

## **George Monbiot on Neoliberalism**

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1. **Neoliberalism (N/L) is a way of defining human beings by the market**
  - a. every aspect of our lives is mediated through the market, not just the economic sphere, every aspect,
  - b. life is defined by competition, we are all simply trying to maximise our own wealth and power, at the expense of everything else
  
2. **The N/L then tries to extend this portrait**
  - a. Attacking trade unions - which stand in the way of what N/L consider the free functioning market
  - b. Ripping down taxes - particularly for the rich
  - c. Tearing up anything that stands in the way of this magical thing called "the market"
  - d. The market - which is not actually some force of nature - but is actually something controlled by people - often very rich people
  - e. Getting things out of the way for the market = getting things out of the way for the "very rich and powerful"
  
3. **N/L began as a sincere philosophy but it**
  - a. Quickly became a self serving racket
  - b. Exempted billionaires
    - i. From paying their taxes
    - ii. From not polluting
    - iii. From having to pay fair wages
    - iv. From not exploiting their workers
  
4. **One of the main things N/L wants is to remove democracy**
  - a. Many like **Friedrich Hayek** (father of N/L), feel democracy is an impediment to the very rich, the most important value to be protected
  - b. N/L have set out to take the power out of democracy
    - i. Shift power from democratic organizations to bodies the public cannot control, like
      1. International Monetary Fund
      2. European Central Bank
      3. Offshore Trade Tribunals
    - ii. Where power is no longer subject to democratic constraints
  
5. **The N/L ideologic framework tries to justify many concepts like**
  - a. Sweeping away of the power of the people - and replacing it with the power of money and corporations
  - b. It has been extremely successful leading to
    - i. Mass deregulation of corporations like
      1. Mergers and acquisitions
      2. Banks and corporations that are "too big to fail"
      3. Privatization of public services
    - ii. All of these getting bailed out by the state because

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1. They can't exist in a real world without constraints that people would otherwise impose on them
  2. They tend toward crisis after crisis
- c. The N/L ideology was supposed to (theoretically) get the state out of the way - but actually it requires intense government intervention (bailouts, etc.) to continue to function

### **6. N/L promoted globalization**

- a. Some of the goals
  - i. To remove restraints on capital
  - ii. To destroy the fixed exchange rate system
  - iii. To promote the mass outsourcing of business
  - iv. To support the creation of transnational corporations - with unaccountable subsidiaries
- b. All of these have made it very difficult for governments and people to get a grip on and restrain corporate power
- c. There are positives to globalization - the problem is that the tremendous power it has unleashed is not subject to democratic consent
  - i. There is no global democracy
  - ii. There is no democratic globalization
  - iii. Without these democratic controls it has become the place where power resides - having fled from democratic forums

### **7. The N/L philosophy leaves democratic governments and its citizens**

- a. Weak
- b. Atomized (divided, fragmented)
- c. Incapable of dealing with the scale of the problems
- d. In N/L theory states are supposed to get out of the way, but it is the only actor big enough to constrain the power of billionaires and corporations. We (the people) can't effectively do it ourselves
- e. The State ends up essentially siding with corporations and billionaires
- f. Government and the people become incapable of addressing their own problems. We have no agent through which we can act to constrain these powers
- g. We have created this weird phenomenon, "the self hating state" where
  - i. our role is to destroy ourselves
  - ii. our only function is to "get out of the way" on behalf of the promoters of N/L

### **8. One of the most crucial aspects of N/L is to tear down regulation**

- a. Regulations make it harder for the wealthy to make loads of money
  - i. by extracting resources and dumping their pollution - without consequence
  - ii. When they have to pay fair prices their profits disappear
- b. They strive to do whatever they want and dump their cost on us (we the people)

### **9. Environmental / climate crisis**

- a. Actually predates N/L

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- b. Has been greatly accelerated by N/L, by the escape from the constraints of democracy
- c. Soil degradation is an example of a massive problem not discussed - estimates by UN Food and Agriculture Organization estimate about 60 years before soil is almost totally degraded based on current rates of soil loss and degradation
- d. Illustrations of a global "bias against relevance" in our media and everyday lives
  - i. What is salient is not important
  - ii. What is important is not salient
  - iii. Those things that are not objectively relevant to our lives are marginalized while total trivia is put front and center

### **10. Neither Trump nor Brexit could be described as N/L - they are the result of N/L, which has**

- a. Destroyed effective political choice
- b. Destroyed democratic power
- c. Politics has become meaningless jabber with no relevance
- d. Political debate becomes pointless as the political elites fight back and forth
- e. Created a reactive "anti politics"
  - i. Helped by atomization (divided, fragmented), communities are broken, societies are broken, there is no longer any common purpose
  - ii. Creating the perfect opportunities for a demagogue, extremist - anti politics filling the void
  - iii. People look for an alternative to politics
    - 1. Abandon solutions within political debate
    - 2. Look for slogans, symbols and sensations instead
    - 3. Abandon normal political process and replace it with a desire to kick over the system, at any cost
- f. Result of N/L in America resulted in Trump, the kind of person Friedrich Hayek (father of N/L) worshiped - an ultra rich person who inherited his wealth, who can do whatever he wants, completely uninhibited by the constraints of democracy

### **11. Solutions to N/L**

- a. Rebuild and value communities
- b. Rebuild democracy - discussions worldwide of the consequences of N/L
- c. Weave a new political narrative