

# ***Neoconservatism, Bohemia and the Moral Economy of Neoliberalism***

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At the heart of capitalism lies an apparent contradiction between cultural liberalism and traditional moral authority. This contradiction was spelled out by Friedrich Hayek in *The Constitution of Liberty* “the individual should be able to transgress them [the rules] when it seems to him worthwhile”, the individual needs to be able to produce new modes of thought and ways of seeing challenging conventional opinion and authority allows the market to function. On the other hand, “the general observance of these conventions [traditions] is a necessary condition of the orderliness of the world in which we live” (Hayek, 2011: 123). According to Philip Mirowski this moral question is something that puzzled what he calls “the neoliberal thought collective” from the beginning. Hayek brought it up at the first meeting of the Mont Pelerin Society in 1947 saying that “I am convinced that unless the breach between true liberal and religious convictions can be healed, there is no hope for a revival of liberal forces” (quoted in Mirowski, 2013: 66).

Irwin Stelzer has claimed that the enduring economic legacy of neoconservatism regards a loosening attitude toward deficit spending (Stelzer, 2004, 194), this, I will argue is only part of it. David Harvey has described neoconservatism as neoliberalism’s moral support (Harvey, 2005: 82), in this paper I will develop this thought and show how the neoconservative moral discourse has established a moral legitimation that is central to neoliberalism and the overcoming of what Hirst has described “modernity’s abyss” (Hirst, 2012) . By overcoming and co-opting aspects of the bohemian attitude, neoliberalism established new moral codes based on risk, flexibility the creativity of the individual and the will to embrace chance. It is the stabilisation of this moral economy that, along with intellectual capture of the economic establishment (Mirowski, 2013) and the side-lining of heterodox economic thinking (Keen, 2011), has enabled neoliberalism to survive.

This paper is structure around reading of three writers. Norman Podhoretz, Irving Kristol and George Gilder have all been significant voices in what is broadly defined as neoconservatism and each, I will argue, builds on and responds to the critiques of each other. My focus will be on the neoconservative response what is perceived as the malaise and nihilism of liberal modernity, particularly as it appears through bohemianism and the counter-culture and then through capitalism.

How does this relate to neoliberalism? The consumer capitalist economy relies upon the breaking down of cultural boundaries in order to create new markets. This homology between economic and cultural liberalism is key to the understanding of neoliberalism. The freedom that is offered to the individual in terms of thought and lifestyle is mirrored in the freedom that the market has to exploit these opportunities. This means that what begins as a critique of bohemia and the counter-culture for Podhoretz and Kristol necessarily developed in into a critique of capitalism. Capitalism is attacked in the same terms as the counter-culture, it is accused of being nihilistic and of producing a cultural and moral malaise that ultimately undermines political order.

However, the neoconservative programme developed a contradiction because although the cultural negativity of bohemia was rejected the same approach was not taken to capitalism. Indeed, Kristol's critique is meant as a warning so that capitalism can protect itself from itself. The question then becomes the one that troubled Hayek, how can a moral order be restored into a necessarily amoral system? How do you construct a moral order within an economic system that rejects boundedness? Furthermore, how does capitalism legitimate itself in the face of what Hayek called "the game of catallaxy"? This game presents the problem in which "differences in rewards... will be based partly on

achievement and partly on mere chance” (Hayek, 1982: 74). Success in a market economy can very often be based on chance and what used to be known as “freaks of fortune” (Levy, 2013), how, in this situation can there be justice?

At this point commentators have often turned towards neoconservative foreign policy. Foreign policy presents a sphere where a black and white code can be re-imposed (Drolet, 2013; Hommolar, 2010; Hirst, 2012; Halper and Clarke, 2004). I would not dispute these claims and they are well supported by neoconservatives themselves (Kristol and Kagan, 1996). My question is different, I am interested in how neoliberalism attempted to overcome moral emptiness and produced its own moral code. By understanding the moral economy of neoliberalism and appreciating its particular form of moral seduction we can better understand the apparent steadfastness after the total systemic crisis that manifested in 2007/8.

My central claim is that the response to the neoconservative critique of bohemian and capitalist morality in liberal modernity has been to subsume that bohemian negativity. Neoliberal morality internalised negativity and the counter-culture in the creation of a moral economy based on risk and the willingness to embrace chance. Risk and chance offer the individual a form of neoliberal seduction whilst also justifying the massive inequality generated through the deregulated economy. By understanding the seduction we can understand the appeal that neoliberalism seems to hold. Understanding the seduction is of course not the same as falling for it. The financial system is more interested in the avoidance of risk than the existential benefits gained through embracing it. Risk is displaced through financial instruments such as insurance and personal risk is often removed from the financial players, subprime mortgages and the resulting Collateralised

Debt Obligations being only the most notorious example. Real risk is imposed upon those at the bottom where the existential joy of life on the edge is less noticeable.

The first part of this paper will consider the neoconservative reaction to the Beat writers.

The neoconservative reaction, exemplified here through the writings of Norman Podhoretz, will be contextualised through a longer historical view of bohemia as a response to the rationalising logic of bourgeois modernity. The second part, focusing on Irving Kristol, will show how this critique of literary bohemianism developed into an attack on the counter-culture and then capitalism. The third part of this paper shows how, in light of the critique of bohemian and capitalist amorality produced by neoconservatives, George Gilder proposed a new form of capitalist morality based on risk and the willingness to accept chance. Existentially Gilder's presentation of capitalist risk mirrors that found in earlier bohemian critiques of the safe world of bourgeois modernity. The paper concludes by noting the misrepresentation of capitalist risk in Gilder's work, capitalism is not irrational like he claims and does not embrace risk and chance as ends in themselves. However, despite this, Gilder's argument still contains a seductive value that is key to understanding the legitimization of the contemporary situation of the neoliberal subject.

### Podhoretz on the Beat(s)

In 2004 George W. Bush presented the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Norman Podhoretz. Podhoretz had been the editor in chief of the neoconservative journal *Commentary* from 1960 until his retirement in 1995 and in 1997 and was a signatory of the statement of principles of the Project for the New American Century, a think-tank that

advocated the neo-imperialist foreign policy that dominated the two presidential terms of the younger Bush.

However, in 1946 the first person to publish Podhoretz was Allen Ginsberg in the *Columbia Poetry Review* (which Ginsberg was then the editor of). Later, in 1956 when Podhoretz was gaining a reputation as a literary critic, Ginsberg felt confident enough in his tastes to send him a copy of *Howl* for review. Podhoretz did not review Ginsberg's seminal work but did go on to publish uncomplimentary essays on the Beat generation.

In 'The Know Nothing Bohemians', Podhoretz makes a distinction between the earlier bohemianism of the 1920s (Hemingway and Fitzgerald) and that of the Beats. Kerouac "seems to feel that respectability is a sign not of moral corruption but of spiritual death" (2004: 31). There was no political reason for *On the Road*, whereas earlier bohemianism "represented a repudiation of the provinciality, philistinism and moral hypocrisy of American life" (2004: 31). Kerouac was interested in pure experience as an end in itself, the only possible end, whereas earlier bohemianism "was a movement created in the name of civilisation: its ideals were intelligence, cultivation, spiritual refinement." (2004: 31) The indifference of the Beats to politics seems to be their great crime for Podhoretz, they rejected civilisation and "worship primitivism, instinct, energy, blood. To the extent that [they have] intellectual interests at all, they run to mystical doctrines [and] irrationalist philosophies." (2004: 32)

The idea of bohemia developed in mid-nineteenth century France as a reaction against encroaching modernity, for Daniel Cottom it "was a dramatic exception to the drive

toward the disciplinary organisation of power... identified with the modern state.” (2013: 227) Bohemia was a revolt against the rationalising tendency of modernity, especially regarding work. Following Hegel’s identification of the master/slave dialectic, work in modernity became associated with spirit. In Hegel’s dialectic it is the labouring slave who recognises him/herself through work whilst the master stagnates. No-longer seen as punishment, the work of the rising bourgeoisie began to be internalised as a culture that increasingly “appeared as a moral virtue” (Cottom, 2013: 79).

The internalisation of work as culture was accompanied by increase in the level of education for the children of the new middle classes. However, these young men were “disabled by education” (Cottom, 2013: 76). The critical education that they received encouraged them to reject the work of their parents. The rejection of bourgeois values constituted the look and attitude of French bohemia that took on aristocratic airs whilst revelling in chosen penury. Though characterised and mocked as mere laziness, bohemia was concerned with the production of community away from “the house, out from under the father, and even, in a sense, out of the capitalist marketplace and modern nation.” (Cottom, 2013: 114). Bohemia sought a new transnational community unbounded by traditional sources of authority and control.

However, there was a vagueness to bohemian identity. One was not born a bohemian, the identity was taken on by the subject. Bohemian identity lacked a doctrine or any form of codified practice. This vagueness freed bohemians to experiment with forms of life that were radically un-codified but also opened bohemianism up to the sham of the poseur, “the bohemian is artificial through and through” (Cottom, 2013: 11). The bohemian

identity is a pretence and a performance, as an attitude it is a reaction against modernity and born of modernity, yet it was reliant upon the middleclass safety net in which it developed.

The vagueness of bohemia also constituted its international aspect. For example, the bohemia that developed in nineteenth century France was not the same as that which developed in America. Contrary to the French bohemians' search for the outside as rebels, "In America... bohemia positively desired respectability" (Cottom, 2013: 161) American bohemians were broad, free-thinkers and supporters of the nation, religion and respectability, not the wild children of the French middleclass. For Walt Whitman, "democracy, individualism, nationalism, spiritual identity, manliness, moral decency and tolerance" characterised the "patriotic cosmopolitanism" (Cottom, 2013: 164) of American bohemia. Citing 'manliness' as a feature of American bohemianism is important in light of recent work by Harvey C. Mansfield, the Straussian neoconservative. For Mansfield, "The manly man is in control when control is difficult or contested – in a situation of risk" (2006: 16). Authors, such as Ernest Hemingway, are used illustrate the lost figure who is key to the establishment of "authority" (Mansfield, 2006: 17). For Mansfield the collapse of manliness in the "gender neutral" society is a manifestation of the nihilism of modernity. Mansfield is not a lone neoconservative in these concerns, George Gilder posed a similar problem in his 1986 book *Men and Marriage*. A recuperation of some form of manliness seems to be an important part of the neoconservative programme, it is key to the supposed moral qualities of foreign policy and also to the moral economy of risk that Gilder will attempt to establish.



It is respectability that Podhoretz saw in the cosmopolitan, but not threatening, bohemianism of the 1920s. If bohemianism is understood as a particular response to modernity, this American variation should be understood as particular to American modernity. Unlike its European cousins it did not evolve inside the aristocratic order; American modernity established itself anew. Without an aristocracy to mock, in a land still being discovered and with opportunity and adventure available at the frontier, American modernity of the nineteenth-century was a long way from Europe. However, the respectable and corporatist atmosphere of the US in the nineteen-fifties was a long way from the nineteenth century. The frontier had closed and the freedom that expansion gave had been replaced by Fordist production, Taylorist organisation and the consumer society; the two Beats were rebelling against this world (Holton, 2004: 12-13). Influenced as much by Baudelaire and Rimbaud, the surrealists and Andre Gide, as they were by American writers, the Beats fused together the contrasting reactions to modernity in their spiritual rebellion.

The Beats, for Podhoretz, represent moral relativism and a celebration of destructiveness. Podhoretz sees Kerouac as celebrating criminality, primitivism and an anti-intellectualism that “makes the ordinary American’s hatred of eggheads seem positively benign.” (2004: 35) Kerouac’s enthusiastic primitivism was, for Podhoretz, inspired by the same spirit that drives “the young savages in leather jackets who have been running amok in the last few years with their switchblades and zip guns.” (2004: 39) Podhoretz sees American moral decline symbolised in the leather-jacketed youths that were celebrated by Kerouac.

Decline was connected to the development of the American middle class, Podhoretz claims that “I happen to believe that there is a direct connection between the flabbiness of

middle class life and the spread of juvenile crime in the 1950s" (2004: 39). It was Kerouac's celebration of a life that refuses to engage with society that most disturbed Podhoretz. By rebelling against American culture and rejecting "characters who are capable of getting seriously involved with a woman, a job, a cause" (2004: 39) and by celebrating the use of drugs, promiscuity and madness the experimentation of the Beats posed a problem to social norms.

In 1999 Podhoretz even went so far as to suggest that Ginsberg, in his declaration "that the perverse was infinitely superior to the normal", became "homosexual not out of erotic compulsion but by an act of will and as another way of expressing his contempt for normal life" (2000: 36). In a second essay from 1958 'The New Nihilism and the Novel', Podhoretz notes:

...the reception accorded Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg, whose work combines an appearance of radicalism with a show of intense spirituality, testifies to the hunger that has grown up on all sides for something extreme, fervent, affirmative and sweeping.  
(1965: 163)

Citing David Reisman's *The Lonely Crowd*, Podhoretz takes the Beats as a symptom of a cultural malaise that developed during the 1950s due to increasing affluence and comfort. Referring to the nihilism of the character Sebastian Dangerfield in J. P. Donleavy's *The Ginger Man*, Podhoretz says "he is living the truth of his times" but he is not a rebel:

...for there is nothing to rebel against, but he is an example of what becomes of the impulse toward rebellion at a moment in history when the only conventions in existence are anachronistic survivals of a moribund ethos. (1965: 169)

Podhoretz recognized the international nature of rebellious bohemia stating that “it was... Camus who first spotted the significance of this new style of nihilism” (1965: 170). In *Alexandre Kojève and the roots of postmodern politics*, Shadia Drury sees this nihilism encapsulated in the existential *acte gratuite* and the expression it received in Andre Gide’s *Les Caves du Vatican* (1994: 60). Gide, whose literary questions preceded those of Camus, describes an apparently motiveless murder where a man was pushed out of a moving train. The murderer, Lafcadio, had no interest in the money found in the dead man’s pocket; the murder was essentially gratuitous, Lafcadio was simply bored. “His *acte gratuite* was intended to separate him from the herd of humanity. Lafcadio wanted to live like an immortal god in the midst of mortal play things.” (Drury, 1994: 61) What Gide describes is fictional but for Drury, “It is certainly not foreign to those of us who live in a world filled with gratuitous terror and motiveless crimes directed against totally anonymous victims.” (1994: 61) For Drury these crimes reflect reality, “the new brand of criminality is motivated by boredom, a desire for adventure, and a quest for ‘pure prestige’” (1994: 61)

In response to this problem Georges Bataille, who along with Camus attended Kojève’s lectures on Hegel, wrote to Kojève “the question arises as to whether the negativity of one who has ‘nothing more to do’ disappears or remains in a state of ‘unemployed negativity’” (1997: 296). In the post-historical state, where legal recognition and equality is given to all

and material affluence has provided comfort, there is nothing more to do; Bataille questions if this is really enough. After being granted universal recognition the human, as negativity, becomes unemployed, it has nothing left to do. What happens to this unemployed negativity is the question of the end of history because, although desire is declared to be satisfied, it is not; “it brings into play representations extremely charged with emotive value... these representations intoxicate him.” (Bataille, 1997: 298)

Leo Strauss, who became a crucial philosophic influence on American neoconservatism, also attended Kojève’s lectures and undertook a long correspondence with him, echoes Bataille’s criticism:

The recognition, for which great men of action strive, is admiration. That recognition is not necessarily satisfied by the End-State. The fact that great deeds are impossible in the End-State, can lead precisely the best to a nihilistic denial of the End-State.

....If I had more time than I have, I could state more fully, and presumably more clearly, why I am not convinced that the End State as you describe it, can be either the rational or the merely-factual satisfaction of human beings. For the sake of simplicity I refer today to Nietzsche’s “last men”. - Letter dated 22/8/1948 (2000: 238-239)

Both Bataille and Strauss, though offering different responses, recognized the Kojévian conception of the end of history as an ultimately disappointing and unsatisfactory place. In connection with this, Mansfield’s understanding of manliness is that it has not entirely disappeared in modernity but has also become “unemployed”. Mansfield situates this unemployment in the rational, Hegelian state saying “the entire enterprise of modernity...

could be understood as a project to keep manliness unemployed.” (Mansfield, 2006: 230)

This understanding of unemployment as a consequence of a rational, administrative state encapsulates the bohemian attitude that influenced Bataille’s own generation through Surrealism; it is an attitude of experimentation that appears as a rebellion but that is enabled by a level of material and political comfort.

This same unemployed negativity is represented in the literature of the 1950s, it is a striving for something that is not there. This striving can be detected in many of Kerouac’s texts, from the search for “kicks” in *On the Road*, to the Buddhism of his time in California and in his return to Catholicism and descent into alcoholism. What marks Kerouac’s writing is the encompassing desolation as unemployed negativity searches for something to do.

### Irving Kristol – Counter-culture and capitalism

The Beats were the precursors to elements of the counter-culture, which Podhoretz considered to be a “species of nihilism” and a plague that affects the “vulnerable young”. Podhoretz saw them as being a symptom of a culture that saw itself as satisfied, a culture that had nothing more to do. Irving Kristol extended Podhoretz’s critique of the developing cultural paradigm, especially in relation to the radical student movement of the 1960s; later he would detect this nihilism in capitalism itself.

America's problem was one of affluence, the students saw ahead of them a comfortable existence, one that held no great danger and offered no opportunity for "great deeds". The comfortable students desired recognition but existed within a system that offered no opportunities for heroism. For Bataille the response was the idea of sovereignty found through the act of rebellion as an end in itself, through the transgression of the rational society (2001: 129-132). Following the acte gratuite, the Beats shared this sense of rebellion (McNally, 2003: 67). Kristol calls this phenomenon an "adversary culture" which, as with nineteenth century bohemia, developed through education:

When we send our sons and daughters to college, we may expect that by the time they are graduated they are likely to have a lower opinion of our social and economic order... The more "cultivated" a person is in our society, the more disaffected and malcontent he is likely to be – a disaffection, moreover, directed not only at the actuality of our society but at the ideality... The average "less cultivated" American, of course feels no great uneasiness with either the actual or the ideal. (1995: 106-7)

The adversary is someone who is framed through education and not their material conditions, the adversary is not opposed to the state because of the merciless exploitation of an economic system but, it is claimed, because they are comfortable and bored. Kristol saw the adversary culture not as politically programmatic but as a reaction against the comfort and ease of modernity.

Kristol had elucidated his understanding of the role of culture in a 1971 essay called 'Pornography, Obscenity and the Case for Censorship':

...if you believe that no-one was ever corrupted by a book, you have also to believe that no one was ever improved by a book (or a play or movie). You have to believe, in other words, that all art is morally trivial and that, consequently, all education is morally irrelevant. (1972: 32)

Kristol, like Podhoretz in relation to the Beats, takes the opposite view; all culture *is* morally relevant. Kristol's argument for the importance of cultural education echoes that Leo Strauss's reading of Plato's *Republic* (Strauss, 1964). Drawing on Walter Berns, a student of Strauss, Kristol says, "no society can be utterly indifferent to the ways its citizens publicly entertain themselves" (1972: 33). Popular culture affects the people, for example, cockfighting and bear baiting are wrong not because they are cruel to animals, but because "it was felt that they debased and brutalised the citizenry" (1972: 33). Culture should present and promote accepted moral conventions and not corrupt them.

The modern spirit of nihilism was not limited to cultural and intellectual spheres, it also extended to the economic. In a 1973 essay 'Capitalism, Socialism and Nihilism', which was first delivered as a lecture to the Mont Pelerin Society, Kristol continues his critique of the New Left and the adversary culture. He begins by acknowledging the importance of Chicago School economics and the arguments of Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman in attacking the planned economy. For Kristol, the traditional economics of socialism had been discredited but the question remained, "If the traditional economics of socialism have been discredited, why has not the traditional economics of capitalism been vindicated?" (1978: 57) The answer is to be found in the notion of "thinking economically". What marked out the old Left was its serious engagement with economic thinking, with

the rational science of modernity and for Kristol this is where it lost the argument. The old Left was rational, but “the identifying mark[s] of the New Left are its refusal to *think economically* and its contempt for bourgeois society precisely because this is a society that does think economically” (1978: 58). Kristol defines economics and thinking economically as the “social science *par excellence* of modernity” based upon the “philosophical presuppositions of modernity” (1978: 58) and enlightenment rationalism. Kristol is referring to the turn that Leo Strauss identified in modern philosophy that moved away from classical notions of virtue and towards rational individualism, the quest to conquer nature for the sake of “comfortable self-preservation” and what Strauss saw as a moral levelling down (Strauss, 1989: 81-98). Following the bohemian lineage through the Beats (Belgrad, 2004: 30-36) and the counter-culture, the New Left was constituted as a rebellion against these philosophical presuppositions.

Kristol seems to have had some sympathy with this argument. Central economic planning did not fail because it assumed knowledge of the good life. It failed because it assumed that the good life is based on material consumption, but it could not deliver on this promise:

If you do not define “happiness” or “satisfaction” in this way, if you refuse to think “economically”, then the pre-modern view is more plausible than it is not. (1978: 58)

And in a very revealing statement Kristol goes on:



...if you believe that man's spiritual life is more important than his trivial and transient adventures in the market place, then you may tolerate a free market for practical reasons... but you certainly will have no compunction in overriding it. (1978: 59)

Kristol's view of capitalism is that it sees the good life, much like the old Left did, as material satisfaction gained through comfortable self-preservation. But for the neoconservatives, comfortable modernity, if possible for all, may not be satisfying in-itself. Allan Bloom, a student of Leo Strauss, made a similar point in his essay on Plato's *Republic*, saying that by "denying the existence of spiritedness" (1968: 349), the modern capitalist system denies the value of anything that is beyond the economic. Kristol's position here is that markets are useful because they produce affluence but are not an end in themselves. Without spiritual underpinnings the capitalist system lacks legitimacy, the very problem that Hayek brought to Mont Pelerin in 1947.

Kristol's question turns to the failings of bourgeois civilisation. Liberal capitalist society is of necessity also secular; the end of religion and the promise of otherworldly happiness meant that "the demands placed upon liberal society, in the name of temporal 'happiness', have become ever more urgent and ever more unreasonable" (1978: 63). The lack of a promise of a better life after death necessarily turned people toward this worldly satisfaction. This means material satisfaction, the promise of affluence and the Straussian understanding of post-Lockean political modernity as "comfortable self-preservation" (Strauss, 1989: 89). The collapse of the religious ideal and the legitimacy that it provided necessarily turned people towards the material satisfaction found in consumption.

Consumption could not replace the old form of legitimacy and so dissatisfaction and counter-cultural rebellion developed.

Kristol carries on:

Another, and related, consequence of the disestablishment of religion as a publicly sanctioned mythos has been the inability of liberal society ever to come up with a convincing and generally accepted theory of political obligation. (1978: 64)

Kristol considers religion as useful for the production of political obligations and a codified, transcendently understood morality. In the nineteenth century the latent Christian influence moderated the capitalist spirit by imposing “bourgeois virtues [such] as honesty, sobriety, diligence and thrift” (1978: 65). But as the liberal focus on individualism increased, the hold of religion weakened and a purer form of liberal, capitalist logic developed. This was a logic that had no room for the religious life and instead focused on the progressive, technological satisfaction of desire. Kristol sums up his position thus, “I think it is becoming increasingly clear that religion, and a moral philosophy associated with religion, is far more important politically than the philosophy of liberal individualism admits.” (1978: 66)

Religion is however only one element of the neoconservative project, the protection of capitalism is another, particularly in relation to the problems of nihilism and political stability. For Strauss, modernity is characterised by the replacement of the classical notion of moderation with the attempt to satisfy desire. However, because desire is not satiable the economy needs to constantly expand to match rising expectations. This is why

economic growth is so important; there will always be a desire for more and so infinite economic expansion becomes a vital component of modernity. The economy needs to expand to meet rising expectations, but:

What is called “the revolution of rising expectations” has reached such grotesque dimensions that men take it as an insult when they are asked to be reasonable in their desires and demands. (1972: 27)

Kristol sees capitalism as being successful in the modern world because it achieves this, in 1978 he writes that it “does work – does promote economic growth and permit the individual to better his condition” but he also demonstrates his discomfort, “there is something joyless, even somnambulistic about this” (1995: 120). Not only is it joyless, it is pointless because, the “demands of material compensation gradually become as infinite as the infinity they have lost” (1978: 64). Once the religious impulse has given way to capitalism there is only the impossible fulfilment of infinite desire, yet it is unacknowledged as such.

The collapse of bourgeois morality was typified by the rise of the instalment plan. In a 1974 Kristol remarked that those buying on credit through an instalment plan were once considered “feckless and irresponsible” (2011: 71) but this taboo on credit no longer exists. Daniel Bell, a long-time friend of and collaborator with Kristol, noted in *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (1976) that this represented a “revolution in the moral habit” (1996: 69). This revolution was a necessary development for the capitalism of mass production that had developed in the first half of the twentieth century. If people insisted

on being thrifty and saving their money until they could afford the consumer goods, there would much fewer consumers and less capital exchange. A shift in moral attitudes regarding debt was necessary to speed up capital exchange and open the markets for mass-produced goods. Bell argued that this need to produce consumers for the new capitalism fundamentally changed the moral attitudes of the US so that “by the 1950s American culture had become primarily hedonistic, concerned with play, fun, display and pleasure... in a compulsive way” (1996: 70). The spiritual hedonism of the Beats was reflected in a general hedonistic consumerism. This made possible the exploration of identities, opened up new attitudes and produced new subjects who were willing to experiment and mould their own identities in newly privatised spaces outside of traditional authority (Gammon, 2013, 522). These new attitudes in turn helped to break-down social conventions that had held capital back from establishing new markets.

Bell identified a fundamental problem with Kristol’s wish to return to protestant values, “the one thing that would utterly destroy the new capitalism is the serious practice of delayed gratification” (1996: 78). In other words, the return of moderation as a virtue would be unacceptable to a form of capitalism that relies upon the willingness of people to go into debt in order to consume. If people were to stop using credit, consumer demand would dry up. Such a collapse in demand would have a knock-on effect on production with catastrophic consequences for the capitalist economy. Capitalism’s need for consumerism is why the return to religion that neo-conservatism desires struggles to insist upon thrift as a value. This is one reason why the contemporary rhetoric of austerity is so contradictory, with markets being fearful of both over-indebtedness and a contraction in the supply of

credit. In 2003 Kristol's change in attitude to credit is shown when he describes the neoconservative position thus:

The cost of this emphasis on economic growth has been an attitude toward public finance that is far less risk-averse than is the case among more traditional conservatives. (2011: 191)

Bell implies a link between the development of a consumer capitalism designed around immediate gratification and the counter culture of the 1960s, "It was an effort, largely a product of the youth movement, to transform a liberal lifestyle into a world of immediate gratification and exhibitionistic display." (1996: 81) The development of mass production necessitated a shift in the moral norms of society, an ideology of thrift was no longer commensurate with production and liberalisation was needed. Liberalisation in the habits of buying implied liberalisation in other forms of behaviour and social attitudes that produced "women's libbers, sexual nonconformists and cultural radicals" (1996: 78).

The experimentation of bohemia is mirrored by "the spirit of perpetual innovation" (Bell, 1996: 78) of consumer capitalism. Consumer capitalism goes hand in hand with cultural experimentation, particularly regarding identity, but "the curious fact is that the 'new capitalism' of abundance has never been able to define its view of these cultural-political issues." (Bell, 1996: 78) Capitalism is ambivalent about these issues, cultural shifts merely open up new markets. The social liberalism of the counter-culture allows the development of the market liberalism of consumer capitalism and vice versa.

Bell claimed that this liberalisation of culture meant that, “the corporate class had abdicated” (1996: 79) from its responsibility to moralise the working class. This is a view shared by Kristol who defined republican virtue as “curbing one’s passions and moderating one’s opinions in order to achieve a large consensus that will ensure domestic tranquillity... a form of self-control, an exercise in self-government.” (2011: 68) For Bell, “it was the American businessman who first liberated himself from the idea of ‘republican virtue’” (1996: 70). Republican virtue was sacrificed for the profit motive when the modern businessman rejected the connection between his vocation and moral character. Kristol points out that “it was thought to be dishonourable for a businessman to go bankrupt, not because this was a sign of failure but because it meant that he was cheating his creditors who trusted him.” (2011: 70) Such behaviour, it is implied, is no longer the case.

The ambivalent attitude of the new capitalism is evident in the apparent support that it gives to the counter-culture through the music industry, cinema, clothes and lifestyles. This process has been noted by Left intellectuals as a process of recuperation, where capitalism takes something that is organic and potentially threatening, re-packages it and then sells that feeling of kicking against the system back to the potential rebel. Kristol mocks the Left for sometimes making this process sound like a grand conspiracy, but his line is in some ways more radical:

Our capitalists promote the ethos of the New Left for only one reason: they cannot think of any reason why they should not. For them it is “business as usual” (1978: 67).

Bourgeois virtue has been replaced by individual liberty, this liberty is both economic and social; modernity produces the two symbiotically so it becomes accurate to say that *capitalism is counter-culture*. The new capitalism needs a counter-culture that expands horizons and seeks out new possibilities, it needs an ideology that is focused on expression and the development of the self because any development in the social and the breaking down of any taboo establishes fresh markets. Neoliberal hyper-consumption and the post-war counter-culture share an ideology of personal expression and freedom and have an aversion to centralised control. This symbiotic relationship is something that has been documented by Thomas Frank in *The Conquest of Cool* through management literature and the development of marketing. Capitalism captured social aspects of the counter-culture, particularly the emphasis on youth and free expression, whilst disarming its political edge.

Worried about the consequences of capitalist excesses, rising executive pay and economic instability Kristol warned that this behaviour was damaging to the social whole. In 1970 he explains that a society that places freedom over virtue is “severed from its moral moorings”. Criticising Hayek and Milton Friedman he asks, “can men live in a free society if they have no reason to believe it is also a just society? I do not think so” (1972: 97). For Kristol, the mere opportunity to express oneself in the market, both economically and socially is not enough if one is at the sharp edge of capitalist practice and at the mercy of fortune in Hayek’s game of catallaxy.

Kristol perceived the problems of capitalism, both in terms of the ambivalence to changing moral orders and about economic injustice and mismanagement. The two problems feed into each other and Kristol worried that if the economic promise of capitalism failed, the

erosion of morality would leave the system without a convincing narrative with which to legitimise itself. However, because of his opposition to bohemia and his wish to re-establish bourgeois codes of behaviour Kristol was, despite his awareness of the need, unable to imagine a new mode of morality compatible with the developing economic paradigm of the second half of the 1970s. The question that Kristol failed to resolve was of how retain a universal moral order *and* the individual capitalist subject freely acting in the market.

### The Capitalist as Hero and a New Moral Paradigm

The new capitalism had failed to produce a new moral paradigm. Kristol poses the problem in 1974:

Who wants to live in a society in which selfishness and self-seeking are celebrated as primary virtues [...]... So if capitalism is what this indictment claims it is – if it is what so many businessmen today seem to think it is – then it is doomed, and properly. (1978: 85)

Capitalism is doomed because it is perceived as a celebration of selfishness for its own sake. Kristol turns to the work of Horatio Alger, the nineteenth century American novelist famous for fictional representations of the rise, through hard work and thrift, of the poor to middle class respectability. For Kristol, Alger's novels are "the only substantial body of American literature where businessmen are heroes rather than villains" (1978: 86). But, as Kristol explains, these characters are not heroic because they simply pursue the profit



motive, “instead one finds a moral conception of business as an honourable vocation for honourable men” (1978: 86).

Kristol was unable to escape the cultural logic capitalism. He perceived the collapse of the bourgeois moral paradigm but was only able to offer paeans to the dead protestant ethic. Does this mean that the neoconservative moral critique runs into a dead end? Is it incapable of overcoming the contradiction between liberalisation (both economic and cultural), traditional authority and political order? This is where commentators make the turn towards foreign policy. It is argued that the realm of foreign policy offered the neoconservatives a sphere in which to recreate a black and white moral order which could counteract the abyss of modernity. Drolet is quite specific, “For the neoconservative, foreign policy is a prime site for the cultivation of forms of subjectivity and citizenship which are... resistant to the ‘cultural contradiction of capitalism’” (Drolet, 2007; 273) I do not disagree with these accounts. However, a focus on the moral valence of foreign policy in neoconservative thought can lead to a forgetfulness regarding the moral economy of neoliberalism. It is not so simple as to suggest that a morally infused foreign policy masked a moral abyss in capitalism. Though neoconservatives did recognise the importance of foreign policy in the domestic moral economy (Kristol and Kagan, 1996) others attempted to overcome the impasse in moral thought that was reached by Irving Kristol. It is particularly relevant to draw attention to this narrative in light of global financial crisis that began in 2007. The important question regards how neoliberalism has survived? The question has relevance for those interested in neoconservatism because this period of time has corresponded with the neoconservatives, especially in foreign policy terms, being broadly side-lined and in which the binary rhetoric of the war on terror has diminished. It

cannot be said that that a foreign policy distraction has made up for capitalism's moral abyss during a time of financial crisis. To answer the question of neoliberalism's survival Philip Mirowski has detailed the intellectual capture of what he calls the "neoliberal thought collective" in university economics departments and throughout the political system. Mirowski goes some way in explaining the hegemony of neoliberal reason but he does not answer the moral question that I began this paper with. As Hayek noted and as Kristol and Bell detailed, the liberal capitalist project has undermined both classical and bourgeois morality. To better understand the survival of neoliberalism we must instead develop an understanding of its moral economy.

In *Wealth and Poverty* George Gilder takes Kristol's problematic as his starting point and reiterates the question "Can men live in a free society if they have no reason to believe it is also a just society?" (Gilder, 1981: 6) Capitalism lacks a "transcendent justification" and is wounded by "moral contradictions deriving from its continuing practical failures" (1981: 4). "Practical failure" is here acting as a euphemism for financial crisis. Gilder's motivating question is how to maintain the appearance of a capitalist morality given the apparent inequality of the system. In other words, the presence of practical failures (crises) questions the legitimacy of the system and so capitalism needs to produce a narrative to justify this risk and to explain away inequality and the spectre of destitution. Gilder repeats Kristol's criticisms of Hayek and Friedman, accusing them of being "technical and pragmatic". Freedom is considered good because it makes people rich and wealth is the only measure of success, but "None of these writers sees reason to give capitalism a theology or even assign to its results any assurance of justice." (1981: 6) Gilder's project in the early 1980s was one of reshaping the capitalist moral paradigm, to produce for it a

theology that justified and explained inequality whilst disrupting the middle-class flabbiness that Kristol and Podhoretz saw in the counter-culture.

For Gilder “Capitalism begins with giving” and from this he attempted to produce a justification of capitalism on anthropological grounds via the idea of potlatch. Potlatch, where the primitive economy is based on the gift, is here presented as the primitive form of capitalism. Borrowing from the work of Melville Herskovits, Mervin Harris, Marcel Mauss and Claude Levi-Strauss, Gilder tells us “the capitalists of primitive society were tribal leaders who vied with one another in giving great feasts” (1981: 21). One leader would put on a feast and invite another tribe in the hope of an eventual return. The receiver of the gift, and this is the point emphasised by Mauss, is symbolically obligated to return a gift to the giver. In this instance the return is via another feast, but with one crucial difference, the gift must be returned with interest. To return a lesser gift, or worse, no gift at all, places the initial receiver of the gift in a symbolically less prestigious position to the giver; to not return a gift is shameful.

Potlatch is presented as a successful form of exchange because “these competitions in giving are contests of altruism. A gift will only elicit a greater response if it is based on an understanding of the needs of others.” (Gilder, 1981: 22) However, this formulation of the potlatch is at odds with some other interpretations where it is the value of the gift to the giver that bestows power to the gift and not the use-value to the receiver (Mauss, 1950: ch. one; Bataille, 1991: ch. one; Baudrillard, 1993: 131-143). For Gilder the value of the gift is defined by its use-value to the receiver; if the gift is of no use to the receiver it cannot be symbolically more prestigious. By presenting it in this way Gilder cuts out the aspect of the

gift where its prestige is based on the sacrifice of the giver, with the ultimate gift, one that cannot be returned, being the life of the giver. For Gilder, a gift that is unwanted contains no symbolic power in spite of any value that it may have for the giver.

In the way that Gilder reads the gift, the giver has to consider the needs and desires of the receiver, he has to anticipate these, so, “the contest of the gifts leads to an expansion of human sympathies” (1981: 22). Gilder’s gift is productive not destructive. This supply-side version of potlatch implies that the giver makes an investment (the gift), in the hope that he will, in time, receive a return in either material wealth, by being given back a more valuable gift than the one given, or in prestige. Gilder’s gift is entirely instrumental.

One invests in a company in the hope of a return at some future date, but this return remains unknown, it is always a risk. If a return is made, the investment will have been well received and the product will have been a success. If the investor makes a loss, s/he will have to absorb it, but the lesson learned may still lead to a good for someone else at a future date. The problem with the capitalism is when this material loss is made and there is not a corresponding increase in prestige. For Gilder, entrepreneurs “contribute more to society than they ever recover, and most of them win no riches at all. They are the heroes of economic life” (1981: 245). What Gilder was aiming to achieve was a reversal of this lack, he wanted to establish the prestige of business via heroic investment.

Gilder attempts to re-moralise capitalism through the celebration of entrepreneurs as heroes. Gilder celebrates the gift giving of the capitalist investor as the person who, by supplying something, creates demand. The new products and services are the capitalist’s

gifts, but because a return is not guaranteed the capitalist must be willing to take the risk, s/he therefore becomes morally more prestigious. Gilder's economics is based on the expansion of consumer desire and not moderation. He inverts the problems of modernity as perceived by Kristol and attempts to insert a moral paradigm at the exact point where Kristol and Bell could only see the collapse of one.

The risk element also produces the spiritual factor:

For entrepreneurial experiments are also adventures, with the future livelihood of the investor at stake. He participates with a heightened consciousness and passion and an alertness and diligence that greatly enhance his experience. (1981: 25)

This risk taking produces the excitement that is lacking in post-historical culture, as Mirowski says "This is one reason that participation in neoliberal life necessitates acting as an entrepreneur of the self: unreserved embrace of (this version of risk) is postulated to be the primary method of changing your identity to live your life to the fullest." (Mirowski, 2013: 119). Gilder's economics is that of the master, it celebrates those who take risks as heroes whilst those too fearful to risk anything are forgotten. This was also the argument that Francis Fukuyama reiterated in his *End of History and the Last Man*, the primordial battle for pure prestige that Kojève described in his reading of Hegel is re-imagined as a field of entrepreneurial investment, "they do not risk their lives, but they stake their fortunes, status, and reputations" (Fukuyama, 1992: 316). What Gilder did in his best-selling book, which was a favourite of Ronald Reagan, was to redefine the moral paradigm of capitalism; bourgeois virtues are abandoned and the willingness to take risk and

embrace *fortuna* and Hayek's game of catallaxy are presented as the new moral benchmark.

The problem of nihilism in the new capitalism is thus solved by redefining that nihilism as virtue, what was problematic for Kristol becomes glorious for Gilder and the presence of extreme wealth turns into a sign of prestige and moral worth. The rich are so because of the moral superiority of the "wealth creator". On a policy level this leads Gilder to a rejection of the social democratic welfare model as this merely protects and encourages a slave morality. Investors should be let free and encouraged to take risks, the poor, instead of being animalised by state hand-outs should be given a legalistic framework that encourages them to become risk-taking entrepreneurs. The neoliberal triptych of deregulation, free markets and low taxes was thus given a moral basis. Not only will investors experience the "heightened consciousness" of risk-taking but society should also celebrate those risk-takers as its paradigmatic heroes. Indeed, this is what begins to be represented in the 1980s in notable films such as *Trading Places* (1983) *Risky Business* (1983), *Wall Street* (1987) and *Working Girl* (1988). These films all celebrate the entrepreneurial spirit of the characters but unlike Horatio Alger, who presented the business man as honourable, these representations celebrate risk-taking and experimentation. The "heightened consciousness" of the entrepreneur is celebrated and capitalism is shown as a spiritual practice.

The slave is re-imagined as the person who is too afraid to be an entrepreneur and is pathetically satisfied with working for another. Worse than employee are those who rely on state for financial support. Welfare is the centre of the Nietzschean slave revolt

because, “Socialism is an insurance policy bought by all the members of a national economy to shield them from risk.” (Gilder, 1981: 26) The poor are so because they are afraid of taking risks and being entrepreneurial. Ideas of institutional inequality are rejected as wealth and poverty become a reflection of one’s moral worth. Gilder and other neoconservatives like Gertrude Himmelfarb argued that the attempt to help the poor through welfare created a trap, government spending is therefore accused of being immoral. Such arguments have remained intrinsic to debates around welfare during contemporary austerity where the poor should be set free and re-moralised by exposing them to a precarious life on the edge.

Gilder’s moral economy is however split and necessarily so because of how he imagines the investor, “their chief desire is not money to waste on consumption” (Gilder, 2012: 254). The entrepreneur is thrifty, s/he saves money and does not consume unnecessarily. But if the entrepreneur does not consume where does demand come from? Within the moral economy there is a hierarchy between the expenditure of the risk-taking entrepreneur and the expenditure of the consumer. One who is moral and one who is not, one who is careful yet embraces risk and another who is feckless but fearful. Gilder’s rejection of conspicuous consumption as vulgar and his insistence that the entrepreneurial rich are frugal reveals the contradiction in neoliberalism’s utopian vision. Neoliberalism both demands consumption and the creation of credit yet still castigates non-productive expenditure.

The moral economy of the gift that Gilder attempts to establish is based on what he perceives as the generosity of the entrepreneur, however, following Derrida’s analysis of the gift in *Given Time* (1992) it is not certain that it should be taken it as such. Following

Mauss, Gilder insists upon the reciprocal nature of the gift but for Derrida “for there to be a gift, there must be no reciprocity, return, exchange, counter gift or debt” (Derrida, 1992: 12). Furthermore, the gift should not appear as a gift either to the giver or the receiver. If there is such an acknowledgement of the gift then symbolic recognition is taken, which is a form of return. What Mauss described, and Gilder adopted, was a form of exchange based on reciprocity and not gift giving. Gilder was correct to rename these as “investments” but he produced a sleight of hand when he implied that these were generous. The logic of neoliberalism always seeks a return.

What Gilder imagines is a moral economy of debt based on an excess of giving rather than moderation, where the entrepreneur demands moral prestige because of the risk-taking venture. The ‘gifts’ of consumer goods, a growing economy and employment are for Gilder augmented by something more important, the gift of knowledge. In the recently rewritten edition of *Wealth and Poverty* (2012) he states that “every capitalist investment has the potential for a dual yield: a financial profit and an epistemological profit” (Gilder, 2012: 274). This is reiterated more thoroughly in the recent *Knowledge and Power* (2013) where Gilder stresses that entrepreneurs are also the creators of knowledge through their experiments in ‘giving’.

Entrepreneurial experimentation is given a religious underpinning through a faith in a better future. Religious beliefs, “bear in their symbolic depths the greatest of pragmatic and historical truths. They tell us that free humans with faith in the future and a commitment to it will prevail.” (Gilder, 1981:258) Rationalism and the enlightenment tradition are rejected for “excluding chance and novelty” (Gilder, 1981: 263). It is only by



embracing creativity, and overcoming fear of the unknown that transcendence can be found (Gilder, 1981: 263) and the key to transcendence is a minimal State. The minimal state is not only seen as helping to produce a richer economy and more freedom (as in Hayek or Friedman) but is also key to the establishment of an economic culture that gives access to the divine. Capitalism is not just an economic system but a theology, or in Walter Benjamin's terms a cult (Dodd, 2012). This cult is based on risk, a faith in one's creativity, acceptance of chance and the production of debt. Gilder's imagination of the capitalist hero mirrors the bohemian critique of the staid and safe bourgeois world where security was prioritised over pleasure and excess. For Gilder however, it is the entrepreneur who is the rebel, or, in effect, the bohemian is co-opted into the capitalist economy through the valorisation of the will to step outside convention. Gilder builds an ideology in which the entrepreneur is the outsider who creates new modes and orders, this seems to invert the moral abyss of modernity by turning that nihilism into a seductive form of Nietzschean capitalism.

This aspect of Gilder's formulation of the moral economy of capitalism has been developed by Jean-Joseph Goux in relation to Georges Bataille. Goux notes the similarity of Gilder's capitalism with Bataille's "notion of expenditure", expenditure is the locus of the sacred, it is the wilful waste of that which remains. In Bataille's studies expenditure often appears in a specifically spiritual guise such as Tibetan Lamism or the Christian mystical traditions. For Bataille, bourgeois capitalism gives no outlet for expenditure. As Goux notes, part of Bataille's involvement with the surrealists was a bohemian urge to subvert this order (Goux, 1990: 209). This disruption of bourgeois rationality is what is at stake in Gilder, Goux is worth quoting at length:

it is precisely at the moment when the entrepreneur must think himself into the model of the most advanced artistic genius, at the moment when the avant-gardist strategy of innovation at any price becomes the paradigm of dominant economic practice, that the artistic avant-garde necessarily loses its difference, its marginality, its deviance-value. The aesthetic avant- gardes have won... it becomes more difficult for the poet to distinguish himself from the grocer, more difficult for the surrealist to differentiate himself from the dishevelled manager. (Goux, 1990: 219)

Capitalism encourages the risk taking element in human nature, “reason and calculation, for all their appeal, can never suffice” (1981: 27). Government is problematic because it tends toward the minimisation of risk for what is perceived as the benefit of all. However, there is a rationality of accumulation behind Gilder’s celebration of risk, for without risk an economic system (and in Gilder’s mind, society as well) will amortise and capital accumulation will cease:

...waste and irrationality is the secret of economic growth... a society ruled by risk and freedom rather than by rational calculus, a society open to the future rather than planning it, can call forth an endless stream of invention. (1981: 252)

The irrational, held back by bourgeois morality, needs to be set free:

...in order to take the hill, someone must dare first to charge the enemy bunker. Heroism, willingness to plunge into the unknown, in the hope that others will follow, is indispensable to all great human achievement. (1981: 253)

## Conclusion: Bohemia and the Moral Economy of Neoliberalism

If modernity was characterised by the apparent triumph of rationalism, Gilder's post-modern capitalism embraces fortuna, "Chance, however, is not the realm of the anarchic and haphazard but the area of freedom and the condition of creativity. It taps the underlying and transcendent order of the universe." (Gilder, 1981: 254) Gilder maintained and reiterated this position in the wake of the financial crisis of 2008. He even went as far as to castigate the economics profession for its penchant for complex, though flawed, models, "Austrian and Keynesian – both sides share an essential vision. They see their discipline as successful insofar as it eliminates surprise." (Gilder, 2013: 3), what animates economic modelling is the avoidance of chance and not its embrace. For Gilder, it is the need for this comfort that exacerbated the crisis.

Gilder describes the "willingness to face danger and fight" (Gilder, 2013: 283) as the defining motif of capitalism and calls it "an economics of disequilibrium and disruption" (Gilder, 2013: 5). This emphasis on the satisfaction of the risk-taking entrepreneur is consistent with sociological theories of the risk, particularly regarding edgework. Edgework is used to describe activities that put one's physical and mental well-being outside of ordered reality. The need for risk, specifically the embracing of chance and the testing of one's clarity of mind amid uncertainty, constitutes the satisfaction of edgework. Be it skydiving, gambling, drug-taking and binge drinking, identity experimentation or entrepreneurialism, it is this sense of the edge and the overcoming of social boundaries that connects these activities (see Arnoldi, 2009: 138-152; and Lupton, 2013: 213-221). This emphasis on risk can be given further depth if we consider Alexandre Kojève's reading of

Hegel's master/slave dialectic which emphasised the importance of risk taking for human recognition. In the struggle for life and death the two subjects recognise each other as something that is willing to risk its own life for the sake of recognition. It is recognised by the other as something willing to do so and is therefore worthy of recognition. Gilder is, unknown to him, appealing to such a notion in his attempt to legitimise capitalism. However, the risk must be genuine and it is unclear whether this is so in capitalism. The economist Thomas Picketty has noted that "Capital is never quiet: it is always risk oriented and entrepreneurial, at least at its inception, yet it always tends to transform itself into rents as it accumulates in large enough amounts – that is its vocation, its logical destination" (Picketty, 2014: 115-116). Capital seeks the safest way to expand itself, sometimes risk is involved but if a safer option is available, for example through rent-seeking, it will take that. This dual aspect of capitalist risk has been highlighted by Jonathon Levy. In the nineteenth century classical liberalism offered "a vision of freedom that linked the liberal idea of self-ownership to the personal assumption of 'risk'" (Levy, 2013: 5) but, at the same time there developed the corporate financial system that sought to insure against that risk. Capital is rational, not irrational as Gilder claims. Gilder attempts to make it appear as the latter to establish for it a moral economy that replaces the traditional authority, based on moderation, which has been eroded in modernity. But it is, as Goux says, "only a legitimisation" (Goux, 1990: 216). Ultimately, Gilder's valorisation of capital is a misrepresentation, the risk is not taken as an end in itself and is avoided when possible. This is not to say that an individual cannot existentially validate himself through capitalist risk, but that Gilder's model is cannot be representative of the system. The post-crash era revealed the financial system as in fact a risk avoidance system that failed. The celebrated heroes of capitalism were shown to have not undertaken any risk on their own part and

have suffered few personal losses. Through austerity and programmes of quantitative easing the losses have been socialised. The stripping of the pretence of risk has undermined the legitimacy of part of the system, but not its entirety.

It is through risk and edgework of entrepreneurialisation that the seductive legitimization of neoliberalism can be understood and why, for Wilson, “we have reached the point at which virtually the whole of metropolitan mass culture is bohemianized” (Wilson, 1999: 20). Bohemia constituted a reaction against the rationalisation of space and the lived experience. In the US the Beats and the subsequent counter-culture provided a response to the Fordist rigidities of everyday life (Lloyd, 2010: 63). Though at the time appearing as a threat to capitalism, the desire for experimentation, cultural liberation, creativity and flexibility became the perfect solution for the problems that had developed in the Fordist economy by the mid-1970s. As consumers the bohemian, whose identity is homeless and “artificial through and through” (Cottom, 2013: 11) appears as a blank slate ready to be defined through lifestyle rather than class, race, gender or nation. But equally important is the field of work. The bohemian life, artistic and creative but insecure and flexible is better adapted to the work of neoliberal capitalism than the organisation men of the post-war period. For Lloyd:

In addition to requiring that workers acclimate themselves to greater flexibility, with volatile compensation and irregular work schedules, the flexible workplace makes increasing demands on the individual’s creative capacity, even in mundane service sector jobs... they must also be able to acclimate themselves to enormous amounts of uncertainty and risk. (Lloyd, 2010: 244)

The valorised neoliberal subject, the new “creative class”, is one who is adapted to and embraces this new climate of risk and uncertainty (Peck, 2005). A choice for the bohemian, this form of insecurity is now accepted practice across the whole of the neoliberal economy, producing what Guy Standing has dubbed “The Precariat” (Standing, 2011). The entrepreneurialised bohemia of neoliberalism is neatly seen in a website like PeoplePerHour on which businesses can advertise for hourly workers. Those seeking work can set their own hourly rate, thus encouraging a race to the bottom and receive no security. The founder of PeoplePerHour, Xenios Thrasyvoulou, matches a bohemian aesthetic with a moral claim that “traditional employment... made people lazy” whereas flexible, insecure employment “keeps you on your toes” (interviewed in Peretti, 2015). Whilst offering a few the ability to tailor their working day around other activities, flexibility for many means zero hour contracts, or enforced self-employment. ‘Portfolio’ careers and co-working may benefit those working in well-paid, highly specialised industries, but the reality for most is a series of fixed-term, low-paid jobs in relatively unskilled positions in a life that could not be described as “comfortable” or “flabby”.

Neoliberalism survives and thrives not only because of the intellectual capture that Mirowski describes and the side-lining of heterodox economics outlined by Keen but because it has reshaped culture. When capital was eagerly exploiting the changed social conditions of twentieth century neoliberals recognised the need that capitalism had of a legitimising discourse beyond the mere creation of wealth, this morality was found in the process of atomisation through which capitalism eroded community. Neoliberalism is not simply reducible to economics, this is what Hayek, Kristol and Gilder recognised, it

contains within it a moral economy based on the willingness to experiment, to take risk and embrace the vagaries of chance.

The flexible economy that replaced Fordism required a flexible workforce and this needed a change in attitude for the whole and not just the bohemian few. "Comfortable self-preservation", that for Strauss characterised modernity, is replaced by precariousness. This state of being reduces organised labour power and makes production more efficient, but crucially for neoliberalism, it contains within it a moral claim that should not be forgotten or underestimated. This flexible, insecure state is seen as lifting unemployed negativity out of modernity's abyss. Precariousness and the universalisation of entrepreneurialism elevate the neoliberal subject from the vegetative existence of comfortable satisfaction and introduces risk to all. The homeless flexibility of neoliberalism experiments with ways of being, it establishes identities and breaks-down taboos. The neoliberal counter-culture seduces through the 'gift' of undogmatic freedom, the possibility of joy through creativity and life on the edge, in return it demands atomised insecurity and submission to chance.

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