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### PERMANENT GLOBAL CRISIS, POST-TRUTH AND BIOPOLITICS

Firstly, the issue I would like to turn to is the concept of *permanent global crisis* i.e., the question how it is that we have existentially walked into a situation precisely described as “*seconds to midnight*”. In this sense, I would say that although Schinkel (2018) is indisputably correct in articulating that *permanent global crisis* is a feature of *post-modernity* there is, I believe, a *hypokeimenon*, an underlying deeper foundation which has enabled this crisis to become both *permanent* and *global*, therefore, practically *inescapable*, *continual*, and *world-wide*. This is *neoliberalism per se*.

Now, if one were to approach this matter from a political science or, more explicitly, from a geopolitical perspective, then, certainly, the analysis would firstly refer to the fall of the Berlin wall, i.e., to the rise of *political, economic and social neoliberalism* which has practically coincided with *the rise of the US*, or, more accurately - with the establishment of *the unipolar world with US hegemony*, while the most notable proclamation about this era is Fukuyama’s story about the “*end of history*”.

In a brief sketch, the ideology which Chomsky called “*profit over people*” (1998), and which Harvey articulates in his “*History of Neoliberalism*” (2007), has not only placed in its core what Badiou calls a specific “*materialistic paradigm*” (2008) but in doing so has intrinsically broken the old Aristotelian interrelation between *politics and ethics*, as well as, on the other hand, an entire line of both Christianity and a specific course of Modernity. This is why the concept of *the end of history* also in itself includes *the Western break from its own best traditions as well*. Therefore, the neoliberal doctrine – which became the unquestionable and prevailing paradigm not only in the US but in Europe likewise - and precisely through *the project of the EU* which corresponds to the gradual weakening of the Welfare state in Europe – as its basic outline had that *market exchange is a politics, ethics, crypto-metaphysics, and sociality in and of itself*, capable of acting as a *guiding principle for all human action*, and, as such, also deprived of history as completely unnecessary. This is what Fusaro and I have called “*the eternal present*” of *neoliberalism* which operates exclusively in the “*now*” without past and future. The extension of

*neoliberalism via globalism* - its internal structure to spread around the world so as to maximalize the profit of the few - created not only what has properly been named as the difference between the 99% and 1% i.e., the deepening of *hierarchical and class divisions* but has likewise enabled the implementation of the doctrine that *all means are both allowed and justified* which, in final instance, led to the breakdown of *the international system and international rule of law*.

The logical consequence of this process has been the revival of a *crypto-Schmidtian friend-enemy distinction*, which led to creation of *permanent global crisis* precisely because major Western powers in recent decades were seeking neither compromise nor resolution of conflicts but, on contrary, *have permanently produced them* in the name of *practically absolute political, economic, social, and cultural hegemony*. Specifically, Costamagna (2023) has articulated how the military actions in Ukraine, for example, is, actually, a long-term effect of NATO intervention against former Yugoslavia - because it is precisely aggression against Serbia and Republic of Srpska that presented a historical turning point of the collapse of the international rule of law.

As far as the EU is concerned, one can remember how two decades ago Balibar has written that it is a dead political project because some countries are dominant while others are dominated, then a decade ago Beck wrote his *German Europe* asking “what kind of a world is it in which one country gets to decide the destiny of another and this is accepted as a normal state of things”. Finally, well known is Habermas’s critique of the EU and his statement that it has entered a post-democratic era because of monopolization of the EU project by self-proclaimed elites. Last but not least, Cooper observed how the EU is, quote, “the most developed example of the postmodern system”.

Now, in this crossing to the terrain of political philosophy, it should be observed how *neoliberalism* – as *the sine qua non condition of creation of permanent global crisis* – has, as it were, an accomplice in this theoretical and practical crime i.e., its counterpart in the Doomsday clock show has been *postmodernity* which is not only a by-product of capitalist social organization but *has been articulated and politicized as a useful tool for the hegemonic rule of the West*.

Or, more precisely, on the one hand, Lyotard’s proclamation about the end of *grand narratives*, of all *metanarratives*, has opened the door for the creation of the contemporary condition which Carlson now calls *the post-truth age* (2018) while, simultaneously, deconstruction of concepts such as *subjectivity, sovereignty, law, the state, the people*– and in final instance even *democracy* - has precisely enabled what I call *neo-totalitarianism*. This neo-totalitarianism is

manifested both *as forced uniformization* and as the destruction of the *other via other* i.e., of *otherness per se*. Both of these processes are presented as extension of *control and regulation of populations* and, therefore, appear as *the ultimate end of freedom*.

This structure of interweaving between *neoliberalism and postmodernism* results, therefore, in 21<sup>st</sup> century *neo-totalitarianism* and, moreover, this is precisely what Foucault has called *biopolitics*. Furthermore, Foucault's analysis in this respect is certainly a lot more updated in comparison to numerous newer theories of biopolitics, including Agamben's, Hardt and Negri's, Esposito's etc. This is because – in articulating *neoliberalism as biopolitics* - Foucault has basically outlined a core structure of all we have witnessed in several decades as *contemporary biopolitical phenomena par excellence*: and these are

a) so-called “*humanitarian interventions*” enabled by *previous ideologization and instrumentalization of politics of “human rights”*, as described by Douzinas in his “*Human Rights and Empire*” (2007), as well as other works;

b) secondly, *terrorism* and numerous constructed “*wars against terrorism*”, as articulated by Bernstein (2006);

c) thirdly, *the deconstruction of the system of international law* as one of the bases for implementing *post-politics* and *post-ethics*. One of the implications of this process has equally been the establishment of *ad hoc tribunals* and *political trials*, as elaborated by Laughland (2008).

d) then, phenomena such as *the migration crisis*, both its causes and effects,

e) *the economic crisis* which began in 2008,

f) *the corona virus and measures which were implemented*. This is a *par excellence* example of *fear of loss of life* i.e., of societies in which the only value becomes *bare existence* - the reduction of *bios* to *zoe*. What is really at stake is how the individual fear of loss of life is such that it, in fact, abandons all normative frameworks. Now, continuing with contemporary phenomena of biopolitics:

g) the development of *biolaboratories* around the world;

h) the politics of the so-called “*social credit rating*” in the US;

i) *the rise of radical right wing and extremist politics* and *the US proxy war against Russia in Ukraine* – all the way up to a specific example which perhaps most strikingly demonstrates the dimensions of *erosion of democracy: the recognition of 3% turnout in elections in northern Kosovo* by major Western powers *as legitimate which in turn has caused a new spiral of violence*.

j) and finally, the justification of Israel's brutal violence in Gaza and Palestinian lives as *homines sacri*, namely, *the lives of those who do not matter or count* – the living “walking dead”. This example is particularly relevant because it discloses how *the struggle for bare life and dignified life can fall into one*, becoming practically inseparable; the issue of existence and the issue of equality and freedom;

Of course, *this list of 21<sup>st</sup> century phenomena of biopolitics* is much longer than this and can be exemplified through *numerous case-study illustrations* as well as through articulations of *its multiple theoretical aspects*.

Totalizing and hegemonic concept of biopolitics, therefore, has structurally deconstructed the ancient *polis* and *the agora*, which led to the disappearances of the political and to creation of *post-politics* as *different forms of governmentality* which exuberate *power over life*. This meant the end of free speech and dialogue and - as in Foucault's articulation - *neoliberalism as biopolitics has been realized through a series of historical practices and techniques of governing*. Neoliberalism *via* biopolitics, therefore, is the name of both the “how” and the “what” i.e., it is the name of the content as well as the form of practically all prevailing narratives and politics in recent decades. Likewise – and precisely this is missing in majority of post-Foucauldian approaches to biopolitics – Foucault perceived *how biopolitics most relevantly as a strategic relation appears as a process of fragmentation and dissolution of sovereignty*.

The “object” of biopolitics as a particular micro-strategy of power is the individual, class, the people, the nation, the state – or indeed all of this at once in different forms of *politization of life* and so-called *management of the population*. Therefore, the biopolitical turn in social sciences is not over, and Foucault's analysis appears as instructive as ever. Moreover, Foucault has equally articulated how the movement from sovereignty to biopolitics appears as *the destruction of the legal system* and likewise *the movement of distancing from philosophy*. According to Foucault, *biopolitics is a “practice of truth”* which permanently recreates itself in different phenomena of *surveillance, control, and regulation of processes of birth, death, health, life conditions, migrations, growth, economic power etc.*

Here it should equally be observed how *liberal democracy* has shown itself to be a contradiction in terms, as elaborated in the work of Chantal Mouffe. Or, more precisely, this has been the paradoxical attempt to reconcile two separate traditions – one of individual freedom and human rights – namely, liberalism – and the tradition of concepts and practices of equality and

popular sovereignty – democracy. In reality, *neoliberalism as biopolitics has excluded popular sovereignty from the public discourse* which in turn had wide scale consequences for both *the democratic imaginary* as well as for *the democratic institutions*.

Democracy can never be properly spoken of without reference to *the demos, the people* while crypto-democracy - as Ranciere articulates this – is a process of *medicalization of thought* which corresponds precisely to Foucault’s concept about the *one regime of truth*. Moreover, Ranciere explicitly refers to *crypto-pedagogy* and *therapists* i.e., to the so-called experts which apply a series of contemporary techniques in order to “civilize the primitive patient”. Precisely this is medicalization of thought of biopolitics, and the self-proclaimed “doctors of democracy” have structurally subverted the democratic idea within, and in the entire social field, enabling pure calculations of a specific knowledge-power relation which transforms human life *per se*. Moreover, Ranciere exemplifies how the cause of contemporary post-democratic condition is the fact that so-called liberal democracy appeared as an unnatural bond between democracy and individual race for profit. Or, more precisely, the ideology of profit Ranciere called conformism – emphasizing the destruction of the system of values and basically of any normative framework in the story according to which everything is permitted.

Moreover, once the individual race for profit has been presented as the highest value the theoretical and cultural dimensions of human existence were dissolved - the process which precisely enabled appropriation of externally forced-upon patterns of behavior. Ranciere turns to Plato’s critique of democracy in order to emphasize all of its similarities with the contemporary condition - most notably the egoistic individual and the concept of false equality in a time of *mass consumerism*. Indisputably, the egoistic individual was shaped through a monadic social set i.e., atomistic individualism where the orientation towards the individual and its particular wishes and needs comes forth in the form of highest socially favorable imperative. This is what Cristopher Lash called “*cultural narcissism*” which, in turn, produced *depolitization*

Now, all of this, however - as Foucault emphasizes - is just one course of Modernity, namely the utilitarian one, while what he calls a revolutionary course has not yet been realized. Because – contrary to Habermas’s claim – Foucault never displayed the intention to completely dismiss Modernity, nor does he conclude that a rationalized discourse is not possible. Moreover, Foucault’s project is precisely a different possibility of Modernity, in which reason is present as well as power and the real issue is the forms of knowledge-power relations take on i.e., the way in

which philosophy of power can become philosophy of freedom, or rather, the philosophy of fear replaced with the potentiality of subjectification of *homo politicus*.

As for the utilitarian course, Foucault emphasizes how it is the course for which “truth clearly functions as a tool for certain victory”, and how its structural elements are “foreign to the great tradition of philosophical-legal discourse”. Now, this is because the utilitarian course is not founded on law but on practices, i.e., on usefulness as the ultimate criteria. In other words, philosophy, rationality, and law are opposed precisely to this *instrumentalization of truth* which occurs in *post-politics of power*. Or, in the words of Claude Lefort, this happens when power is not a presentation of principles of creation or, more explicitly, when it does not exemplify virtues which come forth from reason and justice. In this situation law and knowledge appear as situated in the sphere of externality. Therefore, biopolitics establishes the prevalence of categories such as “species” and “population” i.e., the neoliberal regime of truth has posited the primacy of these categories in relation to legal categories.

In such a way, different forms of governmentality – as they have, for instance, been established in several recent decades in and with the EU – represent a special *dispositive of management* which has failed to incorporate *the demos*. This is how the EU crypto-universal monarchy became to resemble an *empty polis*, as a unification without citizens, as a quasi-state without the people which does not account either for democracy or popular sovereignty likewise.

Moreover, the concept of *polis* carries in itself an ultimate reference to the creation of the body of the citizens – as well as to self-governance and autonomy, and equally *polis* presupposes highest relevance of the public space i.e., of dialogue and participation. Therefore, *polis* is practically inseparable from the concept of community *per se*, from the topos of the common as well as from the idea of space of speech and decision-making. Furthermore, the concept of *polis*, therefore, exemplifies how the political is structurally interrelated with the collective as well as the concept of *demos*. Or, more precisely, *polis* and *demos* became identical in Athens and it is through this process that we consider both the birth of politics as well as the birth of philosophy.

A constitutive part of this process is likewise the act of refusal practiced by the *demos* as the act of re-appropriating one’s own environment i.e., as the possibility of rebirth of both subjectivity and the *polis*.

Now, as all contemporary phenomena of 21st century biopolitics demonstrate, the *primacy of the body and of life per se* coincides precisely with *tutorial crypto-democracy and its experts*

*which posit themselves as civilized ones* in difference to all the rest as barbarians. This situation is one in which Hobbes's "obedient subject" thrives, as it presents a specific return to "the state of nature" as a war of all against all. The "therapeutic Leviathan" this way attempts to deconstruct even the very concept of the human being, opening the door for *post-humanism*. In Foucault's terms, this is the shift from the Aristotelian *dictum* that "man is a living animal with the capacity for political existence" towards "modern man as an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question".

The bottom line, now, is that *permanent global crisis* – as well as spreading of a highly *disconnected world* – represents *the philosophical and political hegemony of biopolitics as governmentality* realized through different forms of *control and regulation of the population*. Now, it is of relevance to conceive how *biopolitics - via a specific type of neocolonialism* - is precisely the prevailing discourse of the West which explains majority of its practices in recent decades and how it is thus intrinsically linked to *post-truth as existential indifference to the concept of truth*. Relating to the era of prevalence of opinions *post-truth* also refers to the *motivational deficit* inscribed in the heart of so-called *liberal democracies*.

Or, more precisely, creating the era of *opinions and preferences* has *deconstructed truth politics* in the shift from *argumentation to expressionism* and this has resulted in the establishment of what we can call *the regime of equivalence*. In such a way, *post-truth* has erased the difference between *parrhesia as true speech* and *isegoria as free speech*, although, indisputably, *the crypto-elites as ultimate carriers of biopolitics* attempt to *deconstruct both equally*. As Badiou emphasizes in his *Logics of Worlds*: there are only bodies and languages with their particular desires and opinions.

Certainly, *the society of the spectacle* has relevantly contributed to this *false equation* which permanently promotes the seemingly objective narrative how, for instance - to take the Ukrainian example - both US and Russia are equally to blame because there is no structural difference between them. This is precisely how *the regime of equivalence* functions, backed up by series of techniques to bring into question *the reality, memories and even basic comprehension*. Moreover, *post-truth* is likewise followed by *post-shame* and *post-knowledge* overturned into *information*. Because, if information is to have a meaning its *sine qua non* is its comprehension in the perspective of *culture and history* – and this is not the case with *the post-truth condition*.

Furthermore, *the logic of equivalence per se* appears as *perfectly well suited for contemporary capitalism* which turns *the incommensurable* to *the exchangeable*.

Neoliberalism as biopolitics is thus both the cause and the effect of *the post-truth condition* realized through the logic of equivalence. One of its decisive features is likewise AI which not only transforms our everyday lives and horizons but questions human experience as we know it. AI, therefore, also appears as one of paradigmatic contemporary biopolitical phenomena of the 21st century which spreads the disconnected world – as the process of exclusion of otherness. Likewise, it is as if AI takes an additional biopolitical step – undermining the “I” i.e., the concept of the subject in ways yet unseen in history. This is how AI manifests itself as an exemplary type of alienation, leading to growth of *the precariat* and accelerating class divisions. Moreover, AI enables new forms of governmentality i.e., both of control and of regulation of population in such a way that *the human* appears theoretically and practically as a “*surplus*”.

At the same time, it is precisely due to the increasingly AI-driven campaigns of *misinformation, dis-information and “fake news”* – and “*deep fakes*” created through *generative AI* - that *post-truth* emerged as *the proper name for our contemporary condition*. Because AI increases the conflictual potential and the crypto-Schmidtian “friend-enemy” distinction, while, simultaneously - as a *post-ethics phenomenon* - it deconstructs *the system of values per se*.

Or, more precisely, *the practically infinite virtual world* highly contributes to human distancing and promotes a *post-philosophical* and *post-political stance* in which Marcuse’s *one-dimensional man* is now perverted into a *multi-dimensional trans-human*. Moreover, virtual ever-present connectivity represents a perfect illusion of communication and associations while in reality people have perhaps never been further apart. This is because the human experience, immediacy, the spoken word, the irreplaceability and originality of a live event, the encounter between “*the one*” and “*the other*”, and then “*the third*”, is what *structurally creates closeness and bonding*. Therefore, permanent production of virtual worlds presents merely *an inadequate substitution* - an “*as if*” which *mimics but does not really exist*. Because *sheer virtual interrelatedness is neither relevant in and of itself nor a value*. On the one hand, this movement facilitates *the escape from the real* in creation of *infinite multiplicity of illusionary worlds*, while, simultaneously, it disables the existence of *subjectivity* in practically *all intersubjective contexts* which is why both *political* and *democratic pathways* become *theoretically and practically impossible*.



Now, in response, it should be emphasized that overcoming biopolitics can be realized beginning from the fact that although AI appears as a practically perfect *mimesis* of *zoe* it still can never become *bios*. Or, more precisely, *new forms of subjectification* and their ultimate carriers – on *philosophical, social, and political level* – arise as the proper path for superseding the “*post-truth*” condition – and the possibility for such an outcome is strengthened precisely with the *rapidly-evolving multi-polar world*. The basic philosophical perspective of “the Rest” vs. “the West” is precisely the one of *renewal of dignity* in a chaotic world rather than imposing any particular *Weltanschauung*. Because it is comprehended how the referential point of democracy is equality – as the core of its concept. Here both the concepts of *isonomia* and *isegoria* appear as instructive pathways for reestablishing autonomy i.e., as indicators how in ancient Greece the principle of politics has been exemplified as equality or, in other words, how both true politics and true democracy have been founded on the will of the people.

Therefore, an undertaking of a project of autonomy must begin with the remembrance of how democracy is, firstly, the power of all to engage in public affairs. The concept of *autonomia* refers to political freedom, participation in public life, as well as to decision-making – as freedom of action in public space. In this way, Brown, for instance, emphasizes how *demos* and *kratos* have been in opposition not only to aristocracy, oligarchy, and tyranny but also to any situation of colonialism and occupation, while, simultaneously, Urbinati articulates how Athens has been the first democracy because it attempted to break the continuity between *wealth* and *political power*.

As *isonomia* and *isegoria*, democracy designated that each citizen had an equal chance to participate in law-making and to speak about public affairs. From Herodotus *isonomia* arises as the name for the rule of the people because it is the name of equality, while in Thucydides, as democracy, it represents the alternative to both aristocracy and oligarchy. Hannah Arendt articulates how – at least from the time of Herodotus – *isonomia* in and by itself refers to freedom i.e., to the condition in which there is no distinction between the rulers and the ruled. This way, *isonomia* has been the crux of the Greek polis and referred to an entire conception of life in which *isegoria* has been practiced.

For Herodotus, *isegoria* has, in fact, been a form of government in Athens. As structured around the concept of equality, *isegoria* became the hallmark of Athenian democracy – which has been specific in comparison to other Greek city-states precisely because it has included the poor. Finally, there was also the concept of *isokratia*, as the concept of equality of power.

In all these different ways of referring to equality, Athenian democracy proved in exemplary way how politics as equality translates to freedom – and *how barbaroi are precisely those who do not practice democracy i.e., who do not decide on their own politics, life, and destiny.* Castoriadis, for example, reminds us how the Greeks also made laws themselves through the processes of collective deliberation i.e., in the self-founding process of the becoming of the political. Or, more precisely, it is the Greeks who – for the first time in history – realized that a society's norms are not something imposed or derived from the outside but that, rather, societies are created by themselves, that is, by us. This could perhaps appear *as the proper path for re-conceptualizing equality in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and especially in terms of political creation.*

Of course, one can also recall Foucault here: “*The task today is to refuse what we are... We must imagine and built what we could be... We need to promote new forms of*

*subjectivity.*” Foucault also articulates how such a task is *political, ethical, social, and philosophical*, therefore implying that what is at stake is *a new birth of philosophy, ethics, and politics in a specific discourse of political rationalism.* In other words, new subjectivity would mean the appearance of a new form of power – the power of freedom and the proper response to biopolitics. Moreover, in a manner of *political realism*, Foucault claims how “the problem is not to attempt to dissolve power relations in a utopia of a perfectly transparent communication, but to provide *legal norms*, as well as ethics, *ethos*, which would *enable these power plays to be realized with a minimum of domination.*” Likewise, this would be a transition from *homo economicus* to *homo politicus*.

This is why the proper response to *neoliberalism as biopolitics* lies in *the project of autonomy* in a process in which *subjectivities* rebuild *the polis*. Equally, this is the structure of *truth coming into being* which in political terms refers to, let us say, new social contracts which carry their proximity to the concept of self-determination. Most relevantly, *democracy is intrinsically linked with self-determination* and *political entities have democracy as their truth precisely inasmuch as they are reflected as the expression of autonomy.* Moreover, *this project of autonomy* is equally inseparable from rethinking *politics of locality* i.e., from *local topoi* through which politics is created and beginning from which *political subjectivities* take shape.

*There is no politics without location – and there is no democracy without politics proper.* This locality is interrelated with *the demos* coming into being which, in such a way, is *a presupposition for the becoming of polis.* Democracy can, therefore, be rethought as *local*

*participative democracy* that does away with *the logic of ruling and ruled* as well as with *the logic of consumer society*. Such democracy *dissolves hierarchical divisions precisely in relation to particular localities – as places where one lives, works, thinks and plays*. In such localities *the democratic imaginary is re-invented* and transformations occur on multiple levels. Likewise, in Foucault’s project, the potentiality for a new political subjectivity arises from the interrelations between *scientific knowledge* and *knowledge of the people - local memories*. Moreover, *true politics in and of itself requires an infinite demand which flows from the perspective of injustice*.

The idea, therefore, is to recreate a post-conflictual world but in such a way that – in difference to ideologization of the Western world through its self-contradictory paradigm of “liberal democracy” – a space of free decision-making and self-determination is opened. An original openness of the multi-polar world would thus present the deconstruction of biopolitics through realization of true democracy. In a relevant way, this path has the potential to become one of the courses outlined in the tradition from Aristotle to Rousseau – in difference to Hobbes – the path for superseding biopolitics in subjectivity, freedom, and equality. This is how rebirth of polis and true democracy corresponds to Foucault’s articulation about the becoming of reason in politics, in and through knowledge which extends beyond the “know-how” and it therefore constitutive for the political – and this is precisely *truth*.

Moreover, *the perspective of truth after post-truth* corresponds with an ethical demand of a consensus about dissensus – as a respect of otherness and differences beginning from which subjectivities create political, social, cultural, and economic principles and doing so abandon the sphere of virtual realities. Indisputably, a digitalized world cannot be erased *in toto*, but digital sovereignty, for example, can be discussed, and most relevantly, such a world should not replace the concepts of education, knowledge and, above all, truth.

In response, therefore, *a theory and practice of truth-telling arises as the most decisive ethico-political task*, and the subjective dedication to it – as is the case, for example, with Badiou’s reference to *fidelity to the event* – illuminates precisely the ethical and political role of truth in the process of subjectification which both Foucault and Badiou talked about. *Parresia*, this way, would be the discourse that questions *the status quo*, underlining explicitly what Jean-Luc Nancy has articulated as the difference between *equality and equivalence*. Because equality refers to *the respect of dignity of all living humans* and dignity is the name of the value which is absolutely valid – which means it has no worth if to “have worth” implies a scale of measure. Indisputably,

this process of transition of epochs and overcoming of both post-ethics and post-politics is relevantly one of *de-colonization of the world* – as it is, for instance, the case with *contemporary Africa* – and it should be outlined how *the right to rebellion has been articulated even in the charter of the UN*.

As for the Western civilization, perhaps the most instructive path is to recall the beginning of Hesiod's *Theogony* which exemplifies how *the beginning of the very beginning* in ancient Greece i.e., the beginning of *philosophy, history, politics, and the Western traditions en generale* has been, first and foremost, signified by *the difference between truth and lies – as well as the possibilities of both*. In such sense, Hesiod writes: “*The Muses once taught Hesiod a beautiful song...we know how to say many lies like the truth and, whenever we wish, we know how to tell the truth*”.