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Review article / Обзорная статья

A Review on Monbiot G. “Neoliberalism — the Ideology at the Root of All Our Problems”

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Abstract. George Monbiot is the author of the online publication “Neoliberalism — the ideology at the root of all our problems”. He is a British author well-known for his political and environmental activism. In addition, he founded The Land is Ours, a movement in the United Kingdom that advocates for the right to access the countryside and its resources. The online journal discusses neoliberalism’s anonymous characteristics, such as how it attempts to reshape human life and establish a world governed by competition. In addition, it also discusses the birth of neoliberalism and how it entered the mainstream. Furthermore, it broadcasts the guileful validation of neoliberal theorists in policymaking. The author explains how neoliberalism reduced the size and influence of the state and how it defined freedom in a discordant way. The author also discusses the diametrically opposed philosophies of Keynesianism and Neoliberalism. He posited that it is not enough to oppose a broken system; a coherent alternative system tailored to the demands of the 21st century has to be proposed. However, the author’s suggestion to have an economic Apollo program — a new system tailored to the demands of the 21st century — is not an easy occupation.

Keywords: neoliberalism, Keynesianism, ideology

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Summary

George Monbiot asserted in the online journal “Neoliberalism: the ideology at the heart of all our problems” that Neoliberalism is at the heart of the crises: the financial meltdown, the offshoring of wealth and power, the collapse of public health and education, the increasing child poverty, the epidemic of loneliness, the collapse

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of ecosystems, and the rise of Donald Trump. Neoliberalism attempts to reshape human life and is evident in most countries. Neoliberalism, according to the author, is viewed as utopia in the current political climate, as if it is pursuing a utopian dream of world prosperity. It tries to convey the belief that competition is vital to human relations. As argued by the author, customers are regarded as citizens. It views the market as a source of benefits. The author states that by enhancing deregulation, privatization, marketization, and the promotion of private enterprise, neoliberal theory seeks to find ways to reduce the size and power of the state. Inequality, as maintained by the author, is the object of neoliberalism. It considers inequality as ethical in the sense that the rich have become richer and the poor have become poorer: “The rich persuade themselves that they acquired their wealth through merit, and the poor begin to blame themselves for their failures, even when they can do little to change their circumstances”.

Neoliberalism’s historical forerunner got its origins in Paris in 1938. The author claims that Friedrich Hayek and Ludwig von Mises were the two individuals who ultimately came to define the ideology. Both viewed social democracy as a form of collectivism that fit the same description as Nazism and communism. Headed by Hayek, The Mont Pelerin Society was the first organization to spread the doctrine of neoliberalism in 1994. With the help of some wealthy individuals, they began to establish a movement that was funded by a series of think tanks that support and promote the ideology, or, as Monbiot puts it, “a transatlantic network of academics, businessmen, journalists, and activists”. The American Enterprise Institute, the Heritage Foundation, the Cato Institute, the Institute of Economic Affairs, the Center for Policy Studies, and the renowned Adam Smith Institute are a few of them, according to the author. Hayek thinks neoliberalism encourages efficiency because it creates and supports monopolies. The movement lost steam in 1951. Without a widespread replacement, the phrase was eliminated. The use of Keynesian programs increased. The idea put out by John Maynard Keynes was widely adopted, leading to greater tax rates as well as expanded public services and safety nets. But in the 1970s, Keynesian policies started to lose their effectiveness. Neoliberal philosophy started to reappear in the mainstream once more. With the aid of friendly journalists and political advisors, the governments of Jimmy Carter in the US and Jim Callaghan in Britain adopted the concept. Policies promoting neoliberalism were implemented without democratic approval. The IMF, the World Bank, the Maastricht Treaty, and the World Trade Organization were the driving forces behind these initiatives. Surprisingly, these ideas were also accepted by the parties that once belonged to the left.

Neoliberal thinkers, as shown in “The Shock Doctrine” by Naomi Klein, exploited the crises as a vehicle to impose unpopular ideas, which, despite what it might seem, was the freedom that neoliberalism so eloquently promised. International treaties and extraterritorial tribunals are also used to impose neoliberal policies. Neoliberalism was intended to be a self-interested scheme. Rent was paid by the public or the government, utilizing unearned income. As a result, the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. The neoliberal philosophy spread widely. Political

and economic catastrophes have been caused by it. Voting became less significant as votes were not allocated equitably. The widespread disempowerment of the poor and the middle class resulted in disenfranchisement. The government has lost its moral authority and will almost certainly descend into totalitarianism. Invisible backers, as stated by the author, are promoting the invisible doctrine of the “invisible hand”. Neoliberalism failed to elucidate its character. Confusion and anonymity became the core of the ideology. “Or all of that, there is something admirable about the neoliberal project, at least in its early stages”, wrote George Monbiot sarcastically. It was a distinctive, innovative philosophy promoted by a coherent network of thinkers and activists with a clear plan of action. “With patience and persistence, the road to serfdom became the path to power”.

There were no workable alternatives to the failing system after neoliberalism and Keynesianism fell short. There was no overarching school of economic thinking for 80 years, or as George Monbiot puts it, “the zombie walks”.

Finally, the author contended that it is insufficient to oppose a flawed system, as Keynesianism and Neoliberalism did. He thinks there ought to be a reasonable option. The development of an Apollo program—a new system suited to the needs of the 21st century—is a key objective for the Democrats and the Left.

Review

When the authors wrote about the remarkable role of neoliberalism in a variety of crises, among which are the slow collapse of public health and education, Elena S. Rotarou and Dikaïos Sakellariou shared their observations concerning the negative effects of neoliberal policies on access to healthcare for people with disabilities. In the article “The effects of neoliberal policies on access to healthcare for people with disabilities”, the authors pointed out that due to the increased health care needs and lower socio-economic status, neoliberal reforms lead to the disadvantage of people with disabilities. The government cannot fully provide for their health care because of this market-oriented approach to neoliberalism. People with disabilities seek medications from competing private health care facilities. Furthermore, in this process of reducing social welfare, the state transfers responsibility for taking care of people from the state to the free market, leading to wide disparities in the level and quality of care people receive [2]. With respect to education, neoliberal policies have also created a compulsive crisis. Marketization of policies and service transfer, particularly in education, has a significant impact on both public and private life in general. Education became an instrument for sorting and grading learners. The neoliberal purpose of education is to provide the essential workforce needed to sustain the capitalist economy. Education, achievements, and opportunities are subject to competition that draws attention away from the true purpose of education. Assessment is done only for purposes of ranking learners as well as schools and universities, which we now call accreditation. Education is perceived as a form of acculturation (socialization) that comes with the acquisition of social and human capital, whose process depends on the increases in knowledge in the

workforce. Because profit-making operations are increasingly dominating the world of education, education has become a tool for instilling business values [3].

According to the author, the pervasiveness of neoliberal influence is so obscure that we rarely recognize it as an ideology that has spread to every aspect of life. Even the field of social work and the profession of social work have been impacted. In the article “The Fourfold Neoliberal Impact on Social Work and Why This Matters in Times of the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond”, Abigail Ornellas and her fellow writers wrote, “Social welfare and consequently social work are thus often seen as representing the state’s excessive spending, and neoliberalism advocates that such spending be shifted to the market, where it is believed that service delivery will be more efficient” [4]. Outsourcing of social services to private and NGO bodies, according to them, has a negative impact on the current harsh economic downturn brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. The private sector and NGOs, who are primarily employers of social workers, were gravely affected by the economic downturn, and ultimately, it has consequences for social services worldwide. The monopolistic condition of marketization in social work is that profit and competition can often become drivers rather than the needs of the community. Another impact of neoliberal marketization on social work is the generation of private and expensive welfare services that become accessible only to the wealthy, leaving poorly resourced and under-capitated NGO services to deal with vulnerable groups [5]. In his article, “Revisiting the Esoteric Question: Can Non-Social Workers Manage and Supervise Social Workers?” Lambert Engelbrecht [6] talks about how neoliberalism brought a crisis to the social work profession. With the neoliberal promotion of the private sector and its business principles, the task of social work was increasingly given to less qualified workers, such as care and auxiliary social workers, or entirely alternative professions.

Fascinating as it might appear, the author deliberately included Donald Trump in his online journal article. Former US President Donald Trump, according to George Monbiot, is one of the crises brought about by neoliberalism. The author even made disparaging remarks about the supporters of Donald Trump. He wrote, “When political debate no longer speaks to us, people become responsive instead to slogans, symbols, and sensations”. “To the admirers of Trump, for example, facts and arguments appear irrelevant” [7]. Monbiot’s online journal was published on April 15, 2016, and Donald Trump is one of the candidates for president of the US. Hence, the online journal of George Monbiot appears to have a political interest. The author was successful in presenting the horrendous effects of neoliberalism. However, citing a political figure in a journal article on the election period might taint his work with controversy.

The work of George Monbiot claims that it is not enough to oppose a broken system. An economic Apollo program — a new system tailored to the demands of the 21st century — has to be proposed. However, the task of developing a new system is not an easy occupation. Neoliberalism has deep roots in the entire system and is widely adopted from the perspective of global development. It has been widely accepted, practiced, and nourished by the elites. Neoliberalism is now the central ideology that drives the world of globalization. Thus, George Monbiot wrote in the

article, “This is why the zombie walks, the left, and the center have produced no new general framework of economic thought for 80 years”. Consider the brilliant minds of experts in the field and the people with the courage and resources to support a new system over an 80-year period with no alternative framework. No wonder why the author emphasized having a new system with a sense of immediacy.

To conclude, this article serves as an answer to the problems that every society is facing. It also challenges the experts to develop a coherent alternative designed to cater to the demands of the 21st century’s predicaments. Opposing a broken system is never an option.

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Рецензия на статью Дж. Монбио «Неолиберализм — идеология, лежащая в основе всех наших проблем»

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Аннотация. Джордж Монбиот — автор онлайн-публикации «неолиберализм — идеология, лежащая в основе всех наших проблем». Это британский мыслитель и публицист, хорошо известный своей политической и экологической активностью. Кроме того, он основал

в Соединенном Королевстве общественное движение «Наша Земля», которое выступает за широкое право доступа к сельской местности и ее ресурсам. Рецензируемая публикация обсуждает анонимные характеристики неолиберализма, такие как то, как он пытается изменить человеческую жизнь и создать мир, управляемый конкуренцией. Автором также рассматривается рождение неолиберализма и то, как он вошел в мейнстрим. Автор объясняет, как неолиберализм уменьшил размеры и влияние государства и как он противоречиво определил свободу. В своей статье Дж. Монбио также обсуждает диаметрально противоположные философии кейнсианства и неолиберализма. Он утверждает, что недостаточно противостоять сломанной системе; необходимо предложить согласованную альтернативную систему, адаптированную к требованиям XXI века. Однако предложение автора создать экономическую программу «Аполлон» — новую систему, адаптированную к требованиям XXI века — является непростой задачей.

Ключевые слова: неолиберализм, кейнсианство, идеология

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