freedom as part of a state rationality and a regime of truth that claimed to foster the development of the quality of life of the people along with the reinforcement of its strength.

“The exercise of power is a “conduct of conducts” and a management of possibilities. Basically, power is less a confrontation between two adversaries or their mutual engagement than a question of government... When one defines the exercise of power as a mode of action upon the actions of others, when one characterizes these actions as the government of men by other men... one includes an important element: freedom. Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are “free”. By this we mean individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several kinds of conduct, several ways of reacting and modes of behavior are available... At the very heart of the power relationship, and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom. Rather than speaking of an essential antagonism, it would be better to speak of an “agonism” – of a relationship that is at the same time mutual incitement and struggle; less of a face-to-face confrontation that paralyzes both sides than a permanent provocation.”

(Foucault 2003c, 139)

The aim of this thesis is to follow Foucault’s footsteps in looking at the regime of truth and the governmentality of neoliberalism to better understand how the neoliberal rationality defined the sphere of possible actions and thoughts for the people. How were the neoliberal games of truth which served to maximize the individual and collective contribution of people to the economy internalized by the people in their desires and aspirations and in their search for freedom and identity? Where do we find ourselves today? Is there a possibility of dissidence or the refusal of the identities, norms and knowledge that is presented to us through the neoliberal rationality?

“What has to be questioned is the form of rationality at stake... Political rationality has grown and imposed itself all throughout the history of Western societies. Its inevitable effects are both individualization and totalization. Liberation can come

from attacking not just one of these two effects but political rationality's very roots.”

(Foucault 2003a, 201)

I argue that the regime of truth of neoliberalism derived its legitimacy from the principle of political economy, which was stripped from any concern for the social and served as a tool to be manipulated by the market agents. The neoliberal doctrine, with its individualizing and totalizing knowledge-power apparatus, has eradicated the social, isolating the individual from the society in the pursuit of happiness and prosperity. Neoliberalism has demolished the utopia of collective freedom of the people and of democracy for all with its idealization of individualistic freedom and promise of free circulation for those who were lucky enough to afford it. Submission to non-democratic measures and compliance with security technologies were accepted as side costs of the new world order. With the Covid-19 crisis, we are sadly observing the dire consequences of the neoliberal understanding of economic prosperity and how we have robbed ourselves of the ability to prevent the death of millions. It seems to be high time for the questioning of the neoliberal rationality and of our subjection to it in the Foucauldian sense. The simple observation of how we have accepted to constitute our subjectivity through submission to the regime of truth of neoliberalism can pave the way for an alternative experience of subjectivity and an alternative world.

In the following chapters, I will investigate the principles and ideals of the neoliberal truth games including the principle of political economy, individualism and individualistic freedom, competition and the enterprise subject. I will examine how the neoliberal truth games have evolved since the birth of neoliberalism and the state of the neoliberal governmentality as reflected in the dynamics of today's society. Lastly, I will conclude that the neoliberal rationality has lost its relevance for the modern day and that an alternative rationality is not only possible; it is imperatively demanded.

2. BIOPOWER AND THE PRINCIPLE OF POLITICAL ECONOMY

“Economics are the method. The object is to change the soul.”

Margaret Thatcher

In his lectures at the Collège de France, “*Society Must Be Defended*”, “*Security, Territory, Population*” and “*The Birth of Biopolitics*”, Foucault looks at the governmental practices of different periods through history and studies the changes in the rationality of government. He identifies three main periods, the feudal period of the Middle Ages, referred to as the period of “sovereignty”, the “disciplinary” period in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the modern period of “biopolitics” commencing with the eighteenth century.

Foucault claims that there was a transformation of the mechanisms of power in the West starting with the seventeenth century. In the Middle Ages, the sovereign, deriving his power from God and the crown, possessed the right to kill; it was “essentially a power of seizure: of things, time, bodies, and ultimately life itself; it culminated in the privilege to seize hold of life in order to suppress it.” (Foucault 1990, 136) The utmost concern of the sovereign was that of preserving his status of sovereignty and the right to decide life and death for the people. Foucault argues that the sovereign power had an extrinsic limitation and was bound to fail as soon as it lost some of its power against the people in their struggle for freedom.

With the seventeenth century, a new technology of power emerged, which Foucault names “biopower”, whose legitimacy was no longer founded on the power to take life but to foster life; it was “a power bent on generating forces, making them grow, and ordering them, rather than one dedicated to impeding them, making them submit, or destroying them... The ancient right to take life or let live was replaced by a power to foster life or disallow it to the point of death.” (Foucault 1990, 136)

Foucault argues that biopower was established through the technologies of power which were exercised on the bodies of individuals and problematized how to increase the usefulness of the body and to make the maximum use of its capabilities through disciplinary controls. With the eighteenth century, there then emerged “biopolitics”, which focused on the problem of the population and sought for ways to manage the biological processes of the population such as fertility, mortality and health, through “the apparatus of security”. “Sovereignty is exercised with the borders of a territory, discipline is exercised on the bodies of the individuals, and security is exercised over a whole population,” (Foucault 2007, 25) says Foucault in his lecture *Security, Territory, Population*. The apparatus of security includes “the military-diplomatic apparatus” and “the apparatus of police” which serve not just to eliminate disorder in society but also become the tools to manage the economy and the population and to ensure the continuation of the new world order.

“The real problem of this new governmental rationality is not therefore just the preservation of the state within a general order so much as the preservation of a relation of forces; it is the preservation of a relation of forces; it is the preservation, maintenance, or development of a dynamic of forces... This maintenance of the relation of forces and development of the internal forces of each element, linking them together, is precisely what will later be called a mechanism of security.” (Foucault 2007, 384)

The governmental rationality of biopolitics was fundamentally different than that of the feudal period because it derived the legitimacy of its power not from the wealth of the sovereign but the wealth of the nation. In the period of biopolitics, a new regime of truth was established in which the state claimed to pursue the economic interests of the people and as such it derived its power from the people, from their yearning for belonging and freedom, their energy to be better and to achieve more. A new “economy of power” was established,

one that was much more “efficient” in the utilization of the capacities of its people for its advancement.

“A new “economy” of power was established” says Foucault,

“that is to say procedures that allowed the effects of power to circulate in a manner at once continuous, uninterrupted, adapted and “individualized” throughout the entire social body. These new techniques are both much more efficient and much less wasteful (less costly economically, less risky in their results, less open to loopholes and resistances) than the techniques previously employed, which were based on a mixture of more or less forced tolerances (from recognized privileges to endemic criminality) and costly ostentation (spectacular and discontinuous interventions of power, the most violent form of which was the “exemplary”, because exceptional, punishment.” (Foucault 2003d, 307-8)

In the eighteenth century, a more “efficient” form of government was necessary with the growth of the population and the advancement of its needs, which required the opening of the town borders. Regulatory controls and technologies of security were deployed to provide for the circulation of the goods and the people. The new economic theories of the physiocrat aimed to govern the fluctuations in the market with a more flexible system. The security mechanisms and the economic order of biopolitics incorporated a certain ‘laissez-faire’ approach in order to govern the population on a larger scale. Disciplinary mechanisms were operated on individual cases to eliminate inappropriate behavior but the security mechanisms of biopolitics were deployed on the population to control the circulation of capital and labor. Freedom in biopolitics becomes synonymous with freedom of circulation, which can only be granted with the precondition that the necessary security technologies will be willingly accepted. Foucault comments:

“Freedom is nothing else but the correlative deployment of the apparatuses of security. An apparatus of security ... cannot operate well except on condition that it is given freedom, ... the possibility of movement, change of place, and processes of circulation of both people and things. I think it is this freedom of circulation, in the broad sense of the term, it is in terms of this option of circulation, that we should understand the word freedom, and understand it as one of the facets, aspects, or dimensions of the deployment of the apparatuses of security.” (Foucault 2007, 71)

After the fall of absolute monarchy in the eighteenth century, liberalism as both an economic doctrine and a new governmental rationality was considered as the replacement of divine rights and state religion with the rule of law and democratic principles. The fall of feudalism and the demolition of the royal monarchy broke up the alliance between the Church and the Empire. Liberalism brought an end to mercantilist policies and promoted free trade and free markets against monopolism.

Foucault argues that the new economy of power of the eighteenth century, biopower, merged “pastoral power”, signifying the technologies of power of the regime of truth of Christianity, with governmental reason, incorporating the characteristics of pastoral power with its promise of spiritual guidance and salvation in return for obedience and truth. The Christian pastor must know the soul of each individual and asks for personal submission. Foucault asserts that the biopolitical governmentality is both individualizing and totalizing just like pastoral power and it is based on a regime of truth “whose elements are life, death, truth, obedience, individuals and self-identity”..., “exerting itself on individuals and through the demonstration of their particular truth.” (Foucault 2003a, 191)

The emergence of the problem of population along with the advancements in the various disciplinary areas of social sciences, natural sciences, mathematics, economics and biology

paved the way for the transition to new technologies of government. The state was concerned now with the management of the welfare of a larger and more diverse population and of the problems concerning its health and prosperity. Statistical analysis and regulatory controls brought to life a new set of practices and new intervention methods for the control of birth and death rates, labor dynamics, health problems such as epidemics and circulation of goods and people.

There was the problem of the population before the eighteenth century as well of course. With mercantilism, there was the focus on the population in the effort to provide labor for agriculture and for the manufacturing industry which required a certain level of planning of the population. The supply of workforce determined the price of agricultural products; the population was important as a force of production and as a source of wealth. Disciplinary mechanisms were used to train and distribute the workforce according to the needs of the state.

The fall of absolute monarchy and the growing demands of the people for more democratic processes of government made it impossible for the state to govern the people against their will as a “collection of the sovereign’s subjects” by controlling what is allowed and forbidden. A new understanding of governmentality started to develop with the ideas of the physiocrats and particularly Adam Smith, that was based on “the production of the collective interest through the play of desire” and that promised “win-win” for all. The rationale that bridged the gap between the will of the state and that of the people was to be found in liberalism and its principles of political economy.

“The new science called “political economy” arises out of the new networks of continuous and multiple relations between population, territory and wealth; and this is

accompanied by the formation of a type of intervention characteristic of government, namely intervention in the field of economy and population.” (Foucault 2007, 142)

While in feudalism there was the state of justice and in fifteenth and sixteenth centuries there was the administrative state with its regulations and disciplines, the state of government in the eighteenth century marked what Foucault calls “the governmentalization of the state”, where the legitimacy of government relied on the principle of political economy. Economics had no reverence for religion or for the divine rights of royalty; it was based on the workings of the market and the governmentalization of the state marked that the state could no longer legitimize itself through self-reference but was dependent on an order outside of itself.

“Economics is an atheistic discipline; economics is a discipline without God; economics is a discipline without totality; economics is a discipline that begins to demonstrate not only the pointlessness, but also the impossibility of the sovereign point of view over the totality of the state that he has to govern.” (Foucault 2018, 282)

With governmentalization, the state started using more complex processes and apparatuses of security to manage the population and to control the circulation of goods and people. A new privileged class was born; there emerged experts and consultants who had access to the developments in the various disciplinary areas of statistics, economics and biology and were employed to advise the government in its choice of policies and practices. The state would opt to leave decision making to private institutions and the principle of limitation of the state was considered necessary for a better functioning and more successful government. It was in the interest of the government to limit its powers not only because people wanted it but because the “things to be done” required it. As such, the opposition between being the state and the people was transformed into a more “cooperative” relationship that focused on how to get “the job” done. The concept of “agenda” in utilitarianism, which referred to what

needed to be done in order to maximize the happiness of the people, was transformed in liberalism to a new “agenda” that was defined by private corporations who had the liberty to invent and apply the principles of political economy as they saw fit.

Foucault argues that liberalism can be defined by three features: veridiction of the market, limitation by the calculation of governmental utility, and the position of Europe as a region of unlimited economic development through globalization. It was claimed that the ideals of minimization of government and maximization of the happiness of the people were represented in the principle of political economy. The market would be the guiding force, not as a theory but as the practical real-life end result, dominated by the “natural price” which is the point at which the market forces are at an equilibrium with each other.

(Prices) “constitute a standard of truth which enables us to discern which governmental practices are correct and which are erroneous... It is the natural mechanism of the market and the formation of a natural price that enables us to falsify and verify governmental practice when, on the basis of these elements, we examine what government does, the measures it takes, and the rules it imposes... a site of verification-falsification for governmental practice.” (Foucault 2018, 32)

It is assumed in liberalism that different governmental practices may be tried but whether they will be successful or not would be determined by the market. Foucault differentiates between the economic model and the market and in the lecture of January 17, 1979, remarks, “Did the economic model become the organizing principle of governmental practice? Clearly, this is not what I wanted to say... This site of truth is not in the head of economists, of course, but is the market” (Foucault 2018, 30) If the founding principle of liberalism were not the market but the economic model, which is in fact only an assumed, “a priori” model in the economists’ heads, then it would be no different than the previous systems of thought and

rationalities of government that were based on intrinsic, self-referencing, theoretical models. It would be based not on practices or real-life outcomes but on theories that are formulated by those in power. Liberalism idealized the market to the far-reaching extent that the market was assumed to have a reality of its own, which cannot be manipulated through theories and through those who have the power to govern.

As Johanna Oksala comments in her essay “Neoliberalism and Biopolitical Governmentality”, “what characterizes liberal governmentality is the idea that there can be no sovereign in economics. Economic rationality is not only surrounded by, but also founded on the fundamental unknowability of the totality of the economic process: the invisible hand is invisible precisely because there can be no totalizing sovereign power.” (Oksala 2013, 62)

The market is almost seen as a part of nature. Referring to Kant’s essay dated 1795, “On the Guarantee of a Perpetual Peace”, Foucault comments that according to Kant, what guarantees the perpetual peace is the same as what for the physiocrats guarantees the “good price”: it is nature itself. Kant wrote about different instruments of government in history which were “dictated by nature” such as the civil law, which allows for management of relations of exchange between individuals, the international law, which allows for the maintenance of legal relations between states since people live in different regions in the world and the commercial law, which allows for the functioning of commercial relationships across the globe. It is nature that guarantees perpetual peace through its manifestations in civil law, international law and commercial law. The guarantee of perpetual peace lies in the continuity of commercial relationships among people throughout the world: “The guarantee of perpetual peace is therefore actually commercial globalization” (Foucault 2018, 58)

The liberal art of government became prevalent in the world starting with the eighteenth century and it defined a new regime of truth which was constructed around the principle of

the market as the sole producer of truth and economy as the science to understand the truth of the market.

“Liberal forms of governing will consequently have a new relation to truth” writes Sven-Olav Wallenstein in the introduction to *Foucault, Biopolitics and Governmentality*: “the market will be the place of veridiction, which means that political theory finds itself subordinated to a new body of knowledge, namely “economy”, a term whose meaning now shifts into a recognizably modern sense -which does not mean that economy here would finally pass over some threshold of scientificity, only that it comes to be endowed with the function of “truth”, itself part of a new complex of power and knowledge, to which politics is subjected. (Wallenstein 2013, 24)

The change of perspective in governmentality that was initiated in the eighteenth century was supported by the rise in the prevalence of scientific methods of analysis. With Adam Smith, there was a clear expectation that economics was a science that was politically neutral, objective and universal, the truth of which could not be altered by those interpreting it. There was also the expectation that governmentality could be based on the findings in biology and statistics and new methods could be implemented to take decisions not on an individual level but for the population as a whole. The new regime of truth was based on the acceptance that economics was a scientific field with its objective truth and the governments would have to comply with the economic truth if they were to be successful. Economic theory, similar to natural sciences, would be the guiding principle in understanding and interpreting the universe of governmentality. In contrast to the law, which was at the mercy of those writing it, economy was believed to have its own principles of nature which could not possibly be bent by those in power.

With the liberal regime of truth or truth of the market, the utility value of the government changed. It was no longer a government for the management of the rights of its citizens but a government for the management of the interests of its people. This critical shift was significant in liberalism's transition to neoliberalism in the twentieth century.

Governmental rationality in liberalism was founded on an understanding of ethics that was not concerned with values as defined by birth rights, but by utility values as defined by the market. At the time, it was a revolutionary idea since it would value one's contribution to the market over whether one belonged to the church or to nobility. Yet it would also mean that democratic values and human rights would have a utility value defined by the market, which was the place of veridiction of truth and the sole producer of truth.

Foucault remarks that a definition of political economy is that it "refers to any government that can procure the nation's prosperity"; the definition points to how things would "naturally" unfold in the coming years. Over time with the advancement of liberalism in the nineteenth century and its transformation into neoliberalism in the twentieth century, the principle of political economy would serve to legitimize all governmental decisions.

"Political economy reflects on governmental practices themselves, and it does not question them to determine whether or not they are legitimate in terms of right. It considers them in terms of their effects rather than their origins, not by asking, for example, what authorizes a sovereign to raise taxes, but by asking, quite simply: What will happen if at a given moment, we raise a tax on a particular category of persons or a particular category of goods? What matters is not whether or not this is legitimate in terms of law, but what its effects are and whether they are negative... The economic question is always to be posed within the field of governmental practice, not in terms of what may found it by right, but in terms of its effects. What are the real effects of

the exercise of governmentality? Not: What original rights can found this governmentality” (Foucault 2008, 15)

Political economy “does not discover natural rights that exist prior to the exercise of governmentality; it discovers a certain naturalness specific to the practice of government itself,” says Foucault. (Foucault 2008, 15) Obeying the law of political economy is seen almost like adapting to ‘the nature of government and things’ and as a ‘natural’ way of governing. “If there is a nature specific to the objects and operations of governmentality, then the consequence of this is that governmental practice can only do what it has to do by respecting this nature... Success or failure, rather than legitimacy or illegitimacy, now become the criteria of governmental action. So, success replaces legitimacy.” (Foucault 2008, 16)

The principle of political economy was a dominant idea in the rise of liberalism and it also played a significant role in the birth of neoliberalism and the neoliberal rationality. In the following section, I will focus on the birth of neoliberalism and the principle of competition in neoliberal governmentality.

3. BIRTH OF NEOLIBERALISM

After the second world war, the western civilization was in shock of the monster that it had created; fascism was on an unstoppable rise in Europe with Mussolini and Hitler in power. The world had gone through what was considered to be the worst economic depression of modern history, the Great Depression. The urgency of finding a new social and economic doctrine for governmentality was deeply felt in intellectual circles in both the States and Europe.

The term “neoliberalism” was first coined in the Walter Lippmann Colloquium which was organized by Louis Rougier in August 1938 and brought together intellectuals from diverse liberal backgrounds including traditional liberals like Wilhelm Röpke and Alexander Rüstow and those who were considered to be more “progressive” like Friedrich Hayek and Lüdwig von Mises. Rüstow used the term “neoliberalism” when referring to a new form of liberalism which was promoted by Hayek and von Mises and which called for a radical shift from traditional liberalism or social liberalism. In the years following the Walter-Lippmann Colloquium, Hayek and von Mises played a vital role in the development of neoliberalism, acting as an intermediary between German ordoliberals and the Chicago school.

In 1947, Hayek and von Mises founded the Mont Pelerin Society together with Milton Friedman, George Stiegler and Karl Popper among others. European and American liberals, looking for a way to prevent the recurrence of the economic and political crises were joined together in their search for and construction of an alternative liberalism. Here is their Statement of Aims published on April 8, 1947:

“Over large stretches of the Earth’s surface the essential conditions of human dignity and freedom have already disappeared. In others they are under constant menace from the development of current tendencies of policy. The position of the individual and

the voluntary group are progressively undermined by extensions of arbitrary power. Even that most precious possession of Western Man, freedom of thought and expression, is threatened by the spread of creeds which, claiming the privilege of tolerance when in the position of a minority, seek only to establish a position of power in which they can suppress and obliterate all views but their own.”

Foucault differentiates between European neoliberalism and American neoliberalism; although they shared common aspects, the two approaches to neoliberalism had different cultural and historical roots. American neoliberalism was born in reaction to the New Deal of Roosevelt, The Beveridge plan which called for economic and social intervention by the state in the war years and Keynesian economic policies, which were blamed for the Great Depression. Contrary to Europe, the States was always less keen on socialist policies and strong government. In American neoliberalism, economic rationality was quickly extended from the domain of the market to the ways of living for the people.

Although Foucault sometimes uses liberalism and neoliberalism interchangeably in his lectures, he also provides a detailed study of the differences between liberalism and neoliberalism. The economic crisis of the Great Depression was considered to be indicative of the failure of liberalism in maintaining price stability. Avoidance of economic crises at all cost would be the fundamental pillar of the new governmental rationality. Neoliberalism dissociated the principle of laissez-faire from the principle of market economy; the regulatory principle of exchange of liberalism was replaced with the principle of competition in neoliberalism. For liberalism the “natural” forces of the market were sacred but not for neoliberalism. With neoliberalism, competition became sacred.

“Competition is an essence. Competition is an eidos. Competition is a principle of formalization. Competition has an internal logic; it has its own structure. Its effects

are only produced if this logic is respected. It is, as it were, a formal game between inequalities; it is not a natural game between individuals and behaviors.” (Foucault 2018, 120)

In neoliberalism, inequality was not something to be eliminated from society but rather promoted. A society of competition would allow for extraction of maximum utility value from the market and for the avoidance of economic crises in the future. Since competition is not the natural state of the market but rather something that needs to be carefully designed and maintained, it required comprehensive state intervention. Inequalities were to be fostered to establish competition as the new norm of society. The object of the art of government became competition; it was the role of the state to make sure a competitive order was established that regulated the economy. State intervention was required to modify the legal and cultural aspects of the market to maximize competition; it was morally accepted that it was only fair that those who were successful should reap the benefits of world prosperity and any concern for income equality was not only superfluous but also destructive.

In neoliberalism, the market continued to legitimize the state and to establish its power and its boundaries. It would continue to be the force that formalizes the state and the society. Yet the norm of competition replaced the norm of market. The role of the state was regulatory and organizational, but it now used more advanced intervention instruments in controlling the market; the approach of “leaving it to the market” was replaced by decisive regulatory and organizing actions for price stability and competition.

Neoliberal governments with the target of “small government”, increasingly outsourced major functions in policy making to private institutions. In time, instruments of state intervention lost their focus on maintaining competition and policies of anti-monopolistic intervention were abandoned as the “agenda” was increasingly designed by the dominant

agents of the market. The market, which was believed to be a “natural” entity of its own with no place for sovereignty, would become the playing ground for decisions taken by market players with the biggest share. As wealth and power once again started to be concentrated in the hands of the few, it would only be “natural” that they would determine what was a “successful” governmental policy. In turn, the government would become an instrument in the hands of the few who rule the market. We know today that if the market is dominated by a few that are “too big to fail”, nobody is allowed to say that there are no fair circumstances for competition.

An ethics of competition, once established, would serve to make it easy for governments to demand people to give up their rights. The regime of truth of neoliberalism had no place for the weak hearted, we all had to be courageous enough to make the necessary sacrifices to keep the market afloat. Prevention of economic crises at all costs was the ultimate ideal. As Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval argue in *The New Way of the World: On Neoliberal Society*, “Benthamite man was the calculating man of the market and the productive man of industrial organizations. Neo-liberal man is competitive man, wholly immersed in global competition.” (Dardot & Laval 2017, 256) There could have been other considerations for the success of the market other than increasing competition such as reduction of poverty, reduction of inequalities, provision of human rights. Yet those were not in consideration. Over time, the regime of truth in neoliberalism would require all to embrace the fact that spending most of the resources on the few that will keep the market afloat may be our only shot at the continuation of commercial relationships and “perpetual peace”.

In the neoliberal regime, the economic domain carved itself a space of existence outside the political and public domain; it was “untouchable” even by governments. The economic question pertained to not just the market but all areas of life and the political and public domains soon became “irrelevant”. Johanna Oksala remarks:

“This meant that once something was defined as an economic question – such as the magnitude of the income gap between the rich and the poor – it was moved out of the political realm, which was understood as a realm that could cause needless interference in accordance with a set of political commitments and moral principles. Economic truths, on the other hand, could not be argued against politically without falling into irrationality. This idea has reorganized our political ontology in carving out an autonomous realm of economy free of political interference. From a Foucauldian perspective the rise of neoliberalism must be understood as the culmination of a historical development that redrew the ontological boundary between economy and politics. Under neoliberal governmentality the autonomy of the economic sphere places strict limits on the realm of politics, such that economic knowledge must fundamentally guide and condition political power.” (Oksala 2013, 60)

In the neoliberal period encompassing the past 80 years, the world has gone through many economic crashes, including the Oil Crisis in 1973, the Latin American debt crisis in 1980, Black Monday of 1987, the economic crisis in Japan in 1990, the Asian economic crisis in 1997-98, the burst of dotcom bubble in 2001, the American financial crisis of 2008 and the European debt crisis of 2010 among others. Yet these have not led to the questioning of the fundamental principles or the recurring practices of neoliberalism. With every crisis, more complex instruments were designed to protect the interests of the few who were regarded as the “saviours” of the market.

The ideals of individualism, competition and political economy were utilized in neoliberalism to justify the destruction of the social. Social policy was privatized and individualized; every man was for himself now, individually responsible for finding the necessary resources to take care of and protect himself. “There is only one true and fundamental social policy” says

Foucault, “Economic growth.” Insurance was privatized and so was education and healthcare. If one fails to be successful, then one clearly does not deserve to benefit from the private resources; those who fail are simply a hindrance to the economy.

The governmental practices of liberalism were founded on the principle of competition for prosperity. Over time the ideals of minimizing the state and maximizing the happiness of the people were replaced by the legitimacy of all means to keep the market “afloat”. The citizen with rights was replaced by the homo economicus as the utility principle no longer served the happiness of the people but the continuation of market dynamics. The corporate takeover gained an enormous momentum after 1980s with the unstoppable rise of the financial sector as the world economy depended more and more on credit to continue its operations. Governmental policies which generated resources for the financial sector found their place in the “agenda” as part of the effort to prevent economic disruption. Legitimacy was not a criterion in assessing the success of governmentality; the neoliberal rationale was a result-oriented, pragmatic approach which with each crisis further extended the reach of the power of its elite.

Governmental practices of neoliberalism were founded on a regime of truth that defined economic truth as truth. Economic rationality replaced any other rationality social or political and created a legitimacy that was independent of social or political rights. At the time that Foucault was giving the lectures at the Collège de France in 1976-79, the neoliberal economic doctrine was in a steep rise of popularity. The Chicago School in the US and the Ordoliberalists in Europe were highly successful in creating the ground for the legitimacy of the economic theories of neoliberalism. With the unfolding of neoliberalism, the economic rationality and the metrics for success of policies were defined by the economic players as they best served the interests of corporations not the people. Income distribution or access to education and healthcare were not chosen as metrics of economic success; instead values of

gross domestic products, growth rates and the stock market indices were monitored on a daily basis with no reference to the actual quality of life of the people. Advanced instruments for lending and virtual assets in the form of stocks and funds were designed, allowing for a much more rapid accumulation of wealth in the hands of the few, who became the source of funding for the world. Soon the system became so dependent on credit that any alternative option was unthinkable. “The Left... has in a particular way been defeated by truth” writes Sven Olov Wallenstein, “since any kind of extra-systemic critique today appears as wholly irrational.” (Wallenstein 2013, 30)

The dependence of the world economic order on credit has defined the subjectivity of the modern day and cannot be ignored in the exploration for an alternative subjectivity. In the next chapter, I will examine the notion of freedom in the neoliberal rationality and how the meaning of freedom has changed with the neoliberal truth games in the new economic order.

4. NEOLIBERALISM AND FREEDOM

Foucault's exploration of the notion of freedom is founded on the precondition that freedom is not a universal and that it has no "a priori" definition or origin; it is not something with its own substance which reveals itself over time. The definition of freedom is dynamic; freedom is defined and redefined at every moment with the workings of the relations in society, particularly between those who govern and those who are governed. The lack of freedom in a society can only be revealed through the demand for more freedom by those who are governed. Foucault argues that modern governmentality operates as the conduct of the conduct of others and it can only function as a legitimate source of power through the production of a certain domain of freedom for the individual and of the field of possibilities for one to live in.

"In this game, freedom may well appear as the condition for the exercise of power (at the same time its precondition, since freedom must exist for power to be exerted, and also its permanent support... The power relationship and freedom's refusal to submit cannot therefore be separated." (Foucault 2003c, 139)

Foucault differentiates between two conceptions of freedom which he calls the revolutionary approach and the radical, empirical or utilitarian approach. On the revolutionary front, freedom is "conceived as the exercise of basic rights" and freedom is provided by public law which defines the rights of people. On the empirical or utilitarian front, freedom is the independence of the governed from those who govern and is therefore dependent on the limitation of government. Foucault's approach to liberty can be considered as a continuation of the concepts of negative and positive liberty, which were developed by Isaac Berlin in the 1950s. Negative liberty is exercised through the removal of obstacles and constraints, particularly as applied to the minimization of the state and positive liberty is exercised

through self-realization and the fulfilment of one's purpose in life. Berlin had argued that negative liberty and positive liberty are two conflicting approaches to liberty for the same ideal and since then it has customarily been that right/liberal political views defend negative liberty and left political views inspired by ancient Greek philosophers, Rousseau and Hegel defend positive liberty.

The concept of liberty in liberalism is established upon the idea of empirical freedom, where the independence of the governed from the state is the precondition of liberty. The liberals' claim to truth is that the notion of freedom in liberalism is not founded on a theoretical concept of freedom or the assumption that freedom is a basic human right but that it is rooted in empirical evidence; they argue that history has demonstrated that the power of the government is always exercised against the people and for the destruction of liberty.

Foucault argues that freedom and more specifically economic freedom was the ground for the legitimacy of political sovereignty in Germany after the Second World War. The legitimizing foundation of the state in neoliberalism was the "guaranteed exercise of an economic freedom" (Foucault 2018, 83) A lot of investment was needed to bring Europe back on its feet and such a founding principle provided assurance to American capital for the vast investments that would follow. In 1944, the Bretton Woods agreement was signed, which allowed for the United States to establish the rules and procedures of the international monetary system with new institutions of lending and regulation including the IMF and the World Bank. The European Recovery Program known as the Marshall Plan that followed would make United States the largest lender in Europe's recovery and the dollar the governing currency of the new world order: "Continuous economic growth will take over from a malfunctioning history... Economic freedom is jointly produced through growth, well-being, the state and the forgetting of history." (Foucault 2018, 86)

Liberalism is based on “a permanent consensus of all those who may appear as agents within these economic processes, as investors, workers, employers, and trade unions. All these economic partners produce a consensus, which is a political consensus, inasmuch as they accept this economic game of freedom”. (Foucault 2018, 84) In the grand consensus, freedom becomes synonymous with economic freedom and it is to be ensured by the freedom of circulation of capital and labor under the condition that it is economically viable. Freedom of goods and services is possible as long as it has economic value and freedom of people is possible as long as they have the resources. The citizen’s freedom is dependent on the global economy; one is not born with any rights but can “earn” one’s freedom. The political power is no longer required to defend its policies with regards to the human rights, it suffices to justify political decisions with economic and security-based arguments.

“What is involved is a new programming of liberal governmentality. It is an internal reorganization that, once again, does not ask the state what freedom it will leave to the economy, but asks the economy how its freedom can have a state-creating function and role, in the sense that it will really make possible the foundation of the state’s legitimacy?” (Foucault 2018, 95)

As the political domain is swallowed by the economic domain, freedom is no longer associated with having equal rights as human beings or having equal access to social services such as healthcare or education but with assuming equal responsibility to participate in the economic game of winners and losers. Freedom pertains to the market players who are free to execute their agenda of the relentless pursuit of profit and growth. The neoliberal rationality claims that all other categories of freedom are provisory to the freedom of the market players; deregulation of the market is the precondition for our freedom. In neoliberal governmentality, in the conduct of the conduct of others, the freedom of circulation is allowed in such a way that the population is controlled through advanced security measures and the citizens are free

in their pursuit of the set of actions available in the economic system such as buying, selling, and establishing one's own company. It is no longer about an ethics of rights and freedom is not a right to be respected but an ethics of consumption where freedoms are produced and consumed as a part of the "natural" economic order.

"If I employ the word liberal, it is first of all because this governmental practice... is not satisfied with respecting this or that freedom... More profoundly, it is a consumer of freedom... It can only function insofar as a number of freedoms actually exist: freedom of the market, freedom to buy and sell, the free exercise of property rights, freedom of discussion, possible freedom of expression, and so on... The new governmental reason needs freedom therefore, the new art of government consumer freedom. It consumes freedom, which means that it must produce it... The formula of liberalism is not "be free"... Liberalism formulates simply the following: I am going to produce what you need to be free." (Foucault 2018, 63)

The apparatus of security is the guardian of freedom in neoliberalism; it is the underlying mechanism that guarantees the conditions for the production and the consumption of freedom and for the control of the circulation of goods and people. Liberalism produces not just the freedoms to be consumed but also the dangers against which security measures need to be taken. Freedom and security as two seemingly antagonistic forces now provide for one another and together they establish the game of truth in neoliberalism.

"We can say that the motto of liberalism is "Live dangerously" says Foucault. Throughout the advancement of liberalism and its transformation into neoliberalism, the notion of living in a dangerous world, where technologies of security are critically required, has been strong, starting with the cold war and then continuing with the war against terrorism.

“There is no liberalism without a culture of danger... (The) consequence of this liberalism and liberal art of government is the considerable extension of procedures of control, constraint, and coercion which are something like the counterpart and counterweights of different freedoms” (Foucault 2018, 67)

Human rights, workers' rights, social rights are sacrificed as there lurks a much greater danger that neoliberalism defends its citizens against. People are immersed in a continuous state of fear and the government then has no choice but to put in place the necessary security mechanisms to protect them. It is estimated that a billion surveillance cameras will be watching the world in 2021. Freedom is offered in return for the willing sacrifice of freedom.

5. THE ENTREPRENEUR AND THE HOMO ECONOMICUS

To the proponents of neoliberalism, it was clear early on that if neoliberalism were to be successful, it would have to be not just an economic principle, but a way of being; and for that it needed its own utopia. “We need a liberalism that is a living thought” Foucault makes reference to Hayek’s words:

“Liberalism has always left it to the socialists to produce utopias, and socialism owes much of its vigor and historical dynamism to this utopian or utopia-creating activity. Well, liberalism also needs utopia. It is up to us to create liberal utopias, to think in a liberal mode, rather than presenting liberalism as a technical alternative for government. Liberalism must be a general style of thought, analysis, and imagination.” (Foucault 2018, 219)

The utopia of neoliberalism was founded on the liberty of engaging in economic activity and on the expansion of the “economic” to all domains of life. The homo politicus is subdued to the homo economicus and the citizen of rights is replaced by the citizen of the enterprise, the entrepreneur.

“Homo economicus is someone who pursues his own interest, and whose interest is such that it converges spontaneously with the interest of others. From the point of view of a theory of government, homo economicus is the person who must be let alone. With regards to homo economicus, one must *laissez-faire*, he is the subject and the object of *laissez-faire*... Homo economicus is someone who is eminently governable. From being the intangible partner of *laissez-faire*, homo economicus now becomes the correlate of a governmentality which will act on the environment and systematically modify its variables.” (Foucault 2008, 271)

Traditionally, the individual's personal and work life constituted different domains; in personal life one pursued happiness and in work one contributed to economic life. Such a distinction allowed for the separation of the personal from the economic and supported the idea that there was more to us than our existence as a contributor to the economy. The neoliberal doctrine merged the economic into the personal; everyone was now the entrepreneur of one's life. The individual assumed the decision-making authority and responsibility to determine how best to invest one's time and resources to particular activities to produce the highest level of output, which is reflected not just in the wage that one earns but in the income and the happiness that one generates. Human has become human capital, with no existence outside of the economic. The question is no longer how to improve the quality of human life but rather how to enhance human capital so as to best serve the interests of the world economic order.

“The stake in all neoliberal analyses is the replacement every time of homo economicus as partner of exchange with a homo economicus as entrepreneur of himself, being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of his earnings... The wage is nothing other than the remuneration, the income allocated a certain capital, a capital that we 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.” (Foucault 2018, 226)

The definition of homo economicus changes in the shift from liberalism to neoliberalism as the principle of the market as a place of exchange and faith in the “natural” price are replaced by the principle of maximization of competition and the idea of human capital. In liberalism the homo economicus was “a man of exchange”; the homo economicus of neoliberalism is “a man of enterprise”, an entrepreneur continuously calculating how to best spend the resources available to him such as his time, knowledge, relationships, feelings and even his sense of

freedom to create the most output for the economy. The neo-subject sees oneself as a neoliberal enterprise that produces pleasure and is subject to the ethics of the enterprise, replicates the practices of the enterprise and uses the technologies of the enterprise on himself.

“In this economic and social regime” says Foucault, “the enterprise is not just an institution but a way of behaving in the economic field – in the form of competition in terms of plans and projects.” (Foucault 2018, 175) Neo-management constitutes the subjectivity of the neoliberal subject who eagerly competes not just in the domain of work but in all areas of life and realizes of oneself though being successful in the ruthless world order. Neoliberal rationality is the rationality of the enterprise-subject who is always on-the-move, efficient and solution-oriented.

Dardot and Laval argue that the neo-liberal subject is the man of the enterprise who works for the enterprise as if he is working for himself and therefore is no longer alienated from his work. The desires and aspirations of the neo-liberal subject can be readily utilized for the maximization of the output of the enterprise. “The neoliberal rationality produces the subject it requires by deploying the means of governing him so that he really does conduct himself as an entity in a competition.” (Dardot & Laval 2017, 261)

The regime of truth of neoliberalism constituted the neo-subject and the neo-society on the notion of the enterprise. The basic unit of the society was no longer the citizen or the family but the enterprise. The enterprise was the optimal functional unit for the maximization of economic output and a society configured to the model of the enterprise subject to the dynamics of competition would surely be the most productive one.

As Richard Sennett beautifully explored in *Corrosion of Character* and *the Culture of New Capitalism*, the ethics of the enterprise slowly became the ethics of the society in the 1980s.

A short-term perspective with loose social ties and commitments was promoted not just in the workplace but also in personal life. Corporations adopted a culture that demoted loyalty for the sake of short-term profits and people, immersed in the economic, embraced similar values in their lives.

Foucault refers to the shift in the ethics of society towards the ethics of the enterprise as “the inversion of the relationships of the social to the economic”. (Foucault 2008, 240) It is a transgression of the boundary between the social and the economic, creating an “economical-ethical ambiguity” which replaces the ethics of freedom with the value model of the enterprise. The idea that the economic approach can be applied to all areas of the human life including fertility, education, crime, marriage and social relations and that investment in human capital is the primary source of economic growth was widely discussed by American neoliberals such as Gary Becker and Theodore Schultz. Even the love of a mother, the care and attention with which she raises her children, is regarded as an investment in the production of human capital. Ethical concepts are valued by their economic worth and actions are evaluated through the value system of the enterprise. Governmental decisions in neoliberalism are based on an economic cost-benefit analysis including for instance the degree to which law should be enforced and society should be required to comply with the law. “Good penal policy does not aim the extinction of crime” says Foucault “but at a balance between the curves of the supply of crime and negative demand.” (Foucault 2018, 256) Law is enforced only to the extent that it is economically justified when the cost of law enforcement is weighed against the economic benefit of preventing the crime.

“Economic behaviour is the grid of intelligibility one will adopt on the behaviour of a new individual. It also means that the individual becomes governmentalizable, that power gets a hold on him to the extent, and only to the extent, that he is a homo economicus.” (Foucault 2018, 252)

The “enterprise form” entails replicating the model of the enterprise and the economic model of investment for profit in social relations and in human existence. The alienation of the worker is no longer a threat since the economic model encompasses all domains of life and the citizen is now the entrepreneur. The neo-subject accepts the necessity of the economic rationale as demanded by “the reality of life” and conforms to the regime of truth of neoliberalism.

The neoliberal games of truth have been successful in constituting the subjective experience of the individual such that each individual is an enterprise subject seeking to maximize its gains through contributing to the world economy; the individual has become ‘governmentalizable’. In the next chapter, I will look at the governmentalizable individual of neoliberalism and how the neoliberal rationality has affected democratic values in today’s society.

6. NEOLIBERALISM AND DEMOCRACY

With neoliberal governmentality, the political domain has been swallowed by the economic domain and the democratic principles of equality and inclusivity are valued with their contribution to economic growth. The social infrastructure of society has been destroyed and the individual is left on his own to find the resources for those needs which were once addressed on a public level. The struggle for rights and freedom is individualized; the citizen no longer has the means for or the faith in the pursuit of the freedom of the community and the advancement of the common good. Neoliberalism has led to the successful “conversion of every human need or desire to a profitable enterprise” as Wendy Brown writes in *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism’s Stealth Revolution*, “from college admissions preparation to human organ transplants, from baby adoptions to pollution rights, from avoiding lines to securing legroom on an airplane; and most recently, the financialization of everything and the increasing dominance of financial capital over productive capital in the dynamics of the economy and everyday life.” (Brown 2015, 28)

Wendy Brown argues that the widening gap of income in the population and between countries, the unethical commercialization of activities, the disturbing intimacy of corporate and finance capital with the state and the damage wreaked on the economy by the liberty of finance capital have been widely noted. Yet the governing rationality of neoliberalism which allowed for the reversal of truth has not been adequately examined.

In the neoliberal game of truth, the individual has given up one’s rights of birth and has been reduced to human capital with the ideal of becoming the entrepreneur, free to pursue his interests, solely responsible and accountable for what happens to him. The citizen has become dispensable in the grand return-on-investment equation which rules the world, he is free to exist only if his existence makes economic sense for society.

“As a matter of political and moral meaning, human capitals do not have the standing of Kantian individuals, ends in themselves, intrinsically valuable. Nor do specifically political rights adhere to human capital; their status grows unclear and incoherent... Rights themselves can be economized, sharply recast in meaning and application. As human capital, the subject is at once in charge of itself, yet an instrumentalizable and potentially dispensable element of the whole... The replacement of citizenship defined as a concern with the public good by citizenship reduced to the citizen as homo economicus also eliminates the very idea of a people, a demos asserting its collective political sovereignty.” (Brown 2015, 39)

The de-validation of democratic rights, values and norms in the neoliberal governmentality has created the perfect ground for the rise of far-right extremism in recent years. The economic doctrine of neoliberalism allowed for political leaders to pursue their agenda through fascist propaganda and for officials in the highest position of government to blatantly misuse their powers in violation of human rights. The people, stripped of the means to think and act as a community, have remained mostly silent and unresponsive in the face of the atrocities. There is a rise in the prevalence of populist regimes across the globe and even more democratic countries like France and Germany increasingly prefer to ignore the public backlash against their policies.

The individual is the target of the modern epoch; while sovereignty was exercised on rights over territories and discipline was exercised on rights of the people, the regulatory governmental practice of the modern times is exercised over the subjectivity of the individual. The utopia of individualism and the ideal of becoming the entrepreneur of one's life has enabled the neoliberal governmentality to separate the individual from the social and to pressure the individual to commit one's life as human capital to the production of economic value for the society. Having destroyed the social infrastructure of society and the

possibility of communal thoughts and practices, neoliberalism eradicated the means of resistance of the people as a community. There is no class struggle in the regime of truth of neoliberalism but the struggle of the individual; it is accepted by all individuals in society that everyone is part of the same economic game. Resistance against neoliberalism would require denial of the economic truth; it is futile.

Sven-Olov Wallenstein remarks in the introductory chapter of *Foucault, Biopolitics and Governmentality* that biopower “works by individualization, or more precisely by producing individuality as the focal point of all the different techniques for monitoring the body politic, which now fractures into a living multiplicity of individuals. In this sense, individuality is produced by those very disciplinary techniques that at the same time discover it as their proper object.” (Wallenstein 2013, 12)

The neoliberal governmentality promised to liberate the individual from the oppression of the state and the society but ended up demanding an ever-increasing level of economic and social sacrifice from the people in all domains of life. Economic justifications along with the ideal of individualistic freedom provided the rationale for stripping citizens of their collective bargaining power and of their rights as a community. The principle of competition and the ethics of the enterprise established the neoliberal game of truth, in which the individual was left alone against the power of capital. Wendy Brown writes:

“The citizen releases state, law and economy from responsibility for and responsiveness to its own condition and predicaments and is ready when called to sacrifice to the cause of economic growth, competitive positioning and fiscal strengths... (It is) valorization of a national economic project and sacrifice for a greater good into which all are integrated, but from which most must not expect personal benefit... Neoliberal rationality’s economization of the political, its

jettisoning of the very idea of the social, its displacement of politics by governance diminish significant venues for active citizenship and the meaning of citizenship itself.” (Brown 2015, 210)

The social movement of 1968 was successful in its pursuit of freedom for the individual and led to the liberation of the individual from the pressures of the society and the disruption of norms in minority rights, sexual choices and gender roles. The ideal of personal liberty was utilized by neoliberalism as a tool to pursue economic profit and to extract surplus value from the individual. The games of truth of neoliberalism established the citizen both as the entrepreneur of his life and as the human capital that is to be invested in the economy. The neo-subject, left with no choice but to accept “the economic truth”, sacrificed democratic values for the advancement of the economic order. The social infrastructure of society was dismantled for the neoliberal freedom of men. The modern homo economicus is free to pursue the success of his enterprise; support is provided in the form of financial loans and privatized resources. As Dardot & Laval argue, “everyone is enjoined to construct their own individual little ‘iron cage’.” (Dardot & Laval 2017, 262)

Progress in the area of sociology entailed giving code names like X, Y and Z to generations as if they are not people but variables of algebra. Young generations are blamed for being ungrateful and impatient, as if it is their fault that they cannot not feel any loyalty towards companies that promote cut-throat competition amongst their employees. After decades of continuous decline in real wages, a white-collar employee who starts his working life with a degree from a reputable college and a large chunk of debt, can no longer dream of buying a house with the lifetime savings.

“Neoliberal governance converts the classically modern image of the nation comprising diverse concerns, issues, interests, points of power, and points of view

into the nation on the model of Wal-Mart, where managers are “team leaders”, workers are “junior associates” and consumers are “guests” – each integrated into the smooth functioning of the whole and bound to its ends.” (Brown 2015, 211)

With each economic crisis of neoliberalism, more and more are being asked of the people for the well-being of the society, in the form of austerity measures for the salvation of the public good, becoming precarious for the economy and society, letting go of one’s rights as a professional worker including benefits and pensions as well as acceptance of a ruthless world order where even the most basic human needs can be met only through privatized resources. No longer in the domain of political rights but that of economic decision making, the eradication of rights is acceptable and even necessary. As responsible citizens, the people are asked to reconcile their differences and to put the economic growth of their country above all else. Having lost the power of collective bargaining, the individual stands alone against large corporations and the government that serves them. Neoliberalism’s promise was to liberate the individual from the pressures of the state and the society but it ended up liberating big business from the pressures of their employees who now willingly make the necessary sacrifices.

7. CONCLUSION

Foucault investigated the history of governmentality throughout the lectures he gave at the Collège de France, under the titles of *Society Must be Defended*, *Security, Territory, Population*, and *Birth of Biopolitics*. His account of the regime of truth of neoliberalism, founded on the principle of political economy to create the modern homo economicus and on the practices of subjectivity and subjectivation which allow for the exploitation of human capital remains very relevant for the problems that we are facing as a society today.

I argued in this thesis that Foucault's assertion that the techniques of modern government are both individualizing and totalizing has been proved to be true to a level that maybe Foucault himself might not have imagined. The individualizing and totalizing knowledge-power apparatus of neoliberalism has succeeded to isolate the individual from the society and to destroy means of collective resistance against the violation of democratic rights.

In *Madness and Civilization* and *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault takes a look at epidemics over the course of history; lepers in the Middle Ages, plague in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and smallpox in the eighteenth century. With leper in the Middle Ages, the principle of exclusion was executed through laws, regulations and religious rituals. People with leper were separated from the others and they were not permitted to leave the leprosariums which were widespread throughout Europe. Foucault argues that the principle of exclusion continued to serve governments in the management of criminals and insane.

With plague in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the disciplinary approach was evident; detailed rules and regulations pertaining to what should and should not be done by sick people were designed with quarantine regulations specifying the time intervals for sick people to go out and the kind of interactions that are permitted between them.

With smallpox in the eighteenth century, the prevailing instruments of government have been those that Foucault refers to as “technologies of security”. Instead of exclusion or quarantine practices, management of the population as a whole was targeted with statistical models. One can say that the technologies of security provide the least amount of direct intervention to individuals and therefore accommodate for a certain level of freedom for the individual. They are not visible like the governmental practices of sovereignty or of disciplinary methods but combined with security technologies of the modern times, they are no less hegemonic.

Foucault argued that modern governmentality incorporated the individualizing and totalitarian practices of pastoral power. In Christianity, access to truth required that one abandoned oneself for the purification of one’s soul. Salvation was only possible through confession, which required the discovery of the darkest depths of one’s being and giving up of this knowledge to someone else. Christianity initiated the government of sacrifice and individualism; the ideal in ancient Greek thought of care for oneself gave way to the principle of redemption through self-abandonment. With modernity, the constitution of the world as the spiritual experience of the subject was replaced with objectification of the subject, objectification of relationships and objectification of the self. There was the alienation of the individual from one’s body and spirit, attaching one’s existence to an identity that was produced by the regime of truth. The individualistic and totalitarian technologies of government of Christianity became techniques of modern governmentality. Salvation was possible for the individual, not the community. The ethics of religion was replaced by the ethics of the enterprise. Freedom became the ability of the individual to govern his life as a personal enterprise and to invest one’s desires and aspirations in the improvement of human capital for the maximization of global economic output.

Now with the Covid-19 outbreak, we can observe exclusionary and disciplinary governmental techniques along with regulatory security measures being put to use to fight the

crisis. Borders have been closed, quarantine requirements are implemented and vaccine rollouts have started. Once again, the crisis is seen as an economic game and an opportunity for the few. Countries are focused on who can afford the vaccine or the closing of its borders. The notion of freedom is diluted to the freedom not to wear a mask and not to care for others. No one seems to embrace the fact that the world is in this crisis together and that we will overcome it not person by person or country by country but together, all of us as one.

The truth is we are experiencing the dire consequences of our acceptance of the regime of truth of neoliberalism, the dismantling of the social infrastructure and the lack of a strong public infrastructure for health, education and social welfare. People are paying the price of the neoliberal governmentality which promoted short-term financial gains over the protection of the society and the rights of the people. It is not surprising that governments of even the richest countries, having abandoned their emergency plans in spite of the warnings of the experts, were left without adequate resources to properly manage such a crisis. Even though Covid-19 is a relatively undeadly virus when compared with some of the other viruses, it has caused the death of more than three million people in the last year.

One can observe the regime of truth of biopolitics at work in the management of the crisis where the population is regarded as “bodies replaced by general biological processes”. The pandemic is monitored by people all over the world as a mathematical count of bodies, with a table of statistical figures at the side of the TV screen. “Death is outside the power relationship” says Foucault,

“Death is beyond the reach of power, and power has a grip on it only in general, overall and statistical terms. Power has no control over death, but it can control mortality... In the right of the sovereignty, death was the moment of the most obvious and most spectacular manifestation of the absolute power of the sovereign; death now

becomes, in contrast the moment when the individual escapes all power, falls back on himself and retreats, so to speak, into his own privacy. Power no longer recognizes death. Power literally ignores death.” (Foucault 2003b, 248)

Foucault foresaw that biopower would ultimately gather the resources not only to manage life but also to generate life and that its power, the power to produce life, would surpass that of the sovereign, represented by the right to kill. It is at that point that biopower would escape any level of control by the human civilization.

“This excess of power appears when it becomes technologically and politically possible for man not only to manage life but to make it proliferate, to create living matter, to build the monster, and ultimately to build viruses that cannot be controlled and that are universally destructive. This formidable extension of biopower, unlike what I was just saying about atomic power, will put it beyond all human sovereignty” (Foucault 2013, 254)

Biopower has reached its limit and today’s world is dominated by artificial intelligence where social media has created its own regime of truth based on algorithms that generate the most profit. It is the world of biological weapons and lab experiments that allow scientists to create new living organisms. The human civilization is facing one of the most difficult challenges of all times. In Foucault’s words:

“Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are. We have to imagine and to build up what we could be to get rid of this kind of political “double bind”, which is the simultaneous individualization and totalization of modern power structures. The conclusion would be that the political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is... to liberate us both from the state and from the type of individuation linked to the state. We have to promote new forms of

subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality that has been imposed on us for several centuries.” (Foucault 2003c, 134)

It is only at the limit that the search for freedom can be initiated. It may be the time to ask ourselves whether we have reached the limit of individualism that promised freedom for mankind, whether there can be freedom for the individual without the freedom of the community, whether society is purely an economic game of self-interested individuals and whether economic truth is politically neutral. As Wendy Brown writes, we have reached the point where:

“most have ceased to believe in the human capacity to craft and sustain a world that is humane, free, sustainable, and above all, modestly under human control. This loss of conviction about the human capacity to craft and steer its existence or even to secure its future is the most profound and devastating sense in which modernity is “over”... Insistence that another world is possible runs opposite to this tide of despair, this abandoned belief in human capacities... The perpetual treadmill of a capitalist economy that cannot cease without collapsing is now the treadmill on which every being and activity is placed, and horizons of all other meanings and purposes shrink accordingly. This is the civilizational turning point that neoliberal rationality marks, its postmodernism and deep antihumanism, its surrender to a felt and lived condition of human impotence, unknowingness, failure and irresponsibility.” (Brown 2015, 222)

The principles and ideas of neoliberalism are losing their relevance in today’s society. New generations who have no loyalty to their employers and who refuse to be the enterprise subject are in search for alternative forms of subjectivity. The rise in the prevalence of populist regimes and of anti-democratic governmental practices demonstrate the effort on the

part of governments to make the people governmentalizable again. Another world is not only possible but as we are bearing witness with the Covid-19 pandemic, it is urgently and unquestionably required. There is no time to waste; the human civilization will have to produce a new understanding of life and of truth before it destroys humanity and the planet along with it.

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