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Shift of Culture: From Liberalism to Neoliberalism

Intro

This paper will focus on the transformations of the liberal culture (ideology, values, identity, formation of the exercising of power etc.) in the era of globalization. In this context, as Giddens (2002) put it, our societies have desacralized most of their values due to the decline of the religious and political discourses. Neoliberal globalization now seems to bring a new not directly connected with the state ‘neogovernmentality’ that on the one hand seems to tolerate differences, but on the other hand pressures for a cultural homogenization within and outside of the liberal world. In this context, the main question that comes up is if the neoliberal ‘neogovernmentality’ might be the only kind of exercising power that can rule a highly integrated and technologically advanced world in which the ‘population’ becomes more and more sophisticated, or if in contrast detraditionalization, neoliberal globalization, and multiculturalism would make liberal or now neoliberal ‘pacts of security’ uncontrollable.

What change? The neoliberal Shift

The paper aims to illustrate the rise of the ‘neoliberal globalized multicultural’ culture as the release of the very core of the liberal culture from the for years suppression from religious and other traditional discourses. Liberalism with the neoliberal rise started to be applied per say as it was restricted less and less from the other cultural and political discourses which now constitute more and more parts of the liberal ‘pacts of security’. In other words, this neoliberal evolution in the liberal exercising of power that puts the State

aside (shift from the foucauldian ‘governmentality’ to a ‘neogovernmentality’ that is supra-territorial and multi-layered), increases the number of ‘the liberal pacts of security’ by locating every political, ideological, religious and cultural discourse/identity within them, and then asks from the subject to build its own identity from these numerous now choices and combinations of choices. This is the neoliberal culture (from politics to arts) within the ‘neogovernmentality’ context, namely the existence of maximum freedom and variation of legitimate choices, and of minimum hierarchy of the aesthetic and moral class.

In this context we have a homogenized world that is homogenized within a context of more and more allowed variations. In other words, the neoliberal shift, which involves the rise of the neoliberal economic model; the globalization process and the information technology revolution, constructs a new liberal culture that is based on the following points:

- 1) Decline of religious faith, and political parties identification
- 2) The idealization of celebrities and sports figures
- 3) The mass re-appearance of comic book heroes and of other based on supernatural stories in cinemas in a more realistic and darker tone
- 4) The turn to self-help books and psychoanalysis
- 5) Nihilism

The first point is the one that indicates the detraditionalization which our societies pass, thus it can be considered as the starting point for the emergence of all the rest. The second, third, fourth and fifth points indicate the broader cultural implications of this detraditionalization that goes more to the level of the individual. So far all these phenomena can be understood within the neoliberal neogovernmentality context as the new ‘liberal pacts of security’, although it is still easy to go out of control.

There are though some other phenomena that indicate the rise of some political discourses that in some levels try to attack to the liberal and neoliberal culture:

- 1) A deep-rooted hate towards immigrants and the rise of right wing parties..
- 2) The global rise of neonationalisms and religious fundamentalisms

In this context, the question that comes up is if those attacks can still be considered parts of the liberal/neoliberal pacts of security or not. In other words, detraditionalization, multiculturalism, and cultural homogenization, all parts of the neoliberal discourse, may not fit so well together.

To start with, there are many forms of resistance and many people that they find difficult to identify their selves within the liberal symbolic universe. In this context, the main instrument of the ‘liberal governmentality’ which was the State loses its power. To elaborate, as Foucault (2007) said it: ‘the complex instruments of coordination and centralization required for this end are found at the level of state’. In this context, the shift from the ‘territorial’ pact to the ‘pact of security’ should also not to be misinterpreted in the analysis of Foucault in terms of the importance of the state. In other words, as Foucault (2007) again put it: ‘Biopolitics can only be conceived of as ‘bioregulation by the state. Thus, it is valid to wonder which can be the new mechanisms that will continue maintaining the single most important notion of liberal societies, the one of security. Could it be a transformed hegemonic power that operates within and outside the state (e.g. USA-IMF-UN-NATO as one center of power), regional, economic and political zones (e.g. EU, NAFTA etc.), the International Institutions, or maybe the markets, the multinational firms, the new social media and the entertainment industry?

However, neoliberalism seeks cultural homogenization through a political discourse that in essence does not promote any particular culture rather one that is based on the

coexistence of several different cultures within societies. This does follow the traditional liberal rationale in which, as Foucault put it, the liberal authorities allow to the ‘population’ to move within the ‘Liberal Pacts of Security’ as long this ‘freedom’ does not threaten the power of the regime. Hence, those phenomena may still move within the ‘liberal pacts of security’ that now call people to forget religion, parties and the State and proceed to a ‘self-renewal’ of identities. What changes is the emergence of a multidimensional culture that increases the number and variations of choices, while at the same time religion, parties and the State are becoming less important in this process. In this context, the neoliberal exercising of power even without the State might be still able to govern the population by transforming all the cultural ideological and political discourses into liberal/neoliberal, ‘pacts of security’.

Conclusion

The paper tried to emphasize the shift of liberalism to neoliberalism, within the context of a Foucauldian analysis, which the contemporary liberal societies are experiencing. The main issue here is if this shift that promotes further detraditionalization, globalization, and multiculturalism, and asks from the subject to build its own identity through an increased number of allowed choices, can be successful or not. This paper did not answer this question, but it raised some arguments for both sides, and tried to put this particular view of examining the liberal and neoliberal culture into the table for further future analysis.