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# Evaluation of the Concept of Preservation of Existence

## The self-preservation of empire in the individual

The inclusionary politics of neoliberalism are such that struggles against empire and the domination of capital are detached from struggles over sexuality, gender and race. The radical potential of these struggles in resisting and subverting the dominant logics of the state and capital has been neutralized by the emergence of neutralizing discourses and institutional relations both domestically and abroad. The rise of neoliberal inclusionary politics has its historical basis in the period of classic liberalism, for periods of empire and global hegemony under the domination of capital have been characterized by formal liberty at home and repressive acts of violence abroad. Think here of how Leibniz escaped to Holland during the flourishing of the liberal Dutch empire, or more tellingly how Karl Marx found intellectual and physical refuge in Britain which also served as the setting for his seminal work on *Das Kapital*. In the past 30 years of neoliberal rule in the United States since the withering of the activism of the Civil Rights era, these formal liberties have been extended sexualized and gendered others, including some with the goal of excluding others, while racialization continues to be a prominent feature in the biopolitical toolkit of empire. In *The Twilight of Equality*, Lisa Duggan begins by providing an overview of the individualization of political activity that began with the dismantling of New Deal politics and the introduction of a competitive national and global order (pg. X). For Duggan:

“The overarching Liberal distinction between the economy, the state, civil society, and the family consistently shaped, and ultimately disabled progressive-left politics by separating class politics—the critique of economic inequality—from identity politics—protest against exclusions from national citizenship or civic participation, and against the hierarchies of family life” (pg. 7)

The separation of class politics from identity politics has led to the commercialization of political action that is increasingly equated to moments of expression. Thus, the continuity of political activity is located in the continuity of the expression of identity, whether this is through clothing choice or brand choice, the expression of identity as inherently political allows for the continued circulation of capital and the maintenance of status quo order. This is what Duggan has coined as the new homonormativity – “a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them, while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption” (pg. 50). Whereas homonormativity shapes the landscape of political action and aspiration domestically, often to the effect of refracting the actions of empire, Jasbir Puar

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(2013) has introduced the notion of homonationalism as analytical tool for apprehending the consequences of the successes of LGBT liberal right movements in excluding whole populations from the protection of these very rights (pg. 25). Whereas homonormativity is crucial in assembling and directing the modalities of affects and desires domestically towards a politics of consumption, homonationalism rises out of the collusion between racism and liberalism. Racialization is a violent and systematized mechanism of exclusion that primarily serves to draw interior boundaries and to define the nation, as such its collusion with liberalism is hardly surprising, for liberalism can grant its formal liberties only through the creation and subsequent economic and political exclusion of the Other. We are at a time where liberalism is no longer confined to hegemonic empires, but rather due to the world integration of capitalism liberalism thrives just as well through relations of imperialism where sex, gender and race form a powerful biopolitical triad. At this point we must wonder how sexuality has been deployed so differently by the state and capital alike. Here, I turn to Steven Shaviro (2011) for his condensation of the intellectual trends of Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze. The movement from Foucault to Deleuze is the movement from discipline to control society, from a society where individuality is molded through certain archetypes and binaries to a society where our identities are multiple and conferred to us as individuals, i.e. sex, gender, but also “my credit rating, and my medical record, and the databases that track my Visa card use and my web browsing habits” (pg.1). This leads to a perfectly individual relationship with the world in general, but most importantly with the state and capital. It is what allows for the commercialization and consumption of identity and what leads to the domestication of any radical alternative to the family, nation, state and capital.

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