FREEDOM NOT YET

Liberation and the Next World Order | Kenneth Surin

FREEDOM NOT YET

NEW SLANT:
RELIGION, POLITICS,
AND ONTOLOGY

A series edited by
Creston Davis,
Philip Goodchild,
and Kenneth Surin

Kenneth Surin

FREEDOM NOT YET

Liberation and the Next World Order

DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Durham and London

2009

© 2009 Duke University Press
All rights reserved
Printed in the United States
of America on acid-free paper ∞
Designed by Amy Ruth Buchanan
Typeset in Carter + Cone Galliard
by Tseng Information Systems, Inc.
Library of Congress Cataloging-in-
Publication data and republication
acknowledgments appear on the last
printed page of this book.

Frontispiece: James Baker Hall, *Thorns*.
Courtesy of the James Baker Hall Archive.

For Andrew Maclehose

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments ix

Introduction 1

PART I

1. The Complementary Deaths of the Thinking Subject and of the Citizen Subject 21
2. Producing a Marxist Concept of Liberation 34
3. Postpolitical Politics and Global Capitalism 65
4. The Exacerbation of Uneven Development: Analysis of the Current Regime of Accumulation 94
5. The Possibility of a New State I: Delinking 125

PART II

6. Models of Liberation I: The Politics of Identity 141
7. Models of Liberation II: The Politics of the Place of the Subject 165
8. Models of Liberation III: The Politics of the Event 197
9. Models of Liberation IV: The Religious Transcendent 226
10. Models of Liberation V: Nomad Politics 241

PART III

11. The Possibility of a New State II: Heterotopia 265
12. Prospects for the New Political Subject and Liberation 285

Conclusion 295

Notes 299
Bibliography 371
Index 407

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to Janell Watson for much help given in countless ways while this book was written. Reynolds Smith, my editor at Duke University Press, was exemplary. Andrew Maclehose was my first teacher in economics and philosophy. He will not agree with many of my arguments, but my debt to him has been immense.

Dem an' dem economical plan
Still can't find solution
Borrowin' money fe lend
World Bank a nuh wi fr'en

Is life an' debt all wi a fret
Life an' debt freedom not yet

MUTABARUKA, *Life and Debt*

We shed blood all these years in order to buy
land at market prices?

USULUTÁN *campesino*, 1992,
quoted in Elisabeth Jane Wood, *Forging Democracy from Below*

Men of good fortune often cause empires to fall.

LOU REED, *Berlin*

Selbst in dem sagenhaften Atlantis
Brüllten doch in der Nacht, wo das Meer es verschlang,
Die Ersaufenden nach ihren Sklaven

(Even in fabled Atlantis
The night the ocean engulfed it
The drowning still screamed for their slaves)

BERTOLT BRECHT, "Questions from a Worker Who Reads"

Introduction

Periodizations (not to be confused with chronologies, which merely indicate the dates of events), no matter how rough and ready, are indispensable for any understanding, at the systemic level, of the emergence and consolidation of political systems and institutions and their underlying structures of economic production and accumulation. Where periodization is concerned, the argument of this book is framed by two emblematic or symbolic dates, 1989 and 2001. At the time of writing it is possible that 2008 may be added to these symbolic dates at some future time, given the fact that there is a growing body of economically informed opinion coalescing around the view that the bank liquidity crisis which started in 2008 represents the most critical moment for modern capitalism since the great crash of 1929. It is, however, much too early to fasten ourselves to this judgment; suffice to say that the argument of this book, which has been in the process of formulation since the mid-1990s, is that the current financial crisis, like its predecessor economic crises, is broadly explicable in terms of a marxist (or neo-marxist) model of the inherently problematic structure of capitalist development. That is to say, the financial crisis which emerged in 2008 is the product of deep and postponed tensions and impasses in the capitalist system of accumulation, pressures, and deadlocks which are constitutive of the system itself, so that their removal will require a supersession of the system itself.[1]

1989

The year 1989, invariably associated with the fall of Soviet-style communism, coincides in the minds of many with the apogee of the political project associated with Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. This political project

was trumpeted by its proponents as an American or British "renaissance" in the world order of that time. It was "morning again in America," said the ever-smiling Reagan (probably mindful of the need to create as much "media separation" between the now-famous images of his beaming optimism on America's behalf and the vote-losing sepulchral earnestness of his predecessor, Jimmy Carter). Thatcher in turn repeatedly invoked the reputed Victorian zenith of Britain's imperial supremacy in her pronouncements about her government's policies: "We must return to Victorian values," she brayed on such occasions. The Reagan-Thatcher project was of course premised on a staunch anti-Sovietism in particular, and a repudiation of any kind of "left" collective politics in general.

The Reagan-Thatcher project was in turn a response to the growing economic sclerosis which led to the downfall of the so-called Golden Age of postwar capitalist development, an era of relative overall prosperity which extended from 1945 to 1975 and which involved a protracted boom in mass production and mass consumption, to which the French gave the felicitous term *les trentes glorieuses*.[2] The economic complement of the political dimensions of the Reagan-Thatcher venture was neoliberalism, that is, the "free market" ideology which viewed the 1970s collapse of the long postwar economic expansion as the outcome of allegedly systemic, as opposed to inadvertent or merely contingent, impediments to the operation of markets and market forces. This neoliberal contention was in turn buttressed by declarations about so-called labor market rigidities (invariably attributed by Reagan and Thatcher to the "excessive" bargaining power of labor unions), "crippling" government regulation and intervention, "exorbitant" tax burdens placed by "big government" on heroic but somehow still hapless "entrepreneurs" (apparently some things never change; this, after all, was the overwhelming refrain of John McCain's 2008 presidential campaign, with its mindless and repeated salutations at campaign rallies of the tax-phobic "Joe the plumber"), as well as the allegedly paralyzing effects of a costly welfare system said to be laden with "disincentives" for the working force (one recalls here the moral panic generated by Reagan and his handlers around the fantasy figure of the "welfare queen," typically depicted as a black single mother who drove a Cadillac to pick up her welfare check).[3]

The 1970s economic disintegration associated with the demise of the Golden Age was therefore to be addressed by a simple policy prescription, according to the soon to be ascendant neoliberals: to make things better, said the followers of Reagan and Thatcher, governments should remove or ame-

liorate all these restrictive policies and their pointless rigidities in order to give markets and market forces a much freer hand. Governments, especially, had no business trying to control markets. *Deregulation* and *privatization* were thus adopted as key guiding principles, and monetarism and attention to the supply side became the favored governmental financial policy tools; this was the essence of the Reagan-Thatcher ideology (though as Jacques Mazier, Maurice Baslé, and Jean-François Vidal point out, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD] did temper this neoliberal approach with some elements of Keynesianism in its policy frameworks, and Reagan's overstuffed defense budgets, and his administration's willingness to run massive budget deficits, did amount to a kind of "military Keynesianism").[4]

This contrived evacuation of the political sphere in the somewhat disingenuous name of "small government" (Thatcher, after all, greatly augmented centralized government in Britain by virtually dissolving all of its subnational municipal structures, and George W. Bush dangerously, and some say unconstitutionally, advanced the prerogatives of the executive branch of government after September 11), along with the cod wisdom that "everything should be left to the market because the market knows best," helped create a political void, especially now that the collapse of the Eastern bloc has left the United States and its close allies in an uncontested globally hegemonic position.

With the gutting of the substantive political formations and their associated practices and strategies put in place by the regulated capitalism of the Euro-American postwar era, politics in the post-1970s West was increasingly degraded into the mere management of voter opinion, involving primarily the mass media–focused orchestration of "hot button" issues capable of mobilizing largely docile electorates. (Examples of such issues come easily to mind: the anxieties of American "security moms" after September 11; gay marriage and gun rights in the United States; the antisocial behavior of unruly inner-city youth, called "lager louts" and "racaille" [scum] by Tony Blair and Nicolas Sarkozy, respectively; campaigns to repatriate undocumented immigrants and radical Islamic clerics in London allegedly hell-bent on replacing British law with *sharia*; the frowned-upon but titillatingly publicized sexual practices of polygamist sects in the American West; and so on.)

In the course of such events, the traditional dividing lines between "left" and "right" came to be blurred or erased, as politics in the West became more and more a matter of occupying a palpably mythical "center," this being the

presumed location where electoral majorities, no matter how ad hoc, could most easily be put together by the constant trumpeting of such hot-button issues, at least in theory or psephological fantasy.[5]

The nodal point of this by now epochal shift was subsequently located in the political movements associated with Bill Clinton and Tony Blair, whose basic though unstated function was to underwrite and consolidate the transformations brought about by Thatcher and Reagan and their acolytes. Blair's "Third Way" and the American president's "Clintonomics" involved the further "de-social democratization" (the term used by Gerassimos Moschonas) of society as the neoliberalism instituted by their predecessors, far from being tempered, came to be even more fully entrenched by Blair and Clinton.[6] The political void created by today's ubiquitous economic managerialism in the West (hence the mantra "What is good for Wall Street is good for all of us," admittedly not heard so much during the economic meltdown of 2008–9) and the accompanying deracination of civil society, have been compensated for ideologically by a spurious politics of human rights and the taking of the society of the spectacle to levels undreamed of by Guy Debord and his colleagues in the Situationist movement. "Human rights" interventions (of the kind undertaken in the past decade or so in Kosovo, Sierra Leone, East Timor, Liberia, and Darfur) were designed to show that the "new" politics espoused by Blair and Clinton (and it should be emphasized that such human rights interventions were not disavowed by the 2008 American presidential candidates, John McCain and Barack Obama) was premised on what gave the appearance of being a resolute and sincere ethical core. However, the vapidity of such appeals to human rights was quickly revealed by the West's failure to do anything during the terrible Rwandan genocide, its silence in the face of Russian atrocities in Chechnya (Russia, like Israel, said it was merely fighting "Islamic terrorism" in its own land), the well-documented abuses perpetrated by the pro-Western Sri Lankan government against its Tamil minority population, and the unending passivity of Europe and the United States in the face of Israel's brutal dispossession of the Palestinian people.[7]

Meanwhile political spectacles continue to proliferate. One recalls the British Conservative agriculture minister John Selwyn Gummer force-feeding beef burgers to his young daughters in front of television cameras at the peak of Britain's "mad cow" crisis in the 1980s in a piteous attempt to convince viewers that eating British beef at that time was safe, and Blair's artful manipulation of the Princess Diana effect at the time of her death. It is also hard not to notice the incessant pandering to second-rate film actors,

elderly rock musicians, sports personalities, "celebrity" journalists, and media performers (hence the obligatory appearances on *Saturday Night Live* and the shows hosted by Oprah Winfrey and Jon Stewart in the United States and by Sir Michael Parkinson and Sir David Frost in the United Kingdom), evinced by Clinton, Blair, Sarkozy, and their followers, as well as the circus performances that now pass for summit meetings (the mandatory group photos of leaders clad in identical batik shirts or some other "native" costume of the host country). Many will recall George W. Bush's grotesquely staged "Mission Accomplished" aircraft-carrier landing, as well as his much publicized cycle ride with Lance Armstrong soon after the latter won the Tour de France for a record seventh time. There is also the seeming need at some stage during an election campaign for nearly every (white) American politician to be televised in a cowboy hat riding a horse or toting a rifle while wearing hunting camouflage.[8] The list can be extended nearly to infinity.

At the same time, the neoliberal economic agenda has been prosecuted with unremitting fervor by its sponsors in the advanced industrialized countries, and despite the back-slapping televised appearances that American and European government ministers make with co-opted celebrities such as Bono and Bob Geldof and the much trumpeted but largely cosmetic "initiatives" on global poverty announced every few years at G8 summits, the income gap between rich and poor countries continues to grow.[9] The neoliberal economic credo (emblematically associated here with 1989), while it has come under increasing criticism in recent years, especially after the spectacular collapses accompanying the 2000 dot-com and the 2008 U.S. credit market bubbles and the regionwide economic failure of the East Asian economies in the late 1990s, nonetheless shows no signs of running out of steam at the ideological level. Nor does it give any indication that those who manage the world economic system will alter its course to take this planet's dispossessed masses significantly into account.

In light of the spectacular economic failures just mentioned, all of which were initially publicized as neoliberal success stories, the advocates of the neoliberal prospectus have had to be much more judiciously understated in their support for it. But the ensuing subterfuges and disguises used by these advocates of neoliberalism do not diminish its underlying hold on the minds of those shaping public policy across the globe. Hence in the 2008 U.S. presidential election campaign, the same old strident advocacy of trickle-down tax cuts was made by the Republican Party candidate, John McCain, and the dogma that "only privatization can save the U.S. social security system" is voiced repeatedly, while the regulator of the United Kingdom's postal

service (the Royal Mail) recently issued a call for its partial privatization.[10] It is one thing to discredit neoliberalism as an intellectual project (and this is increasingly being done); it is another to unfix its grip on the minds of decision-making elites in Europe and North America in ways that could bring about an epochal transformation of our current system of production and accumulation.

9/11/2001

While neoliberalism has held sway for over three decades as an economic and political ideology, it has to be acknowledged that the events now placed under the title "9/11/2001" have also had a very considerable impact on developed, developing, and nondeveloped countries alike, mainly because of the way these events have been used to mobilize American public opinion in an avowedly nationalist and exceptionalist direction. The political catechism identified with the American neoconservative movement—to wit, American exceptionalism, the adamant subordination of the rest of the world to America's interests, America's pursuit of unilateral and preemptive war in the name of "the struggle against terror" (as the former "war on terror" is now called in U.S. government circles during these more chastened, post-Iraq occupation, times)—has been given a free rein since the Al Qaeda attacks in New York and Washington.[11]

If neoliberalism is the *economic* regime unashamedly favored by America and its allies, then neoconservatism is the *political* complement strategically linked to this neoliberal popular religion. And if 1989 is the year marking the clear ascendancy of neoliberalism, then 9/11/2001 signifies the apotheosis of power for its neoconservative counterpart.[12]

There is of course no such thing as a "pure" politics existing only by and for itself. Every kind of politics is a politics motivated and driven by some regnant ideological notion of the nature and scope of the political. Hence for most of the seventeenth century the prevailing political framework in Europe was defined by the historic compromise between European aristocracies and a powerfully emergent mercantile bourgeoisie; as a result of this conciliation a politics marked by a deep and defining interest in questions of sovereignty and the rights of the (individual) citizen came to prevail. The political writings of Grotius, Hobbes, Pufendorf, Locke, and Spinoza are concerned overwhelmingly with such questions of individual rights and their connection with sovereignty, questions which could not have been posed by their predecessors in the Middle Ages.[13]

Similarly, in the eighteenth century a vision of politics highlighting the issue of the artificiality or mere conventionality of the political and social could begin to be addressed, now that Grotius, Hobbes, and others had already posed the key question of what came to be known as "constitutionality." Exemplary in this regard are Rousseau, Hume, and Kant, for whom the political is fundamentally a matter of contrivance or arrangement, so that constitutionality itself had an irreducibly factitious character. Perhaps the most radical acknowledgment of the sheer contingency that pervades social and political structures is Hume's statement (which is almost an uncanny prefiguration of later theories of ideology), "As Force is always on the side of the governed [for the many are governed by the few], the governors have nothing to support them but opinion. It is, therefore, on opinion only that government is founded; and this maxim extends to the most despotic and most military governments, as well as the most free and popular."[14]

This Humean appreciation of the artificiality that pervades all political and moral orders extends, with a number of significant differences, to Rousseau and Kant. Germane in this context is Rousseau's principle that civil society is the primary source of the evils that afflict its members, that people are what their government makes them into, and that the realm of the political therefore affords the only means that humans have of remedying these afflictions.[15] While it may seem implausible and even egregious to lump Kant with Hume and Rousseau, the commonality among these thinkers arises from Kant's insistence that all action can ultimately be reduced to the working of the human will and that the unconstrained capacity to exercise one's will (albeit in accordance with the law) is the basis of freedom, culminating in the insight that the ideal polity is one which enables the freedom (or "spontaneity") of one being to be reconciled with the freedom (or "spontaneities") of other beings according to a universal law.[16]

For Hume, Rousseau, and Kant, politics is thus essentially a set of institutional practices designed for the ordering of the human will, the primacy of the unimpeded will (except, where Kant is concerned, when the law is breached) reflecting the complete ascendancy and self-confidence of the bourgeoisie in eighteenth-century Europe. The problem of the political which preoccupied Grotius, Hobbes, Spinoza, and others—their primary goal being to produce a figure of the (early modern) citizen that could be reconciled with the ontology and explanatory schemas of the mechanist physical science of the time, as well as the outer limits of any prevailing Christian orthodoxy—was by the time of Hume, Rousseau, and Kant supplanted by a conception of the political in which the figures of the citizen and civil society

could be taken for granted (at least philosophically). It was now possible, in this period of a by now fully anchored mercantile capitalism, to install the image of a "free" and entirely factitious civil society in which citizens could begin to be at home in the laissez-faire *mentalité* of the burgeoning capitalist markets.[17]

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, with the emergence of the main elements of what was to become the fully fledged modern European state system (as opposed to the early modern Westphalian dispensation of 1648), the several strands of Romantic nationalism began to permeate visions of the political. The Romantic repudiation of the legacy of the Enlightenment of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was manifested most directly in the linking of the state form to conceptions of ethnicity. Civil society itself was subsumed by the structures of the nation-state, as the notion of sovereignty was yet again transformed: where once sovereignty reposed in the people's assembly based on the active participation of citizens, now the people were disaggregated and only their representatives assembled. The people thus had to be unified by another principle, based this time on the nation-state defined, tribally, on the basis of ethnic and thus ultimately linguistic affiliation.[18] Martin Thom quotes Madame de Staël from her work *Des circonstances actuelles* on this powerful historical shift: according to Madame de Staël, while in bygone epochs liberty "consisted of whatever ensured the citizens the greatest possible share in the exercise of power[,] liberty in modern times consists of whatever guarantees the independence of citizens from governments."[19]

This paradigm of the political underwent a further transformation in the second half of the nineteenth century, when industrial capitalism superseded its mercantilist precursor, making it necessary for the paradigm's ethnically oriented nationalism to find ways of accommodating the industrial working classes of most Western European nations, as well as North America. In this period, electoral franchises were broadened, albeit grudgingly and unevenly (women were excluded even as the franchise was being extended; in most Western industrial nations women were denied the vote until after World War I). The altered paradigm managed to retain its laissez-faire economic orientation, though it was now adjusted for the ethnically bounded nation-state, with its growing population of proletarianized labor.[20]

After World War I the industrial capitalism of the previous period had to contend with the growing need to bring about a compromise between labor and capital, mainly as a consequence of the urgent requirement that the devastating economic consequences of the Great War of 1914–18 be addressed.

And so the first slow steps leading somewhat unevenly to the welfare capitalism of the Golden Age after World War II were taken. This compromise between labor and capital received a further and vital impetus from the Great Depression and World War II, and from these events came the enhanced institutionalization of the social democratic doctrines that occurred in most Western European countries during this period. (The New Deal was viewed as the American correlate of European social democracy, to the extent that it too required American capital to compromise with labor.)

The vision of the political that prevailed in this historical phase (the time from the Great Depression onward) still favored the nation-state as the primary locus of social and economic activity. But this notion was augmented by the principle that the individual political subject was entitled to a wide range of social rights: universal health care and education; subsidized housing, child care, and public transportation; employment and wage protections; state provision for old-age pensions; and a relatively capacious overall social safety net. The compromise between capital and labor notwithstanding, there still existed an effective dividing line between left and right; while in Europe during World War II the parties of the right tended to be Christian Democrat and mildly nationalist, their rival Social Democratic parties often had electorally viable communist parties to their left, which meant that redistributionist economic programs, no matter how cautious and mild, always had a viable political constituency. Hence the situation obtaining in Britain today, where the "new" Labour of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown is aligned with the Conservative Party as the two contending parties of the identifiable center-right, leaving the more or less centrist Liberal Democrats and the Welsh and Scottish nationalist parties to be the *more* radical parliamentary bloc, would have been simply unthinkable during the postwar Golden Age.[21]

As I mentioned earlier, this substantive political demarcation between left and right started to disappear when neoliberalism became hegemonic from the 1970s onward, and this loss became pervasive after the collapse of "actually existing communism" in 1989. A market zealotry which views politics solely in terms of positioning conformist citizens in front of the market, and which insists that economic equality can be presented to "realistic" voters only as an abstract "equality of opportunity" (as opposed to requiring even a minimal degree of actual income redistribution)—these convictions being this market fundamentalism's main propellant—had dovetailed with the wholesale incorporation of electoral politics into the society of the spectacle from the 1980s onward.

In the process, politics in Western Europe and North America has been put in the service of a sometimes bullying, sometimes cajoling populism (which is what the hugely revamped post-9/11 American nationalism really amounts to in domestic terms) that has effectively eviscerated the political by turning it into the mere business of manipulating and dragooning voters according to the largely fictitious rhythms of election cycles. In this "postpolitical" politics (not to be conflated with the "apolitical" annihilation of anything to do with politics), politicians and their attendant logos and slogans are advertised and marketed to their somewhat bemused and docile constituencies like the hard-to-differentiate fizzy beverages typically found in American and European vending machines. Politicians in America and Britain today have to possess a "brand" in order to succeed; hence in the 2008 U.S. presidential election, the McCain "Maverick" brand apparently flopped with the electorate, while Obama's "Mr. Cool" brand was deemed to have been a success. There is no other way to account for the influence wielded in the name of the prevailing market fundamentalism by such advisers as Karl Rove and Alistair Campbell on George W. Bush and Tony Blair, respectively. Indeed in the 2004 and 2008 U.S. presidential elections the category of the "low-information voter"—who knows almost nothing of a political platform or prospectus, but who can be relied on to be enticed by the media-conveyed "brand" of this or that politician with an appealing "personality," typically reflected in the ability to speak with a syrupy voice (Ronald Reagan), or having an alluring smile (Bill Clinton), or possessing a folksy demeanor (George W. Bush before his catastrophic decline in popularity helped expose this pretense for what it was), being blessed with "good hair" (John Edwards before his fall from grace), the ability to drop at will an upper-class accent for the more déclassé "Mockney" (Tony Blair), or having the ability to wink suggestively at an audience (Sarah Palin)—became crucial for the pollsters, focus groups, and public relations consultants of the major political parties.[22]

Hand in hand with this marketization of the liberal-democratic political sphere has been the full-scale conversion of political parties into post-ideological vote-harvesting machines run by professional cadres primarily attuned to the desires of corporate interests. Ross McKibbin describes this development thus:

> The typical politician today, whether minister, shadow minister or "adviser," proceeds from student politics (often with a politics degree), to political consultancy or a think-tank, to "research" or the staff of an active politician. He or she is "good at politics"—which means being good at

> the mechanics of politics, not necessarily its ideas. The consequence is that the mechanics drives out the ideas, and the immediate expels the long-term. Politics is what the *Daily Mail* [a right-wing British tabloid] says today; the long-term is what the *Daily Mail* might say tomorrow. The crucial relationship now is between the politician, the journalist and the "adviser."[23]

Looking at this from another angle, it could be said that modern politics (that is, the politics of the West since 1776 or 1789), until the past couple of decades at least, has always been about the struggle to position or reposition sovereignty in some institutional formation or strategic mode of political agency (or both, more often than not). However, in today's "low-intensity democracy" sovereignty reposes mostly, if not entirely, in the market, and given the centrality of the self-serving internal apparatuses of the present-day political party (which, by being almost exclusively media-focused and driven by the systemically induced compulsion to garner votes for the sake of being at the top of the electoral count no matter what, ends up operating to the detriment of an adequately functioning public sphere), the "democratic citizen" of today has been left to dangle in the resultant void.[24] As McKibbin puts it, "The political élite is now probably more divorced from society, and from any wider organising principles or ideology, than at any other time in the last 150 years."[25]

What is desperately needed today, therefore, is a new sociopolitical settlement, at once practical and theoretical, that will reclaim the political for the project of a democracy that will always place the interests of the dispossessed at its heart. Given the present tarnished state of the political (to wit, the "media-theatricalized" politics referred to by Jacques Derrida) in Western Europe and the United States, this democratic project can advance itself only as a project of liberation, a liberation from the dispossession that is the fate of the overwhelming majority of children, women, and men on this planet. This book asks what, if anything, marxism has to say about this putative project of liberation.

The bank credit crisis of 2008 and 2009 has provided a massive impetus to commentary, some of it bordering on the imbecilic, even though the likely trajectories of this crisis have yet to reach a point of clear discernment. The aim of this book is not to deliver prognostications on events such as this, momentous though they may be, but to analyze the economic structure which provides enabling conditions for such economic crises as the Third World debt crisis of the 1980s (from which some developing economies have never

truly recovered), the Mexican peso crisis of 1994, the Asian financial collapse in 1997, the dot-com failure in 2001, and now the credit market upheavals. As long as this capitalist structure continues to exist, it is likely that such crises will be chronically recurrent. My argument focuses on this capitalist structure, and while I advert to some of these crises for what they reveal about this underlying economic configuration, I proceed on the premise that the occurrence of an economic crisis is always contingent on the possibilities and capacities inherent in this structure. An analytic primacy thus has to be accorded to this structure, as opposed to the descriptions (however accurate and helpful they may be) of this or that specific crisis.

Marxism Today

For marxism it is a commonplace, enjoined by the mutual permeation of theory and practice, that things occur in specific and determinate ways, and possibilities in some situations are unavoidably conjoined with their absence in other circumstances, so that material limits invariably coexist with openings and opportunities. It is a truism also that liberation in the face of a massive dispossession must involve change. Marxism is first and foremost a theory and a practice of historical and political change, involving the following levels:

— A description and analysis of the cycles of capitalist accumulation and consumption
— A political theory and practice of liberation premised above all on the supersession of capitalist relations of production, it being understood that the space of the political is opened up by capitalist relations of production
— A reading of the history of philosophy, since philosophy is the science of the categories of the virtual, the possible, and the real, these categories being integral to any depiction and analysis of social being
— An analysis of sociocultural formations and subjects, since society and culture are the context in which such subjects act

Each of these levels develops in different and specific ways. However, the insight that breaks and continuities at one level are usually reflected at other levels is central to marxism. So, all else being equal, the existence or absence of an opportunity to engage in a quest for social and political liberation is likely to be accompanied by the existence or absence of a parallel crisis of production and accumulation at the economic level, and vice versa.

Any historical and political crisis is thus just as likely to be a crisis of categories, and the current crisis (the one that has existed since the demise of the Golden Age of postwar capitalist expansion in the 1970s) is also a crisis of the category of social class and the accompanying notion of a sociopolitical struggle. The material failure of a previous kind of institutional politics, something palpably evident after 1989 (our emblematic date), is reflected in the failure or problematization of these key categories, in particular the category of class struggle and its attendant political aspirations. With the collapse of a politics enjoining a substantive separation between right and left and the emergence of a "postpolitical" politics based on media-oriented populist spectacles, the categories of social class and class struggle, of militancy in the broadest sense, were jeopardized or pushed to one side, as politics and postpolitics—in late capitalism this is a politics that is one and the same time populist *and* authoritarian—have become more and more a matter of getting the right media-friendly façade for the hypocritical and gleaming-eyed professional politician.[26]

Innovation and change at the level of the political is therefore absolutely crucial, and so has an undoubted ontological primacy for marxism. But just as important for marxism is the innovation or renovation of its categories, especially those that bear on the notion of liberation. If this is a time when real political innovation has become more unexpected than ever, then this is also likely to be a time that is ripe for unexpected innovation at the level of (marxist) theory and philosophy. This book addresses the question of this categoreal innovation.

This book has three main sections. The first deals with the current regime of accumulation, where I argue that financialization on a largely global scale is now the chief instrument of subordination and dependency on the part of the poorer nations, and that our conceptions of a globalized political economy must be modified to take account of this momentous shift toward a highly mobile financial capital. Those, me included, who started to make this argument in the 1990s, and who were greeted with some skepticism then, now (at the end of 2008) invariably find ourselves talking to the converted when advancing this claim.

The second section deals with the constitution of subjectivity, since subjectivity is one of the key arenas in which the struggles against dispossession take place. Subjectivity, or the realm of culture more generally, is conceived here as the repository of the forces and drives that enable human beings to be produced and reproduced as social beings. It is a truism that without this production and reproduction of social and subjective being there can be

no functioning economic order. The discussion in this section focuses on a number of key theorizations of subjectivity, and the emphasis here is philosophical, as opposed to the focus, inspired by social science, on international political economy in the first section.

The third section takes up the theme of liberation, and its key geopolitical proposition is the notion of an economic delinking on the part of the poorer nations. Where subjectivity is concerned, I argue that the precepts of a tired humanism need to be replaced by alternative conceptions of subjectivity and agency which do not require this jaded humanism as a premise; like liberal democracy, this concomitant humanism has failed in decisive ways to live up to what it promised, at least as a set of options materialized in a viable institutional politics. Is it possible to conceptualize (necessarily and unavoidably in theory but also necessarily for practice) something emancipatory that can potentially move the majority of human beings, disenfranchised and deprived as they are, beyond the reach of these increasingly evident systemic failures?

The following pages deal with the enabling conditions for these economic, political, and social failures. As I have indicated, my argument is avowedly marxist, and my motivating impulse is supplied by the conviction that the governing institutions and forces of our society are owned and managed by powerful elites, planetary in scale, paying lip service (if at all) to the veneer of accountability demanded by today's "thin" democracies. But the longing for something better, or less bad at any rate, cannot suffice by itself when it comes to launching an emancipatory project. Likewise the mere analysis of the fundamental structural impasses of "actually existing capitalism" is also not sufficient on its own. This analysis and the longing for a better world, indispensable though they are, need to be buttressed by a careful sense of where beyond "actually existing capitalism" the myriad forms of a creative and perhaps still to be imagined activism can take us. The failures of "actually existing socialism" associated here with the year 1989 mean that there can be no wholesale return to its previous forms and arrangements. The bureaucratically centralized state is dead, whether in its Soviet or milder corporatist forms. Which is not to say that there is no need for any kind of bureaucratic organization; after all, it is a commonplace that complex societies cannot function satisfactorily without at least a modicum of administrative scaffolding.

What we must aim for and at the same time experiment with, in my view, is something considerably to the political left of the nowadays skin-and-bone and barely living remnants of the previous social-democratic or New Deal

consensus (some would say this consensus in fact expired some time ago), while eschewing any longing for the shapes of a Soviet-style state socialism. But simply arguing for this vision will not advance us toward its implementation unless we also scrutinize rigorously the possible ways of realizing this vision, and have as well an adequate grasp of the obstacles likely to stand in the way of any concerted attempt to institute such a project of liberation. Where do we begin to make a start on this undertaking?

There has to be a vigorous democratization of our economic and political institutions; it is imperative that we find ways to create vastly strengthened mechanisms of accountability that cannot be kicked to the side so effortlessly by those with the power and influence gained without too much difficulty in our society by just about anyone with a fat bank balance and bulky investment portfolio. As part of this process of redemocratization it will also be necessary to weaken the hold of the professionalized oligarchies who today run the major European and American political parties (the kind of "no ideology please, only the electoral count matters" oligarchy basically contemptuous of the electorate) and to replace it with a political system with parties once again committed to substantive ideological positions (and thus at least embodying a real difference between right and left), in this way becoming a little more reflective of the ramified and often contradictory wishes of the electorate. The situation prevalent in Britain and the United States today, where the mechanisms of political representation are in the hands of two virtually indistinguishable center-right parties, will therefore have to be rectified quite radically. Any form of democracy heedful of these imperatives would already be much less "thin" than the neutered versions being paraded today.

In addition, the amply documented weakening of the bonds of communal solidarity in the United States and in Western Europe (though let us not become enamored of romantic notions of the "organic communities" of bygone ages) has had as one of its concomitants a perceptible decline in the level of political engagement (the big turnout in the U.S. presidential election of 2008 notwithstanding).[27] The upshot is that a strengthening of these communal bonds is probably a necessary condition for enhancing participation in democratic arrangements potentially more substantive than those currently sanctioned by today's "thin" or "low-intensity" democracies. The reinvention of such forms of collective solidarity (involving what Raymond Williams aptly called "resources for a journey of hope") is thus a crucial task for those invested in the project of liberation. There can be no guarantee that this reinvention will actually take place or succeed in the longer term—there

are no teleologically certified outcomes or "iron laws of history" here!—but that something like this reinvention is needed if the lives of the majority of human beings are to be bettered is a proposition that cannot really be gainsaid.

In some cases, these forms of collective solidarity and agency will have to be enacted at the national level (which is not to imply that they cannot also be ratified at a subnational or paranational level). In some countries there is also a vitally important place for a detribalized and popular civic nationalism, which may not be attainable in the immediate future or on a large enough initial scale, but which could nonetheless be indispensable for a project of liberation. (There are important lessons to be learned from the work of Tom Nairn on a civic as opposed to an ethnic nationalism.) This possibility will be discussed later, as will several other proposals concerning this project of liberation, once the conceptual scaffolding for them is set up in the subsequent chapters.The revolution I advert to should not be confused with something similar in the popular consciousness, namely, the stereotyped characterizations of "insurrection" or "rebellion." Insurrections and rebellions will occur as long as there are people who can no longer acquiesce in living conditions they find absolutely intolerable. There will certainly be times when such insurrections will help advance the course of liberation, and some when they will not. Only an abstract dogmatism will insist from the beginning that the lot of the downtrodden will never be improved by *any* recourse to an insurrectional violence. But by "revolution" I mean a fundamental and lasting transformation of the capitalist mode of production and accumulation and its accompanying structures of social relations, and a revolution of this kind may take many generations to bring to fruition (if indeed it were to succeed). Or a revolution may come about in a relatively short time, as was the case with the collapse of the former Eastern bloc in 1989–91. But the likelihood that this revolution will be long, involving as it does the fundamental supersession of the capitalist system, for now seems a less implausible scenario than that of a spectacular and rapid overturning of the present system.

The revolution may also be long because for the foreseeable future its eventual lineaments may be gleaned only indirectly, as opposed to being part of an explicit and quickly implementable political prospectus.[28] The exemplary militant in this situation will thus have to be not only active and engaged, but patient and persistent, and also alert to the possible emergence of hitherto undetectable modes of political and cultural expressivity.

As Raymond Williams put it, "Everything that I understand of the history of the long revolution leads me to the belief that we are still in its early

stages."[29] Or maybe, just maybe, the movement toward revolution could be at a somewhat later stage? We have no way of knowing, but what cannot be gainsaid is that those massively disadvantaged by this system have little or no choice but to engage in an economic and social struggle in which the beneficiaries of this system will not surrender their positions of advantage willingly and quickly.

PART I

CHAPTER 1

The Complementary Deaths of the Thinking Subject and of the Citizen Subject

The concept of the subject is one of philosophy's preeminent *topoi*, and like all philosophical concepts it operates in a field of thought defined by one or more internal variables. These internal variables are conjoined in diverse relationships with such external variables as historical epochs and political and economic processes and events, as well as functions which allow the concept and its associated variables to produce a more or less specific range of truth-effects.[1] The trajectory taken by the concept of the subject in the history of philosophy affords considerable insight into how this concept is produced, and as a result this philosophic-historical trajectory merits examination by anyone interested in this concept's creation.

The Classical Citizen Subject

There is a conventional wisdom in the history of philosophy regarding the more or less intrinsic connection between the metaphysical-epistemological project that seeks an absolute ground for thought or reason (What is it that enables reason to serve its legislative functions?) and the philosophico-political project of finding a ground in reason for the modus operandi of a moral and political subject (On what basis is reason able to legislate for the good life or right action?). According to the lineaments of what is by now a thoroughly well-seasoned narrative, the essential congruence between the rational subject of thought and the complementary subject of morality and politics was first posited by Plato and Aristotle. This unity between the two

kinds of subject then found its suitably differentiated way into the thought of Hobbes, Locke, Spinoza, Leibniz, Hume, Kant, and Hegel (and a host of their successors). The core of this narrative is expressed by the somewhat Kantian proposition, characteristic of the Enlightenment in general, that reason provides the vital and indispensable criterion by which all judgments concerning belief, morality, politics, and art are to be appraised, so that reason is the faculty that regulates the thinking being's activity. This activity is in turn the essential means for reason's deployment in any legitimate thinking about the world, that is, for the thinking being's capacity to describe and explain the world in ways that accord fundamentally with reason's precepts. And this precisely because reason is the irreducibly prior and enabling condition of any use of this capacity on the part of the subject.[2] Reason, in other words, constitutes the thinking being, and the activity of this being in turn enables reason to unfold dynamically (to provide a somewhat Hegelian gloss on this initially Kantian proposition). In the topography of this unfolding of reason, both rational thought and politics and ethics are deemed to find their dovetailing foundation.

The philosophical tradition provides another way of delineating this connection between the rational subject of thought and the moral-political subject, one that also derives its focal point from Kant. Using the distinction between a *subjectum* (i.e., the thing that serves as the bearer *of* something, be it consciousness or some other property of the self) and a *subjectus* (i.e., the thing that is subjected *to* something else), the tradition has included among its repertoire of concepts a figure of thought taken from medieval philosophy that hinges on the relation between the subjectum and the subjectus. Etienne Balibar, in his fascinating essay "Citizen Subject," uses this distinction to urge that we not identify Descartes's thinking thing (*res cogitans*) with the transcendental subject of thought that very quickly became an ineliminable feature of Enlightenment epistemology. Nothing could be further from the truth, says Balibar, because the human being is for Descartes the unity of a soul and a body, and this unity, which marks the essence of the human being, cannot be represented in terms of the subjectum (presumably because the subjectum, qua intellectual simple nature, can exist logically without requiring the presupposition of a unity between soul and body).[3] As the unity of a soul and a body, the human individual is not a mere intellectual simple nature, a subjectum, but is, rather, a subject in another, quite different sense. In this very different sense, the human individual is a subject transitively related to an other, a "something else," and for Descartes this "something else" is precisely the divine sovereignty. In other words, for Descartes the

human individual is really a subjectus and never the subjectum of modern epistemology, the latter in any case owing its discovery to Locke and not to Descartes. For Balibar, therefore, it is important to remember that Descartes, who is palpably a late scholastic philosopher, was profoundly engaged with a range of issues that had been central for his precursors in the medieval period, in particular the question of the relation of lesser beings to the supreme divine being. This was a question which both Descartes and the medieval philosophers broached, albeit in different ways, under the rubric of the divine sovereignty.

The Cartesian subject is thus a subjectus, one who submits, and this in at least two ways significant for both Descartes and medieval political theology: (1) the subject submits to the Sovereign who is the Lord God, and (2) the subject also yields to the earthly authority of the prince, who is God's representative on earth. As Descartes put it in his letter to Mersenne (15 April 1630), "Do not hesitate I tell you, to avow and proclaim everywhere, that it is God who has established the laws of nature, as a King establishes laws in his Kingdom."[4] From this passage, and from his other writings, it is clear that the notion of sovereignty was at once political *and* theological for Descartes, as it had been for the earlier scholastic philosophers.

This is not the place for a detailed discussion of Balibar's essay, or the magisterial work of Ernst Kantorowicz on this topic; the former, in addition to being a little brief (the section on Descartes is only intended to be an overview), is also not entirely new in what it proposes, since Leibniz, Arnauld, and Malebranche had long ago viewed Descartes, roughly their contemporary, as a follower of Augustine, who found philosophy's raison d'être in the soul's contemplation of its relation to God, and who therefore took the dependence of lesser beings on the divine eminence as philosophy's primary concern.[5]

But if Locke is the true inventor of the modern concept of the self, as Balibar maintains, who then is the real author of the fully fledged concept of the transcendental subject, if Balibar is indeed right to insist that it is not Descartes? The true culprit here, says Balibar, is not Descartes, but Kant, who needed the concept of the transcendental subject to account for the "synthetic unity" that provides the necessary conditions for objective experience. Kant in effect foisted onto Descartes a philosopheme that was really his own "discovery," with Heidegger as his more than willing subsequent accomplice in this dubious undertaking. The outcome of this grievous misattribution has been momentous for our understanding, or lack thereof, of the course taken by this branch of the history of philosophy.[6]

Kant, however, was about more than just the "discovery" of the transcendental subject. The Kantian subject also had to prescribe duties for itself in the name of the categorical imperative, and in so doing carve out a realm of freedom in nature that would enable this subject to free itself from a "self-inflicted tutelage" that arises when we can't make judgments without the supervision of an other; this of course includes the tutelage of the king. The condition for realizing any such ideal on the part of the enlightened subject is the ability to submit to nothing but the rule of reason in making judgments, and so freedom from the power of the despot when making one's judgments necessarily involves a critical repositioning of the place from which sovereignty is exercised. Kant declared that no more is the locus of sovereignty the body of the king, since this "tutelage" is stoppable only if the subject is able to owe its allegiance to a republican polity constituted by the rule of reason and nothing but the rule of reason. Whatever criticism Balibar levels at Kant for the (supposed) historical mistake he made with regard to Descartes, the philosopher from east Prussia nonetheless emerges as a very considerable figure in Balibar's account. For Kant also created the concept of a certain kind of practical subject, one who operates in the realm of freedom, and this practical subject, whose telos is the ultimate abolition of any kind of "self-inflicted tutelage," had to cease to be the "subject" of the king (i.e., the subjectus of Descartes and medieval political theology) in order to become a "self-legislating" rational being.[7]

Kant's great achievement therefore lay in his simultaneous creation of the transcendental subject (i.e., the subjectum of modern epistemology) and the philosophical discrediting of the subjectus of the previous theologico-philosophical and political dispensation. The concomitant of Kant's philosophical gutting of the "subject" who owed his fealty to the king was thus the political emergence of the republican citizen who from 1789 onward (though a good case can be made for including 1776 in this periodization) would supplant the subject/subjectus of the previous historical and philosophical epoch. In the process, Descartes's philosophical world of subjects who submit, albeit "irrationally" from the Kantian standpoint, to the laws of God and king was dislodged by Kant's world of "self-legislating" rational subjects who engage in this legislation precisely by adverting to the rational and non-theological notions of right and duty.

This new subject is the embodiment of right (*Recht*) and of the operation of practical reason (right being for Kant the outcome that can be guaranteed only by the proper use of practical reason). Furthermore the subject is considered a citizen to the extent that he or she embodies the general will,

in which case the only laws worthy of the name are those which "come only from the general, united will of the people."[8] Sovereignty is thus glossed by Kant through a recasting of the Rousseauan social contract. Laws are rationally promulgated only when they exemplify the general will, and this exemplification of the general will is possible only if there is a perfectly just civil constitution. As Kant put it in his "Idea of a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose," "The highest task which nature has set for mankind must therefore be that of establishing a society in which *freedom under external laws* would be combined to the greatest possible extent with irresistible force, in other words, of establishing a perfectly *just civil* constitution."[9] The outcome, as the philosophy textbooks tell us, was a crucial separation of the earthly from the heavenly city, of earthly sovereignty from divine sovereignty. However, if Kant is the true inaugurator of the Citizen Subject, then for Balibar, Michel Foucault is the great theorist of the transition from the world of monarchical and divine sovereignty to the world of rights and duties determined by the state and its apparatuses. Balibar concludes his essay with the following observation: "As to whether this figure [the Citizen Subject,] like a face of sand at the edge of the sea, is about to be effaced with the next great sea change, that is another question. Perhaps it is nothing more than Foucault's own utopia, a necessary support for that utopia's facticity."[10] I would like now to address the Foucauldian question left by Balibar for future consideration and pose the question of the current destination or fate of the Citizen Subject. To do this we have to look again at Kant.

The reason that constitutes the subject is perforce a Transcendental Reason. The obvious Kantian inflection here is not accidental, because the reason that grounds the subject is not a reason that can be specified within the terms of the activity of the subject: this reason is the basis of this subject's very possibility qua subject, and by virtue of that, reason is necessarily exterior to the "activity" of the thinking subject. Reason in this kind of employment is thus the activity of a single and universal quintessence whose object is reason itself, so that reason has necessarily to seek its ground within itself, as Hegel noted.[11] Reason, by virtue of its self-grounding, is perforce the writing of the Absolute.[12] The subject's ground, which has to reside in Reason itself, is therefore entirely and properly metaphysical, and any crisis of Transcendental Reason unavoidably becomes a philosophical crisis of the thinking subject. Kant himself was the first to realize this, though it was left to his philosophical successors in the movement known as "early Romanticism" (*Frühromantik*) to make the acknowledgment of this crisis of Transcendental Reason into a starting point for philosophical reflection.[13]

With Nietzsche, however, the hitherto radical figure of the transcendental subject is propelled into a crisis, and with this ostensibly terminal crisis the fundamental convergence between the rational-epistemological subject and the moral-political subject is denied any plausibility. We know from the textbooks of the history of philosophy that reason, insofar as it operates on both the understanding and the will, is placed by Nietzsche entirely within the ambit of the *Wille zur Macht*, so that power or desire becomes the enabling basis of any epistemological or moral and political subject, thereby irretrievably undermining or dislocating both kinds of subject. The "will to knowledge" for this Nietzschean-Foucauldian school of thought depends on a logically and psychologically antecedent "will to power." As a result of the intervention represented by Nietzsche, truth, goodness, and beauty, that is, the guiding transcendental notions for the constitution of this epistemological and moral-political subject, are henceforth to be regarded merely as the functions and ciphers of this supervening will to power. The same conventional wisdom also assures us that Marx and Freud likewise "undid" the two kinds of subject and thus undermined even further any basis for their essential congruence. The constellation formed by Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud (and their successors) shows both the transcendental subject and the ethicopolitical subject of action to be mere conceptual functions, lacking any substantial being (Kant having already argued in the *Critique of Pure Reason* that the subject of thought is not a substance).

This hackneyed narrative about the collective impact of the great "masters of suspicion" is fine as far it goes; what is far more interesting, however, is the story of what had to come after Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud, of what it is that was going to be done with the ruins of the epistemological and moral and political subject who ostensibly had reigned from Plato to Hegel before being dethroned in the late nineteenth century.[14] It is interesting that Balibar, who is as resolute a marxist as anyone could be in these supposedly post-marxist days, appears not to take on board in "Citizen Subject" Marx's well-known critique of bourgeois democracy, but instead regards Foucault as the thinker who more than any other registered the crisis of this bourgeois Subject. Be that as it may, it is hard to deny that the transcendental subject of modern epistemology suffered calamitously at the hands of Nietzsche (and of Heidegger and Foucault after Nietzsche), and that political and philosophical developments in the twentieth century have cast the Citizen Subject adrift in a rickety lifeboat headed in the direction of the treacherous philosophical reefs mapped by Foucault.

But can the course of this stricken lifeboat be altered, and the functions and modes of expression typically associated with the Citizen Subject be reconstituted in some more productive way, so that this Subject, or its successor (but who would that putative successor be?), would be able to meet the political and philosophical demands generated by the presently emerging conjuncture? Here one senses a certain ambivalence at the end of Balibar's essay, a wish that Foucault was perhaps not going to be right when it came to a final reckoning of the fate of the Citizen Subject, and that new and better times would somehow come to await a radically transformed Citizen Subject. But what could be the shape and character of this new life for the Citizen Subject?

Balibar has an emphatic proposal: the Citizen Subject will live only by becoming a revolutionary actor. I want to take Balibar's proposal as the starting point for the discussion that will occupy the rest of this chapter. There is also the question of the theoretical "space" that was once occupied by the transcendental subject of epistemology. While we may not quarrel with Balibar's suggestion that the (modern) Citizen Subject supplanted the (medieval) subjectus who owed its fealty to the sovereign monarch and sovereign deity (this now being something of a philosophical commonplace), it has also to be acknowledged, and Balibar himself is certainly aware of this, that Kant placed under the category of *Right* not merely action, but also knowledge: the Kantian subject is both the Citizen Subject who acts *and* the epistemological subject who reflects in accordance with the principles of Reason. This subject may have been displaced or finally extinguished in the second half of the twentieth century, but the question of the "right use" of Reason remains, or at any rate, the question of the place of a hoped-for right use of Reason still poses itself. We cannot accept that Reason has "died" simply because its previous philosophic embodiments have been subjected to a concerted critique, no matter how devastating that critique may seem to be.

This issue is therefore one that demands to be addressed, as a prolepsis to dealing with the question that is this book's central concern, namely, that of a potentially enduring transformation of collective political practice, one capable of supporting a project of liberation adequate to the challenges posed by today's structural and conjunctural conditions. These conditions, as we saw in the introduction, are those of a globalizing neoliberalism that has been the dominant regime of accumulation since the end of the postwar boom in the 1970s (even if this economic neoliberalism appears to be on its knees as a result of the 2008 subprime lending crisis) and a neoconservatism

that has bolstered the American political hegemony of the period since 1989. An adequate liberation would therefore be one that produced political subjects capable of surmounting the depredations associated with this globalizing neoliberalism and its complementary American neoconservatism.[15]

The Demise of the Classical Citizen Subject

Whatever Foucault may have said about the supersession of the postclassical *epistéme*, and the death of the Man-Citizen that accompanied this supersession (I take Foucault's Man-Citizen to be coextensive with Balibar's Citizen Subject), it is obvious that the subsequent political mutation of classical liberalism into a globalizing neoliberalism, as well as the disappearance of a viable socialism, have both served to form the basis of what is palpably a new conjuncture. This conjuncture, which some (including me) have called the "postpolitical" politics of the time after 1968, represents an added burden to the already harsh philosophical fate meted out to this Citizen Subject or Man-Citizen by the "masters of suspicion" in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth. The culmination of this trajectory in the postpolitical politics of the past few decades (as described in the introduction) seems to reduce the force of the critique embodied in the writings of Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud; the subject's apparent superfluity in this postpolitical dispensation undermines the very need for its critique. With the effacement of the focus (i.e., the Citizen Subject) of this critique, critique also finds itself fading into insignificance. At the same time, the apparent superfluity of the classical Citizen Subject makes more urgent the question of the ontological status of its putative successor, that is, the subject of this postpolitical politics. Is the subject of this postpolitical politics still some kind of vestigially effective subject, a barely breathing remnant of the Man-Citizen of Foucault's modern episteme or Balibar's Citizen Subject of the time after 1776 or 1789? And if this is truly so, there comes the question of what powers, if any, reside in this seemingly obsolescent remnant of the classical Citizen Subject. Have we been left with nothing for the metaphysical constitution of the possibility of politics but the sheer acknowledgment of the power of the body, the power of bare life (as proposed by the thinkers of the "inoperative" community and the community to come), or the appeal to some kind of undeconstructable justice (as proposed by Derrida and his epigoni)? We don't have to spend too much time thinking about such suggestions to recognize that the practices and orders of thought associated with the "societies of control" limned by Deleuze, and those of the domain of the biopolitical identified by Foucault

but also developed by Agamben and Hardt and Negri, derive their saliency from this postpolitical conjuncture. The centrality of the problematic of the postpolitical, arising as it does from the effacement of the Citizen Subject, for any putative project of liberation can therefore hardly be gainsaid.

By the 1960s and 1970s it had become clear, or clear enough, that the politics of the past two hundred years was no longer able to manage the complex and uneven movements of force that had been unleashed by the newest regimes of capitalist accumulation. Although many periodizations take 1776 or 1789 to be the emblematic starting point for this politics of the "classical" Citizen Subject (a politics which by the 1970s and 1980s had become more and more clearly perceptible as a "previous politics"), by "classical" politics I mean both a politics based on a centrally planned economy of the party-state (i.e., the system of government that existed in the former Eastern bloc) and one predicated on the market-oriented liberal-democratic state (associated in a complementary way with what is still called "the West"). The citizens of the former Soviet bloc, and of the West adversarially situated in relation to the Soviet Union, were both members of dynamic political dispensations requiring visible and even intransigent distinctions between left and right, in ways that are becoming increasingly difficult to imagine in an epoch marked by such solecisms as "compassionate conservatism," "a socialism compatible with the requirements of the capitalist market," "we're all middle-class today," and so forth. No matter how one assesses this previous politics, with its somewhat rigid ideological demarcations between left and right, it was always, even in countries of the former Soviet bloc, the politics of a particular phase of capitalist development. As indicated, this classical politics lasted from 1776 or 1789 until the first unravelings of its supporting international system in the early 1970s.[16]

It has already been noted that the metaphysical heart of this classical politics was a particular conception of sovereignty and of the political subject ideally subsumed under the benison of this sovereignty through the principle of representation. Only those vested with sovereignty by those who qualify as members of the polity can truly represent those who qualify as members of the polity! Sovereignty is thus vested by a polity which in turn is deemed by the sovereign to be the body politic instituted to confer sovereignty, in an unending loop of mutual affirmation. Such is the defining, and circular (in the practical and not just the logical sense), formula of this model of liberal democracy.

With the new capitalist dispensation that came into being in the 1960s and early 1970s, a dispensation now described and analyzed under several

familiar titles ("post-Fordism," "disorganized capitalism," "flexible accumulation," "worldwide integrated capitalism," "late capitalism," "empire after the age of imperial empires," "the domain of the biopolitical," and so forth), such notions of sovereignty were progressively eviscerated or circumvented. The unprecedented transformations in the capitalist order of the past four decades or so were accompanied by a deracination of the classical political subject, that is, the Citizen Subject who up to now had been at once enabled and constrained by the principles of sovereignty embodied in the previous political dispensation. To put it somewhat schematically, if Nietzsche, Marx, Freud, and Foucault undid this classical epistemological and political subject, and in the process undermined its philosophical rationales, then the move to a postpolitical politics associated with the latest stage of capitalist development has had, ostensibly, the effect of doing away with the very need for such a classical Citizen Subject as well as the accompanying philosophical rationales provided on its behalf.[17] The thing rendered equivocal and otiose by Nietzsche, Marx, Freud, and Foucault, but still needed by the politics that lasted from 1776 or 1789 up to the 1970s, had by the 1970s started to become something of a relic.

Today's regime of capitalist accumulation and the neoliberal and neoconservative ideologies identified with its current ascendancy simply have no need for the classical Citizen Subject, just as they have no need for the ideology of modernization that was an intrinsic component of the first or classical liberalism and the various socialisms and communisms which rivaled this liberalism in the period from 1870 until 1989.[18] The disciples of Milton Friedman and Leo Strauss who today control the U.S. government's elite do not give a hoot about substantive notions of an informed and involved citizenry (however mythicized these notions have tended to be in the self-exculpatory or self-congratulatory versions of America's special "destiny"). All that matters for Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, John McCain, and Sarah Palin (and Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom a couple of decades or so before, in her own version of English exceptionalism) is that you and I toe the line set down by those who wield power. One does not have to be Naomi Klein or George Monbiot to acknowledge that, however complex the processes are which led to the emergence of the current phase of capitalist development, it is virtually undeniable, especially in a time which is seeing the beginnings of an economic crisis whose scale is becoming comparable to the great crash of 1929, that corporations and markets have gained hugely in legitimacy and power at the expense