

The Other *Ground Zero*

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If we are to believe the rhetoric of the Bush and Blair governments the attack on the World Trade Centre on September 11, 2001 was an attack on the twin pillars (or towers) of freedom and democracy. The place designated “Ground Zero” has become the permanent reminder of how easily freedom and democracy can be taken away from us if we do not adopt the spirit of Gettysburgh (Berman, 2002) and fight to defend what we believe in. Behind the recent invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq “Ground Zero” has stood as a warning to all those who hesitate or waiver. However, this only externalizes the threat to freedom and democracy and masks an alternative “Ground Zero” precipitated not by “evil foreigners”, hell-bent on destroying our “civilization”, but by the spread of neoliberal governance¹. This other “Ground Zero” (*Ground Zero*) is often imperceptible to the rich and developed West and yet it poses a threat to freedom and democracy much greater than the threat of terrorism.² This article interrogates, in economic, ethical and political terms, this *Ground Zero*, as a condition whereby consumption has become the highest good, ‘the market’ is the measure of all things, and democracy has been supplanted by the rule of a corporate oligarchy. As *Ground Zero* is a transnational condition it is unhelpful and indeed misguided to single out America as solely responsible. Indeed, the

anti-Americanism in Europe is simply a refusal to accept our complicity in this “New World Order”. However, any analysis that does not take account of the fact that America is currently the most powerful agent of *Ground Zero* is also in error. More than this, the failure to register American power is also a failure to recognise to what extent America *remains the hope* for an alternative future.

The Economy of *Ground Zero*

In *Beyond Neoliberalism* Alain Touraine argues that we should not be denouncing globalization but blaming specifically finance capital for many of the ills attributed to a globalized economy. Touraine is right to challenge those who critique globalization with a general sweep as if it is a single and homogenous form, as if it is not criss-crossed with contradictions and dilemmas. However, his diagnosis does not really get us anywhere near the condition I am referring to as *Ground Zero*. While it is true that finance capital is able to flow across national borders without responsibility to either the labour force or the environment, creating what Bauman (1998) has called a new class of absentee landlords, it is not simply the transnational flow of capital that defines the economy of *Ground Zero*. John McMurtry’s normative analysis in *Value Wars* gets us much closer to this condition. McMurtry seeks to show how the “constructed economic programme of a transnational corporate and financial sect has [...] been *internalised* as a value-set [and is] reified as the structure of reality itself” (2002: 21). He argues that this value-set is a “transcendental moral order” (xvii) in which freedom can only be delivered through the expansion of a fully liberalized market. Likewise, the fanaticism of this moral order dictates that it is only the disciples of this globalizing force who can be said to be acting for the good. Systematic analysis of this normative structure, he argues, exposes what remains unexamined in discussions of globalization and permits the possibility of conceiving lines of resistance. Any analysis that does not take account of the normative infrastructure regulating society’s reproduction will only be superficial and ultimately pointless.

Where an analysis of *Ground Zero* differs from McMurtry’s analysis of a transcendental moral order is over the idea that a fanatic mind-set lies at the heart of this restructured world. There is indeed a moral, if not quasi-religious, fundamentalism at work in the rhetoric of *Ground Zero*, but this is a second-order normativity that dresses the revolution of the last twenty-five years in the traditional clothes of good versus evil, freedom versus tyranny.

It masks the radical change in the structure and organization of society by presenting it as a continuation of the pursuit of liberty, for example. But *Ground Zero*'s first-order structure is not so much moral, as ontological. In other words, it does not concern itself with issues of good or bad *per se*, but works with a conception of our being-in-the-world that is believed to be prior to value judgements. This supposed neutral claim is its real strength, for the power of *Ground Zero*'s logic lies in the fact that its idea of the Good is predicated on a supposedly scientific, and therefore objective and universal, understanding of the human condition.

This understanding comprises the three fundamental propositions of neoclassical economics, which in turn inform the broader neoliberal vision endemic to *Ground Zero*. The first proposition of neoclassical economics, the "consumption proposition", states that "individuals are endowed with the ability to choose rationally from among the sets of opportunities they confront" (DeMartino, 2000: 38). As George F. DeMartino has pointed out, the key word here is 'rationally'. What defines rationality for neoclassical economists is utility, that is, the capacity for individuals to make decisions that will yield the greatest personal satisfaction. What is more, the qualification of rationality hides a further assumption, the "insatiability" assumption, which states that "[m]ore of any good will always yield greater total utility than will less, and this drive to have more is without limit" (39). The second proposition, the "production proposition", states that "humans are endowed with the ability to transform elements of nature (through work or labor) so as to produce goods that meet human needs, and they do so rationally" (40). Again the qualification 'rationally' is significant as it assumes that where there exists two production options the most *efficient* will always be chosen; that the evolution of a mode of food production, or even preparation, is simply a matter of the survival of the most efficient, should immediately sound alarm bells for any sociologist, anthropologist or researcher into the *culture* of food. The third and final proposition, the "scarcity proposition", states that "all output (in the form of goods and services) requires inputs from nature, and since nature's bounty is finite, output must also be finite" (40). This seems straightforward and yet, as DeMartino argues, when coupled with the insatiability assumption of the first proposition it has serious consequences: "By virtue of these two propositions, the concept of sufficiency does not and cannot appear within the neoclassical vision. Instead we find a ceaseless competition by each for more. The human condition is, therefore, marked by an ineradicable tension between infinite wants and finite supply" (40). This is the neoclassical version of the Hobbesian war of all against all, but this time the market is

sovereign. The sum of these propositions is the belief that the more choices available to a society, the better off it will be, that more choices means more opportunity for satisfying more individuals and that the privileging of individual choices and decisions enhances personal social satisfaction. This, of course, was the mantra for Thatcher and Reagan throughout the 1980s, and is key for the formation we now commonly refer to as 'consumer culture'.

Over the last twenty-five years, however, consumer culture has become far more than the emergence of consumer options and life-style choices that first appeared with the flowering of post-war prosperity in the 1950s and 60s. Consumer culture no longer simply signals the passage from mass to niche production, with the corresponding development of the service sector. It now signals, as McMurtry has pointed out, the internalization of a specific economic programme as *the* structure of reality, and the reach of the market into every aspect of society. Deregulation, which is the central neoliberal doctrine, has seen the opening up of the social and material fabric to tender and competition, with the result that if the market cannot support a service, product or activity it is to be given up without mourning. Bearing in mind that the market is supposed to be the expression of authentic and rational individual preferences, whatever does not survive has no reason to be kept alive through artificial interference by the state. No aspect of society is exempt; not education, not transport, not art, not poetry, not the environment, not health. Scientific research is funded only with a view to its commodified, technological spin-offs, while thinking is monitored by its possible realisation as a textbook with a wide customer base. And what of morality? A wonderful analogy for *Ground Zero* was Clinton's impeachment. The live television broadcast incorporated a ticker in the bottom of the screen showing the response of the Dow Jones Index to his every word. It was as if we had finally overcome the incommensurability between fact and value that had plagued philosophers for centuries. If the index went up it was good. If it went down it was bad.

The global extension of this marketization leads us to a second feature of neoliberalism, and of *Ground Zero*, namely the formation of what Leslie Sklair has called a "transnational capitalist class" (henceforth abbreviated as TCC). This is tied once again to the issue of deregulation, for "[w]here a capitalist class starts to shake itself free from unwelcome state involvement in its affairs, or starts to shape this state involvement, new opportunities to forge transnational connections will arise" (2001: 53). In turn, a class identity arises when the corporate executives, the bureaucrats and politicians, the technical professionals and the media bosses "partake

differentially in recognizable global patterns of capital accumulation, consuming and thinking” (12). Key to the rolling out of this ‘economic freedom’ is the logic of ‘national competitiveness’ secured through models of ‘world best practice’. As Sklair points out, the rhetoric of nation remains an important part of the TCC’s worldview. In this instance, however, national competitiveness masks the fact that national economies are not being run in the interests of the nation but in the interests of the TCC, for what national competitiveness measures is how open any given nation is to the free flow of transnational capital. This in turn is measured through a process of benchmarking aimed at measuring continuous improvements in competitiveness in line with world best practice. That this logic of benchmarking has again spread from the boardroom to other supposedly non-corporate areas of society such as education, medical and welfare services (141) is indicative of the neoliberal vision that seeks to encompass the totality of social being.

Sklair’s operational analysis of the TCC fits very well with McMurtry’s normative analysis of global capital expansion, with both writers commenting on the discourse of necessity and a natural inevitability that pervades these practices. McMurtry in particular points out how the language of an inevitable fate, integral to the communist vision of history, and which capitalists once abhorred, has now become their own rallying cry. Formerly the ‘no choice’ philosophy of Sovietism had been the anathema of freedom: now it is its purest expression. Nowhere is this more in evidence, McMurtry argues, than in the rhetoric with which Tony Blair sold his alliance with corporate interests to the Labour Party and the British people. “These forces of change driving the future”, Blair said in 1999, “don’t stop at national boundaries. Don’t respect tradition. They wait for no one and no nation. They are universal”. This externalizing and absolutizing of market forces perfectly sums up the poverty of *Ground Zero*, for they represent the abdication of responsibility and agency.

However, as I have already suggested, for this programme and its value-set to be internalized, the ground that needed to be secured was of an ontological as well as a normative order. In this sense, while McMurtry is correct to argue that “*Freedom = the Free Market* is the grounding equation of this ruling [neoliberal] doctrine” (2002: 53), this equation is itself premised on two further formulas. The first, which can be rendered *being = rational self-interest*, is a variation of a long-held belief regarding human nature that necessitates sovereign mediation and protection. This time, the sovereign for neoliberals is the market, hence McMurtry’s grounding equation. The second, and this is a little more difficult to reduce to a

formula, can perhaps be written *polis* = *oikos*. By this I wish to convey the experience whereby our being-with has been reduced to a form of extended ‘housekeeping’. Indeed, Margaret Thatcher consistently argued that the politics of a nation should be pursued along the lines of a well-managed household. At a fundamental level, then, *Ground Zero* marks the complete reduction of politics to the logic of the home, of the demands of the public to the needs of the private. The economy truly becomes *oikonomos*, the head of an estate. Its estate is the complexity of social being which ‘the market’ orders according to what Lyotard called “the rule of performance” requiring “the endless optimization of the cost/benefit (input/output) ratio” (1993a: 25).³ Likewise, within this estate and under this rule each national agent of the TCC functions as a *despotēs*, the head of a family; meting out the necessary fiscal discipline within its own household.

Related to this reduction of the *polis* to the operations of the *oikos* is the concomitant reduction of *bios* to *zoē*. As Antonio Agamben has noted, the ancient Greeks used two words to refer to life, ‘*zoē*, which expressed the simple fact of living common to all living beings [...], and *bios*, which signified the form or manner of living peculiar to a single individual or group’ (2000: 3). If *zoē* is naked existence, then *bios* is society and culture. For Arendt (1958), who also uses this distinction, *zoē* is necessity, the preservation of bare life, of reproduction, while *bios* is the projection of a world, a space preserved for the sake of human beginnings, a world distinct from the incessant cycle of consumption. If the ontological structure of *Ground Zero* can be given a succinct expression it is this *almost* complete reduction of human being to *zoē*, or, in the language of neo-classical economics, to self-interested preference and its insatiability. This is how I would interpret McMurtry’s insightful claim that the doctrine of neoliberalism “is structured always to misrepresent its *life-blind* imperatives as *life-serving*” (2002: 55).

The Ethics of *Ground Zero*

To speak of the ethics of *Ground Zero* it is necessary to return to the definition of human desire set out in the first of the three propositions of neoclassical economics. To repeat, the first proposition states that individuals are endowed with the ability to choose rationally from among the sets of opportunities they confront, with rational signifying the capacity individuals have to make decisions that will yield the greatest personal satisfaction. This, of course, uncritically assumes that individuals are

“egoistic and self-oriented” (DeMartino, 2000: 38), a crucial point I will pick up on in a moment. This supposed value-free science is apparently untroubled by daily evidence of human self-sacrifice, philanthropy and calls for justice that contravene this dogma of self-interest. No doubt neoliberals would recover all gestures of selflessness within the broader concept of utility or social efficiency, but this can hardly be said to be a philosophy in keeping with the complex motives of human activity. It is instead a circular argument seeking to legitimate the possessive individualism integral to its own worldview.

The dereliction of ethics within this framework is completed when human freedom is reduced to the freedom to pursue this self-interest in the light of consumer choices that must be unhindered by any extra-utilitarian imposition. Again, this is McMurtry’s grounding equation: ‘*Freedom = the Free Market*’. Human freedom is the freedom to choose between a set of competitively priced commodities. This was central to the Thatcherite ‘common sense’ that became hegemonic through the 1980s. Privatization and the desired demolition of the welfare state were predicated on this neoliberal reduction of freedom to freedom of choice. Over the last two decades this equation has been fully naturalized to the extent that freedom and consumption have become fully exchangeable terms. This is evidenced by the conflation of the two in speeches made by George W. Bush immediately after the attacks of 11 September 2001. He claimed, for example, that no terrorist would change the American way of life, exhorting US citizens to continue to shop, no doubt as a sign of their enduring freedom.⁴

This right to consume, as the essential freedom the West wants to deliver to the rest of the world, brings us to the broader issues related to the subsumption of human rights beneath the interests of capital. We live in a world where human rights are only enforced if it is economically viable, but what is even more disturbing is how, over the course of the last twenty-five years, the ascendent neoliberal orthodoxy has stripped the Enlightenment notion of *autonomy* in all its complexity to the *autism of material self-interest*. As the pinnacle of Western moral achievement, and the bedrock of a philosophy of rights, autonomy is linked to definitions of the person, providing the dignity of legal status and political representation. It has also been the traditional ground of dissent and independence, and played a significant role in the affirmation of human plurality. It was, of course, essential for the revolutionary spirit that founded America against the tyranny of British rule. A brief look at Gerald Dworkin’s (1988) overview of autonomy reveals that other synonyms for this self-rule include liberty,

responsibility, agency, self-knowledge and self-creation. However, within the ethics of *Ground Zero*, when autonomy is expressed by developing nations who wish to retain control of their resources and services, it is dismissed as protectionist and a barrier to free trade; when it is expressed by dissenting citizens it is irrational and unpatriotic.⁵ Autonomy is now the enemy of freedom because autonomy hinders the free circulation of capital and the optimal efficiency of the global market.⁶

Ground Zero, as an actually existing condition, has a history. On 3 October 1987, speaking to *Woman's Own* magazine, Margaret Thatcher complained that the homeless, in asking the government to house them, were "casting their problem on society. And, you know", she now infamously continued, "there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families". This is *the* expression of *Ground Zero's* ethical autism. It is fully in keeping with the privatisation of freedom and encapsulates the neoliberal belief that broader benefits only ensue from the individual pursuit of private reward. By 2000 this ethical autism was being played out on the world stage. It was strongly in evidence in the early days of the Bush administration as a belligerent unilateralism, exempting America from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and the Kyoto Treaty on global warming and refusing to support the establishment of an International Criminal Court. Bush might have reworked Thatcher's maxim and declared: 'There is no such thing as a world, only individual nations and their patriots'. However, autonomy as autism is more pervasive than a hardening of foreign policy. Such modifications of worldview are manifestations of deeper ontological concerns pertaining to issues of identity, both individual and communal. Indeed, the success of the fanatical mind-set that McMurtry has documented so well lies in part with the ontological incoherence that is an integral part of each and every subject.

As mentioned in the preceding section, the construction of the neoliberal worldview as both necessary and universally applicable produces conflict where difference is expressed in any other form than individual consumption preferences (*zoē*). Worldviews, belief systems and forms of sociality (*bios*) organised according to alternative principles can only relativize the supposedly universal and objective claims of neoliberal "science". This is why McMurtry claims that socialized economies, for example, must be wiped out.⁷ Rather than being open to otherness and difference, the ethical autism of *Ground Zero* compels a confrontational stance to what Michael J. Shapiro has called 'non-imitative others' (1995). Taking his lead from Lacan's reading of Hegel's master/slave dialectic, Shapiro argues that human subjectivity is not a positive and substantial

content but a process of becoming through relations with others, and it is here that we can return to the issue of egoism and self-orientation. A simplified account of Hegel's dialectic has two parties locked in a fight to the death for recognition. The one that risks all wins and demands recognition from the defeated and now enslaved party that s/he is master. This struggle accounts for the movement of history until it is completed in the final overcoming of master and slave in the universally recognised citizen (the moment of the *Aufhebung* for neoliberals is, of course, the consumer).

The interest for Lacan was the idea that the subject must go out of itself and through the other in order to secure its self-image. In this process the subject is deeply vulnerable. Recognition is the moment whereby the subject, having gone out from itself is returned to itself in a moment of ontological confirmation. Those who do not return the subject to itself, that is non-imitative others, are regarded as a threat and are the focus of hostile and violent projections. In fact we might extend this and say that no subject is ever more content than when it has a fully visible and definable enemy. It is well known that times without an enemy can open up internal differences because the enemy's primary function is to allow internal incoherence and vulnerability to be projected outwards. When we are sure of our enemy we are very sure of ourselves. One key feature of fundamentalism is its complete inability to deal with non-imitative others. Its misrecognition of self is based upon a vision of an authentic, enclosed, fully coherent subject, purified of any external contamination.

Returning to the consumption proposition of neoclassical economics we find a similar fundamentalist conception of the self. Another important feature of this proposition is that the expression of preference, or we might say desire, is *exogenous* to social and economic activity. This means that desire is unaffected by our relations with other persons, with the state, with society as a whole and is instead the authentic expression of a fully formed and coherent subject, independent of any external dealings with the world. This conception of subjectivity leaves no room for the contemplation of any internal incoherence or wider dependency, and what is certain about this philosophy is that it has no place for otherness. Difference is only a matter of individual preferences that contribute to and shape the market. It has no place for human bio(s)diversity, as each manifestation of *bios* contravenes the founding propositions of its world-view, relativizes and thereby destabilizes them.

To return momentarily to Agamben, *bios*, as a form of life rather than naked life, is something that is not already enacted. It is a 'possibility and a

power [*potenza*, potentiality]’. It appears when ‘living and intending and apprehending themselves are at stake’ (2000: 9). In relation to this understanding of power, other forms of being-with, other forms of *bios*, reveal that humanity as a form of life is an incomplete project, open to the future. The multiplicity of forms of life challenge neoliberal universalism and challenge the marketized end of history. Human life exceeds the expression of rational preference, but any challenge, any dissent must be condemned. Non-imitative others are irrational, backward, perverse and then evil. While the enlightenment notion of autonomy could never fully escape the politics of self-interest⁸ it at least provided an opening to a plural world and to *bios*, which the ethical autism of *Ground Zero* is now seeking to close off in the name of “science”.⁹

The Politics of *Ground Zero*

To approach the politics of *Ground Zero* it is important to return to the issue of sovereignty, for the relationship between transnational capital, the nation state and its people is key here. In the first instance, and running against much of the literature on globalization, the politics of *Ground Zero* does not represent the end of the nation state, but involves a deep complicity between state and capital through the formation of the TCC. Such a class comprises corporate bosses, politicians, civil servants, consumer elites, and other professionals linked to what Herbert Schiller has called “media-cultural combines” (1989: 38). The media ideologues such as Rupert Murdoch who promote the neoliberal agenda globally are key to the politics of *Ground Zero*, but even more important are the “technopols” (Sklair, 2001), or technocrats and globalizing politicians “who accept and propagate the necessity for the permanent expansion of the global capitalist system” (137). The Bush and Blair governments, together with other right-wing partners such as Berlusconi in Italy, clearly fit into this definition of the technopol. “Above all”, writes Sklair, “technopols understand that corporations and those that control them expect policy continuity to safeguard their investments” (138). Technopols must therefore secure a system that “locks their countries into free markets, international trade agreements, and globalization, and [...] create political openings to bring all important social groups on side for “national” development” (138). The interests of a democratic nation are seen to correlate with the interests of a business and the running of a country is governed according to the principles of corporate performance.

This alignment between state and capital is, of course, nothing new. Wallerstein recently made a compelling argument for the historical complicity between state and capital, arguing that the current world system has always benefited from a strong state. Why, he asks, isn't the free market sufficient for the endless accumulation of capital? The most obvious answer to this is 'the universally noted demand for securing property rights' (1999: 62). The establishment of property rights and the modern "rule of law", which primarily limited the power of previously whimsical monarchs, prevented the loss of capital via the prosecution of theft, as well as the elimination of arbitrary confiscation. The state is also a benefit to the accumulation of capital as it assumes part of the cost of manufacture by building the necessary infrastructure that no single entrepreneur was originally capable of doing. Of course, under the logic of privatization, the state can also put certain profitable public projects out to tender, thereby providing further possibilities for the extraction of surplus value. Recent scandals have also highlighted why Wallerstein can come up with the seemingly absurd statement that "the free market is the mortal enemy of capital accumulation" (63). The example of Enron has shown just how dangerous a completely unregulated market can be. Left to their own devices the new transnational nobility become drunk on their own power. Unaccountable, they pose a threat to capital accumulation itself. Therefore, some element of state regulation is a must if profits are to be maximized.

The first moment, then, in the politics of *Ground Zero* is not a loss of sovereignty, but a refiguring of sovereignty in the guise of the market. In this instance, as I remarked above, the mixture of the first and third propositions of neo-classical economics gives us a version of the Hobbesian state of nature in which the market takes on the role of Leviathan. Nation states remain crucial to this formation of sovereignty, only now state governments operate as agents of the TCC. This means that it is democracy, not sovereignty, that is the issue, as democratic institutions become increasingly irrelevant and anachronistic. As we have seen, globalization has not diminished the state's capacity to regulate. It is rather a question of "whose interests it serves when it regulates" (Sklair, 2001: 90). In other words, voters choose a representative only to find those elected no longer represent the people but the interests of the TCC, and voters have no means of affecting the practices of the TCC unless they become shareholders in one of the major corporate players or take to the streets. In this scenario representation is no longer secured through the ballot box but through share certificates. There is then a lack of fit between the current formation of power and the procedures for holding that power accountable. In the

globalizing revolution of the last twenty-five years what we are seeing is the outmoding of democratic processes that took anywhere between 500 and 3,000 years to develop, depending on your point of departure (the Magna Carta or the Athenian *polis*). This does not mean, however, that democracy is impotent. Because the 'technopols' still have an important juridical and executive function to play, it remains possible to alter course and for an alternative to neoliberalism to be implemented. For how long this remains a possibility is, however, difficult to predict.

The second aspect of the politics of *Ground Zero* pertains to its imperialist logic. A key function of the state in its complicity with capitalist expansion has been the maintenance of order by placing greater constrictions on the modes of action by the working classes than are imposed on the employers (Wallerstein, 1999: 66). Bauman's consideration of these issues in light of globalized labour is best illustrated through an address to the logic of 'flexible labour'. If the changes in working practices are addressed, the notion of 'flexible labour' only has meaning from the viewpoint of the corporate bosses. It is they who demand flexibility from the workforce in order to accommodate and adapt to the vagaries of investment. From the perspective of the worker, the adage is retrain/relocate or die.¹⁰ In developed countries the function of maintaining order is a case of maintaining fiscal continuity, paradoxically regulating in favour of deregulation. In developing countries, however, and largely in response to the destabilizing effect of capital flows, the ordering function is more often manifested in violent engagements with a disaffected population and the bolstering of a brutal political regime. This supports one of the few sensible things Fukuyama (1992) had to say in his 'End of History' thesis, whereby before the inevitable establishment of democracy the future will see a growth in authoritarian capitalism.

Again, this function of maintaining order in favour of the interests of the TCC appears at first to undermine the very notion of sovereignty, but this is only the case if one works with the Westphalian definition of sovereignty that recognises the freedom of a state to legislate as it wishes within its territories and be free from external interference. If, however, one works with the less legalistic and more philosophical definition of sovereignty we find that sovereignty has always involved the disregarding of weaker by stronger states. As the concept has been used thus far in this paper, sovereignty is premised upon the sovereign's ability to protect the people. According to this definition it is easy to see how a nation's sovereignty may indeed require it to enter into an imperial and colonial phase in order to protect the well-being of its nationals (the very logic, in

fact, of the current War against Terror). In other words, in an interconnected and interdependent world, which is not peculiar to the current formation of globalization, any nation, should it have the capacity, will, in the name of sovereignty, challenge those that threaten its 'way of life'.

In June 1998, when PNAC published their statement of principles (Abrams, 1997), this understanding of sovereignty was imperative to the neo-conservative vision. They propose "a Reaganite policy of military strength and moral clarity" in the pursuit of "political and economic freedom". Their aim is "to make the case and rally support for American global leadership" and "to shape a new century favorable to American principles and interests". This is to be done through "a foreign policy that boldly and purposefully promotes American principles abroad".¹¹ This, however, should not be read as a new age of American imperialism. It is rather a recognition of America's role as the most powerful agent of the TCC and that its interests are tied up with the flourishing of these transnational interests. What is more, these interests are believed to be universally applicable. If, as I have been proposing, we take 'the market' to be sovereign, if it is 'the market' that now mediates and protects the world's competing self-interested individuals, then America has a duty to roll out this protection across the globe. This is the 'responsibility' it assumes as the world's pre-eminent power. And what is clear from this is how the three fundamental propositions of neoliberalism have become the grounds for securing a whole set of globally vested interests. If the market is the expression of authentic preferences exogenous to economic and social activity then the American state, in seeking to promote economic freedom, is not simply acting in favour of American nationals, but is rather the representative of universal human desire. Again it is this "scientific" conception of the human condition that underpins the fanaticism of the dominant value-set. What is more, the second proposition of neo-classical economics, the production proposition ('humans are endowed with the ability to transform elements of nature (through work or labour) so as to produce goods that meet human needs, and they do so rationally'), further encourages this 'benign' imperialism. As I have already noted, the qualification 'rational' permits the TCC and its leading agent to vigorously pursue the doctrine of marketization because it is taken to be an objective fact that people and cultures operate solely according to the principle of rational efficiency.¹² When the dictates of the WTO and the IMF strip people from their land and resources, as has been done in India and Mexico, to name but two examples, there is no recognition of the normative social structures that are also stripped away, and which were essential to a

community's identity and sense of belonging. There is, then, no conception of how traumatic the eradication of a particular instance of *bios* might be in favour of the *zoēlogical* efficiency they ought to crave.

Again, for proponents of neoliberalism, there is the belief that they are simply facilitating a fact of human nature. Economics, then, in the guise of neoclassical theory, claims to have overcome the incommensurability between fact and value. Economics has now delivered a philosophy of human desire that condemns all other modes of social organization as ideology, backwardness, or tyranny. In securing the protection and well-being of American citizens the signatories to PNAC's statement of principles are bringing into being the one true, universal church. This is altruistic. There is nothing partisan about it. Converting others from dependency on more primitive, traditional, *irrational*, non-marketized ways of life may be painful, but medicine never tastes good. This 'Mr. Nice Guy Totalitarianism' (Lyotard, 1993b: 159) has, of course, been significantly aided by the events of September 2001. The increased consciousness of globalized risk in the West has set in place a state of emergency without end, supporting further attacks on already faltering and fading democratic structures. In the course of administering the medicine, the state of emergency will be used to secure internal sovereignty by silencing dissent, while also permitting the flouting of external sovereignty through the portrayal of each overseas police action as a legitimate move in the delivery of protection. The economics, ethics and, finally, politics of *Ground Zero* thus establish legitimacy for this unbridled and unaccountable sovereignty.

Endnotes

¹ While the members of the Bush administration are generically referred to as neoconservatives, announcing their discomfort with liberal society, they remain supporters of liberalized economies and the neo-classical economics that theorizes such liberalization.

² The threat is also coming from the assault on civil liberties supposedly justified as a legitimate response to the threat of terror. For a useful commentary on this assault in the USA, with particular reference to the USA PATRIOT Act, see 'The State of Civil Liberties in the Post 9/11 Era', a report issued by the Center for Constitutional Rights (www.ccr-ny.org).

³ This quote is taken from the 1982 essay 'A Svelte Appendix to the Postmodern Question'. The discussion of performativity is, of course, fully set out in the earlier work *The Postmodern Condition*.

⁴ I am thinking here of Bush's speech of 16 September 2001. For details of Bush's speeches see www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases. Also see Richard Johnson (2002) for a full analysis of Bush and Blair's rhetoric immediately after the attacks.

⁵ Such a demand is also reflected in the recent formation in the US of 'Campus Watch', an organization claiming to support free speech while seeking to root out the members of a

‘monolithically leftist professorate’ who “lack any appreciation of national interests” (www.campus-watch.org). Their aim is to foster ‘honest’, conservative comment on Middle Eastern affairs and counter the ‘extremism’ that suggests US foreign policy is a global threat, or that it has links to Israeli interests. ‘Campus Watch’ is also keen to distance itself from charges of McCarthyism, charges that are, of course, patently absurd! For a populist version see ‘Citizens Against Celebrity “Pundits”’ for further attempts to silence people in the name of freedom and democracy. The claim made in messages posted on the forum page is that any questioning of a second conflict with Iraq is unpatriotic, un-American and ignorant of national interests, as if all three are monolithic and uncontestable (www.ipetitions.com/campaigns/hollywoodceleb/).

⁶ We can see how this is also affecting cultural autonomy in the sense that art and the academy are also inscribed within the logic of the market. One of the great advances of Modernity was to match the political separation of the powers with the relative independence of the artist and the intellectual. With regard to the latter in particular, we are now finding that academics are increasingly required to write *for* the market.

⁷ See in particular McMurtry’s analysis of the fate of both Yugoslavia and Iraq in chapter 2 of *Value Wars* entitled ‘The Return of Genocidal Wars’.

⁸ See my *Against Autonomy: Lyotard, judgement and action* (2001). Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing.

⁹ As the one time US Secretary for Agriculture stated: “‘We’ve got to make sure that sound science prevails, not what I call historic culture, which is not based on sound science’” (Shiva, 2003: 95).

¹⁰ ‘Indeed, labour would cease to be “rigid” only if it stopped being an unknown quantity in the investors’ calculation. If it effectively lost the power to be truly “flexible” – to refuse to conform to a pattern, to surprise, and all in all to put a limit on the investors’ freedom of manoeuvre’ (Bauman, 1998: 104).

¹¹ The equation of global leadership with American interests, and the priority given to military strength within this world-view, are the reasons for much of the disquiet expressed around the world with the current Bush administration. That the signatures on PNAC documents include Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz, Elliot Abrams, Richard Perle and Jeb Bush adds to this disquiet.

¹² DeMartino’s example of rationality in relation to the second proposition is as follows: ‘If two techniques for growing wheat are available to a community, and these two are equal in all respects save that one yields more wheat than the other per unit of labor expended in wheat farming, then rational producers will choose to employ the more efficient technique’ (2000: 40). What this example shows is just how insensitive neoliberalism is to culture and its complex formations. There is no consideration of how food production might be tied in with other communal processes to do with identity, including kinship structures, narrative, ritual, religion, gift giving or ancestry, for example. It is assumed that food production is not a vital component in a meaning system but only the efficient pursuit of sustenance. It is evident how this logic would easily contribute to a process of cultural cleansing, especially in the Third World, where countries must increasingly comply with rationalizing prescriptions from the IMF, World Bank and WTO in order to survive.