

The New Neoliberal Turn in Argentina

Omnipotence, the Sacrificial Mandate, and the Craving for Punishment

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ABSTRACT This article examines reconfigurations of neoliberalism as these can be traced in emergent forms of ideological interpellation in Argentina. Privileging an analysis of dominant modes of public discourse, we posit an inextricable relationship between—and simultaneous deployment of—the “punitive” elements of this interpellation and its new, entrepreneurial dimension. This last component, opposed to the first only nominally, exalts individual potency and delivers an “amicable” appeal to a wholesome and reconciled common life. Taking into account the Janus-faced, omnipotent, moralizing, and sacrificial character of this new community of “entrepreneurs cum punishers,” we focus on the idiosyncratic forms that this relationship takes in our current historical conjuncture, distinguishing it from previous inflections and ideological configurations of neoliberalism in contemporary Argentina. Finally, we seek to understand the ethical and political implications of this specific interpellative mode for the process of subject formation.

KEYWORDS neoliberalism, ideology, punitivism

Introduction

How—in which terms and with reference to which concepts—can we think through the recent triumphs that have catalyzed a violent, anti-egalitarian, and de-democratizing turns in several Latin American countries, turns all ostensibly taken in the name of the republic and of democracy? The words at our disposal for identifying the singularity of these political processes—new rights, post-democracies, post-hegemonies, or quite simply “dictatorships by other means”—prove insufficient. Such words are unable to account for the temporalities and ideological strata at stake in these new realities, which resist linear schematizations and reductionist pedagogies.

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133

December 2015 marked the beginning of a political cycle initiated by Mauricio Macri's rise to power as the president of the nation. Generally speaking, the economic measures propelled by this victory echo those launched by Carlos Menem in the 1990s (and even earlier by Martínez de Hoz during the last *civico-military dictatorship*), and they are recognizably neoliberal.¹ Under this new dispensation, the violation of social rights, the alarming repression of public protest, the persecution of activists and political militants, rampant censorship, and nefarious instantiations of institutional violence all coexist.² Both the new mass media programming, ever more saturated and deregulated, and the interventions by numerous officials in the current government—including ministers and even the president of the nation—fuel the manifestations of the most sinister punitive, racist, and xenophobic drives of the populace.

In light of these facts, which point to the possible—and not so new—authoritarian inflection of the “liberal” in numerous Latin American countries, a certain image of the current Argentine government has begun to emerge.³ This image presents a government existing beyond the pursuit of hegemony, as the agent of a “looting operation” that sustains itself through “*de facto* powers” and that places a special emphasis on physical violence as its sole means of self-perpetuation.⁴ But this type of reading—which encourages the belief that such a regime, structured solely along the lines of exclusion and repression, will sooner or later “collapse under its own weight”—deters us from thinking through the normative and ideological dimension of the political process underway, a process that has already been characterized by its own protagonists as a “refoundation,” a “cultural revolution,” or a “permanent reformism.” This reading also forecloses the opportunity to interrogate the images of community and subjectivity produced in this process. This is why we find it necessary, without denying the need to point out and critique the government's increasingly coercive dimension, to question the framework employing in interpreting it.

Should we understand the violence and the aggressive display of the state apparatus, its arsenal and slew of repressive powers, merely as an expression of the “post-hegemonic” qualities of a neoliberal economic project that now only requires physical coercion to implement itself? As we will see in what follows, the current government has deployed, from the outset, a discourse of harmony among Argentines that has been summed up in a slogan: “Everything is possible together.” At play here is an entrepreneurial discourse that sustained and continues to sustain proximity. According to the logic of this discourse, affects, “healthily” withdrawn from the public sphere and redirected toward the domestic realm, allow us to eradicate previous conflicts and divisions.⁵ This discourse suggests that such differences are mere “projections” imposed on the people by politicians and political parties blindsided by resentment and conflicts of interest. How, then, can we interpret the

relationship between the deployment and spectacularization of repressive force, on the one hand, and, on the other, these calls to unite our efforts in a friendly, common life of entrepreneurs who have learned to leave confrontations behind in order to focus on the wholesome pursuit of the “real vital interest” of each and every one of us?

We are not dealing here with a peaceful and liberal façade imposed over the “truth” of violence—be it effectively deployed or hovering as a perennial threat to those who would dare resist. As Louis Althusser insisted in his polemics against “economism” and “ultra-politicism” toward the end of the 1960s, the understanding of ideology as a productive mechanism—and not merely as a strategy for “obfuscation” or legitimation—means conceiving of punishment not only as a violence that falls on subjects, but also as a means by which subjects are “recruited” over the course of a conflictual and asymmetrical socio-political process in which the political identities that take part in it are constituted.⁶ Critical of an exclusively instrumentalist interpretation of repression, defined as a means of realizing something else (the economy), Althusser asserts that ideology produces *novel* and unforeseeable effects, while simultaneously being itself the effect of a *persistent social antagonism*. On this point, even while sharing an emphasis on the productivity of ideology highlighted by other theoretical interventions on neoliberalism, his conception of the ideological—attuned to both the reductive tendencies in traditional notions of superstructure as well as to the more liberal idea of a justification of order⁷—also calls for registering the continuities *underlying* the discontinuity and for a reading of the conflict that cuts across ideology. His model allows us to problematize the “radical immanence” associated with definitions of neoliberalism as a radically new “rationale” or “governmentality” that can only be rendered intelligible on its own terms. It allows us, instead, to think of neoliberalism as a dominant political *tendency* in conflict with other ideologies.⁸

Given the high level of conflict that characterizes the political situation in Argentina, which is embodied in, among other things, the crystallization of two new political alliances—Macrismo and Kirchnerism—in the aftermath of the 2001 crisis, we find it useful to complicate the hypothesis that posits a radical mutation of the political under neoliberalism.⁹ Although it might be read as a unilateral process of depoliticization associated with the terminal imposition of an economic rationale with no outside, we believe the brand of neoliberalism to which we bear witness in Argentina should be read as a novel and efficacious strategy that politicizes an already underlying authoritarianism, one reanimated in our society as a reaction to the popular and democratic victories achieved in the previous political cycle. In this article, we seek to interrogate this neoliberal politicization of society, analyzing the ideological productivity of the display of punishment and the figuration of common life put forth by Cambiemos.¹⁰ We also seek to understand the ways

in which this “refoundational political project,” in sync with a “punitive inflection of neoliberal capitalism”¹¹ on a global scale, articulates a certain desire for punishment and self-punishment by way of an entrepreneurial ideology that postulates a limitless subject, one who “already knows what he wants.” *Alongside* the illusory and limitless community of entrepreneurs “that we are,” this present-day punitive neoliberalism seems to relentlessly carve out a community of “punishment”: one that marks us, in one fell swoop, as both guilty subjects and as subjects devoted to joyous punishment. And the centrality of community in both figurations indicates that, rather than appeal to univocal facts, we need to address a complex constellation of ideological motives. In order to do so, we will also need to clarify the specific workings of this explicitly violent process of interpellation, a process that constitutes subjects eager to punish both themselves and others (for past failures and excesses committed). This also means showing how this form of interpellation squares with that other, ostensibly peaceful form: a form of interpellation that is even perceived as “emancipatory” and locates a limitless omnipotence inherent in self-sufficient individuals solely responsible for their luck and their destiny in a world ripe with opportunity.

In this sense, we argue that the punitivist element in the ideological configuration forged by the ruling political alliance in Argentina does not represent the dark side of an otherwise luminous entrepreneurial discourse. Nor does the former represent an exterior compensation for the latter. It would likewise be imprecise to consider this a simple “punitive turn” understood as a subsequent shift, one that the current government was forced to implement as a “last resort” in light of massive social resistance sparked by the infringement of previously acquired democratic liberties. In the official discourse, entrepreneurialism and (self-)punishment are not related solely by a logic of temporal succession. Nor do they coexist as strategies employed by the new government simultaneously but aimed at divergent sectors of the population. To be clear, all of these readings harbor their own moments of truth.¹² We believe, however, that they prove problematic precisely where they prevent us from thinking what Adorno called “the riddle figures of that which exists and their astonishing intertwinings.”¹³ As such, these readings overlook the constitutive imbrication that makes punitivism and the discourse of the unlimited potency of the subject two “moments” that, as Wendy Brown argues in the context of present-day North American and European neoliberalism, cannot but exist synchronously.¹⁴ They represent two sides of the same coin, one inseparable from the other. They call for each other in mutual coexistence.

Confronted with the mandate of self-sufficiency and made hyper-responsible for their failures, the subjects eventually identified with this particular mode of interpellation must, in order to avoid madness, project their blame onto others;¹⁵ it thus becomes imperative to judge these others severely. They must be declared

guilty and will be punished without delay. The community of those affiliated through their entrepreneurial drive is thus also, and without contradiction in this ideological formation, the community of those affiliated by the blind and imperious urge to punish and be punished. This is a community of those who exert, endure, and consume themselves in pure violence, a community that, were it to carry out its definitive consummation, would inaugurate a subjectivity constituted precisely through its own ethical dissolution. One of our main goals is to aid in the imagination and conceptualization of the risks inherent in such a nefarious political tendency. On a more general scale, we seek to attend to the complex intertwining of socio-historical conditions and psychic mechanisms capable of encouraging or threatening the emergence and the durability of a democratic ethico-political subject.

Features of “Punitive Neoliberalism”

Addressing the dominant ideological formation in Argentina as a form of “punitive neoliberalism” presents various interpretative ways in which to respond to both the calls made to the populace by the current government and the types of practices this government seeks to promote. On the one hand, and from a strictly general theoretical perspective, the term introduces a variation on what many authors have formulated as “neoliberal reason.”¹⁶ Complicating this last concept’s generalization of market rationality,¹⁷ the idea of a punitive neoliberalism allows us to perceive—precisely where we would otherwise have perceived an undifferentiated rationale—a panoply of differentiated political strategies at play in dissimilar historical junctures marked by irreducibly singular events. Neoliberalism is not always selfsame, nor does it endure through its endless repetition. Following William Davies, we would argue that the concept of punitive neoliberalism also allows us to situate certain ideological phenomena geopolitically, in light of events of global magnitude, such as the end of the Cold War, the attack to the Twin Towers in 2001, or the financial crisis of 2008.

Indeed, attuned to capitalism’s inflections at a global scale, Davies’s claims open up space to consider the ways through which neoliberalism relaunches itself after its last crisis, not without transforming some of its most notorious features. Chief among these was the shift in a utopianism that bet on the imminent consummation of a reconciled global community, forged by the hands of “expert” technocrats employing the instruments of only the strictest economic rationality. According to Davies’s periodization, the reconfiguration of neoliberalism starting in 2008 inaugurates a phase distinct from both the “combative” phase between 1979 and 1989—when the emphasis was on discrediting socialist alternatives—and the “normative” phase that continued until 2008, when neoliberals privileged the instilling of meritocratic criteria of justice as well as the reshaping of subjectivity along

business lines. Unlike both phases, punitive neoliberalism — according to Davies — sets hatred and violence loose upon the members of its own populations, and, operating through a highly moralizing set of punitive values, generates an interiorization of financial morality that in turn produces the sense that we deserve to suffer for the economic irrationality of which we were guilty in the past. The key to this production of culpability is its post-critical orientation: “The moment of judgement has already passed, and questions of value or guilt are no longer open to deliberation.”¹⁸ Hence, this new inflection of neoliberalism offers up empty affirmations that must be repeated ritualistically.¹⁹

The notion of punitive neoliberalism, considered now from the standpoint of Argentine political history, can likewise help us think through some of the features that distinguish the neoliberalism of the 1990s (or Menemism) from the neoliberalism currently underway. Menemism sustained itself through the simultaneous deployment of a cold economic rationality and a style of charismatic leadership that encouraged a festive consumerism in a carnivalesque and utopian dimension projecting a horizon to be achieved: the total deregulation of the market; the image of a world devoid of hierarchies, fully horizontal and rid of bureaucracy; and the opening of borders to hyper-communication in a technological revolution still to be realized. Unlike this neoliberalism, at once technocratic and consumerist, multicultural and utopian, the new inflection to which we now bear witness presents itself as more emotional, austere, and moralizing, all while reducing its utopian yearning; it is more affective and less marked by a horizon of transcendence predicated exclusively on the triumph of technical reason. On the one hand, and while still appealing to expert reason and technological fantasies modulated for our current times, contemporary neoliberalism seeks legitimation by placing an emphasis on the sphere of the passions. It is thus possible to claim that neoliberalism today insists on a discourse diametrically opposed to the cerebral rhetoric of the Chicago Boys and instead opts for a *new age* affectivity — happiness without conflict, positivity, dialogue — as an antidote to the “toxic” passions implanted in the minds of “common people” by the “critical madness” of intellectuals and political leaders alike.²⁰ Confronting what it disqualifies as outmoded, artificial, and dangerous ideologico-political doctrines, today’s neoliberalism no longer emphatically employs the cold rationality of those who uphold superior academic knowledge, but rather relies on a hackneyed repertoire of authentic, domestic, pre-political, and egocentric passions that relibidinize the language of social administration.

Furthermore, if the consolidation of the neoliberal model in Argentina during the 1990s was oriented toward a global utopian horizon of a “frictionless capitalism” and thus exploited, on a local level, the objective existence of a social and political crisis²¹ on the basis of which Menem elaborated a discourse of a “return to order,” the normalizing discourse at play in Macrismo seems determined, by

contrast, to be hermetically shut upon itself. This is, on the one hand, because the horizons opened up by multiculturalism have also been shut, on a global scale. On the other hand, it is because Macri's rise to power does not have as its antecedent a great crisis like those that, in 1989 and 2001, marked important political inflections and enabled profound institutional transformations on a national scale.²² But to what extent is this closure possible, or, stated otherwise, how precise is it to characterize Macrismo as more self-referential than Menemismo? Is the neoliberal relaunching exemplified by Cambiemos capable of completing a normalizing project, even without a crisis to which Macri's "refoundational" economic and political project would respond?

Before we answer this question, we must first return to the idea that a punitive neoliberalism characterizes our current conjuncture, in order to make a double specification, historical as well as theoretical. On the one hand, in addressing the singularity of the Argentine case, it becomes necessary to clarify that the "normative" and "punitive" inflections Davies considers to be separate and successive moments in European neoliberalism tend to be superimposed in Argentina. In the case of Macri's project, this superimposition takes place *after* a period of "suspended neoliberalism," during which a series of countervailing policies were implemented, policies that sought to counter the effects of the previous neoliberal cycle launched by Carlos Menem in the nineties.²³ On the other hand, we would insist that the punitive drift in neoliberalism should not be understood as a mere regression or a simplification of the ideological sphere through which domination would finally reveal itself, "in plain sight" and "bare-faced," beyond all notions of normative collectivity and devoid of images of community and the "good life."²⁴ Punitive neoliberalism does not disclose punishment as bare force. In it, punishment is bound up with normative fantasies and justifications for inequality that ground themselves on an entrepreneurial ideology and its concomitant figure, the entrepreneur.

The Punitive Pleat in the Community of Entrepreneurs

Today, the entrepreneur is effectively an official figure for subjectivity, one actively circulated in propaganda.²⁵ As it is presented, this figure is not unrelated to the semantics of risk, with the spirit of ambition and the astute advancements associated with the model individual envisioned by previous iterations of competitive capitalism.²⁶ However, the figures of this entrepreneurialism are not limited to the solitary hero, the pioneer, or the conqueror, all figures privileged by classical liberalism. As noted by Foucault and echoed most recently by Boltanski and Chiapello in their analysis of what they call "the projective city," neoliberalism diverges from classical liberalism by appealing not only to an isolated subject, but also to a supra-individual instantiation: the network.²⁷ Even if we are in fact dealing with individuals, these individuals are always already linked with others, hyper-connected and



FIGURES 1 AND 2. Police repression in front of the Congreso Nacional, Buenos Aires, December 2017. From the series "Represión," by Sergio Goya, 2017.

in constant communication. In this sense, neoliberalism confronts the cold current in the individualist epic of liberalism with a warm current, a hyper-libidinalized collective adventure that, in the particular case of *macrista* interpellation, congeals in the figure of the “team.”²⁸

“Network,” “connectivity,” “team,” “together,” “collaboration”: these are just some of the signifiers that, far from opposing each other, articulate a strong mandate of competition and individual effort through which any and all collective efforts at social solidarity are either nullified or resignified and subsequently attacked as corrupt. If these efforts presuppose subjects in dissimilar positions and structural asymmetries to be corrected, Macrist discourse—on the contrary—is egalitarian only in its purported determination to offset an inequality of opportunities,²⁹ so that all those who invest enough effort can achieve a certain happiness identified exclusively with personal merit. Thus, in addition to “team,” “opportunity” constitutes a key signifier in a rhetoric that not only confirms the insurmountability of inequality, but takes a further step by arguing for its “justice.” Inequality is thus understood here as the gap that naturally and legitimately looms between those who have busied themselves maximizing their resources in the endless pursuit of available opportunities, on the one hand, and, on the other, those pitiful others who have chosen to live “at the expense of the state.” The prime targets of hatred in the discourse of the entrepreneurial community become the lazy, the “planeros,” the “ñoquis” or gnocchi,³⁰ and the “militant vermin.”³¹ Thus demonized, they elicit much less Christian charity than frenzy for punishment in a discourse repeated ad nauseam in the streets of Argentina: “they were given everything,” “they have no excuses,” “I busted my ass working.” Instead, these others became a “threat,” and all that remains is to identify and suppress them. In this argumentative scheme that is also the Janus-faced constitution of a public discourse, the punitive and the entrepreneurial become indistinguishable, two sides of a community that proclaims itself *infinite*.

Indeed, the official discourse paints a picture of the community of “entrepreneurs” as virtually infinite and limitless in its potential: “*Everything* is possible together.” This sense of limitlessness hinges on a rhetoric that emphasizes the singularity inherent in each and every one of us: “*You* are in everything,” this discourse proclaims, as if our singularity were a given and self-evident thing and not something produced against the grain of a dominant, homogenizing logic. These slogans bespeak a yearning for authentic, vital experience and presuppose a language ready and able to express such an experience, devoid of the complications of history. Such slogans thus signal a desire for transparency, asserted by a force that can be called political, as Horacio González has shown, but that stops short of naming itself as such, instead appearing as one with nature and conceiving of itself as a return to “normality.”³² This normality is at once natural and desirable, and

therefore the entrepreneurial spirit must be actively imposed on the hoard of “lazy people,” on those inclined toward “pathological negativity.” “If you don’t do it, it’s because you don’t want to” —these are words uttered in a video circulated on social media by a member of the current government. To those wishing to improve their lives, he recommends a simple exercise of the imagination: the only thing necessary to transform their belongings into cash. “You can lend everything if you want to. You can rent out your garden for camping. Your gazebo, your grill, your barbecue, your sofa, the room you don’t use, your bike, your car. All this you can rent out and make available while you’re on vacation. . . .If you don’t, it’s because you don’t want to.”³³

This discourse dissolves any and all distances, limitations, and unequal distributions of precarity as well as any political accountability for such a distribution.³⁴ It does so in order to make that which forecloses the possibility of a wholesome life the result of mere individual and psychological obstacles.³⁵ However asymmetrical our social positions may be, we can and should all participate in entrepreneurship. It follows, then, that any exclusion produced by this model of community emerges as individual and entirely self-imposed, fabricated by “bad actors” who are entirely responsible for their own resignation. Those who do not belong to this imaginary community chose their lot, removing themselves from the game or squandering their opportunities. On the other hand, actions in defense of social justice are framed as vengeful gestures and sociopolitical conflict becomes a transitory and eradicable pathology. Hence the “refoundational” features of Macri’s discourse, which from the outset sought to cast itself as the *exception* in a long list of discourses at play in national politics, an exception beyond right and left.³⁶ It claims to have always been “here,” *close by*, “doing what needs to be done.”³⁷ However, what is misleading in labeling the current government’s practices “antipolitics” emerges precisely here, where a diagnosis of depoliticization would prompt us to discard the possibility of reading such *exceptionalism* as a form of *politicization* that engenders and fuels a set of preexisting fears and prejudices. These find in the discourse of Cambiemos a space where they can be aired publicly, congealing in a normalizing call to “reestablish order.” This call is immanent to the interpellation delivered by Cambiemos, as well as to its exacerbation of the domestic, of the family, and of proximity.³⁸

Even while it suggests that “being close” is the key to the good life, Macrismo has not ceased to exalt the need to remedy “the ruling confusion.” Instead it has multiplied fences that, replete with security forces and televised seemingly without interruption, alert us to the punitive character, both as repression and as ideological productivity, in their brand of emotional neoliberalism. Such images of reestablished authority proclaim that we will be punished yet also “redeemed” for a sinful past—“the heavy legacy”—against which it becomes necessary to act mercilessly.³⁹ These images announce that we were guilty, and yet they also welcome us

into the community of punishers *that we are*. They offer us, in sum, the vision of a world to which we can belong in order to purge ourselves, and above all make others purge themselves, of sins previously committed.⁴⁰

The punishment that haunts these images does not only strike the body. It also generalizes blame; furthermore, it allows the population to undergo the “irrefutable” experience of the “prior crisis,” necessary for any refoundational project.⁴¹ Its pedagogical power rests on the sword—the exhibitionism of the state’s apparatuses of control—but it ultimately resides in the retroactive configuration of “evidence” regarding an infernal past. The current proliferation of images of punishment productively elaborates the crisis that *Cambiamos* requires in order to uphold its redemptive exceptionality. In other words, unlike the neoliberalism of the 1990s, this refoundational neoliberalism holds the figure of punishment—and not the global utopia or the technical expertise of the Chicago economists—as a central ideological element, indispensable to the positive self-portrait that it paints.

A moralized figure of punishment is also key for Elisa Carrió, the *Cambiamos* congresswoman for the City of Buenos Aires. Here, the “post-critical” tone of this new inflection of neoliberalism is laid bare: “the moment of judgement has already passed,” and all that remains for us to do is to atone for our sins with torments that are thoroughly deserved. But in the prose that emanates from the governor of the Province of Buenos Aires, the figure of punishment also attains an insidious and emphatically “pious” tone. To be sure, María Eugenia Vidal’s discourse still emphasizes our inexorable hour of calvary. But unlike Carrió, the “frail” governor writes in a pastoral mode, as if clinging to her very last breath while also patting us on the back. She invites us to confront this hour chastely, recognizing ourselves as sinners in order to be strengthened by this much-delayed and therefore necessarily welcome purification. To punish here is not to fire a gunshot to the back—like the one that ended Rafael Nahuel’s life—nor is it to issue an arrest warrant—like the one that to this day keeps a great number of political dissidents in prison (subjected to the state’s repressive and judicial apparatuses). In this context, punishment is also more than an intimidating roar (or threats issued by the prophets fabricated and promoted by mass media to ensure the prophylactic disciplining of the population). Here instead punishment reveals all its *integrative ideological power*, because it offers us all, each and every one of us, nothing more and nothing less than the promise of participation in the *sacrificial community* of sinners who have come clean.⁴² Now these sinners pay with redemptive joy for having participated in the frenzied scene of squandering that (according to the discourse, we all ultimately suspected, however corrupt our souls may be) “had to end.”⁴³ The current vice president of the nation insisted on this disciplinary and punitive motif last November, when she stated, “It’s been thirty-four years of disorder.” It is in light of this image of previous flagrant chaos that the present can be seen as a time of salvation, in which we

are rescued from the slippery slope of perdition that started in 1983—when elections were held again after the civico-military dictatorship—and that led to the “witches’ coven” that was the last twelve years of Kirchner’s governance.

These are not “outbursts” but rather features of a sustained hegemonic struggle through which we are interpellated as members of a new community that—neither facing the economic crisis of 1989 nor the political crisis of 2001—appears to be emerging from the hellscape of a moral crisis. We must not lose sight of this politically productive and positive ideological function. The punishment that Argentine society deserves, according to the discourse of the “refoundation” underway, unites us as sinners, punishers, and solicitous entrepreneurs in its peculiar call without utopia. Those who recognize themselves as part of this community of sinners—as heralds of denunciation and endless effort—will furthermore be rewarded with the retroactive experience of a moral crisis they would otherwise drown in, a crisis that justifies the current austerity practiced by chaste, peaceful, and hardworking subjects committed to personal entrepreneurship. These “entrepreneurs” are in fact guilty people on the road to purification, a path that consequently allows them to punish those who do not follow their lead. At the same time, however, their redemption is predicated on the fulfillment of a demand without end: as the corporate literature states and as public officials regurgitate, “the sky’s the limit.” One can always undertake more. Hence the exigencies of a state of “permanent reform,” which is itself also limitless. It postulates the omnipotence of those who, because they are able to do it all, would be sinfully negligent were they to posit a limit.

The violence that is the signature of this new ideological formation can function because, while labeling, excluding, and punishing everyone, it also promises to include them all, enveloping the marginal and oft-excluded lives in its brand of unreality. It states that *no one* is left out anymore.⁴⁴ It also states that for those sinful souls who seek redemption by committing to the entrepreneurial path, there is no longer a limit, since *you* are unlimited and can do *anything*. An infinite identification of objects of hatred, summed up in the image of the “deserter” whose laziness or irresponsibility—whose acquiescing to spiritual corruption—compels him or her to leave the game negatively mirrors the vacuous assertion of the unlimited power that inheres in *all* subjects in a world full of potential profit. One image produces a paranoid subject besieged by others and unable to exit the sphere of stigmatizing name calling, and the other privileges the “homey” in order to champion the transparency and domesticity, the vital interest we all partake in as hard-working entrepreneurs. Both are expressed in a thinned-out language. They rely on a readily available literality, suspicious of all opacity and rejecting any call to establish relations, historical inscriptions, and explanations. These, according to the discourse of the current government, would do nothing more than mask a simple and self-evident reality that can and should be judged without further ado.

Such a thinned-out language intends to speak directly to its addressees, keeping the arguments and debates of an eminently political sphere safely at bay.⁴⁵ The novelty inherent in Macri's project is that, while being a political alliance seeking hegemony, it *makes* political confrontation into a "crusade" strategically situated in a moral and not political terrain. From there—from the moral heights where it seeks to live in solitude—it affirms a logic of absolute exceptionality that kicks others out, relegating them to a "tainted" and unavoidable space of homogenized Evil. "Corrupt" politicians, "mobster" syndicalists, "violent" agitators, and "politicized" intellectuals are some of the labels with which this logic seeks to discredit its opponents. The tone of moral exceptionality is, then, in the discourse put forth by Cambiemos, the purifying force that believes itself to be outside the outmoded and contaminated series of popular ideas, arguments, and symbols, those employed, throughout Argentine history, in the democratic struggles that broadened the scope of our liberties. Also moralizing is the restorative discourse that proclaims, paradoxically, to sweep away the old once and for all ("old discourses," "worn-out ideologies") and at the same time encourages subjects to performatively repeat purifying and sacrificial rituals in the name of a "new way of making politics." These rituals seek to occlude the play—the necessary inconsistencies and structural impurities in the multiple, contradictory, and concrete historical scenes of interpellation—that constitutes the conditions of possibility for, though never guaranteeing, the emergence and durability of a democratic ethico-political subject.

Scenes of Interpellation and Subjective Economies

As we elaborated in the previous sections, the discourse mobilized by Cambiemos sustains itself through the repetition of two calls, vocalized simultaneously and without contradiction. One of them is exclusionary and stigmatizing, consubstantial with a sacrificial rhetoric that insidiously propels a circuit of punishment and communal purification (and which revels in producing an ever-growing list of "bad actors"). The other call, supposedly inclusive and limitless, urges subjects to reject their own limits and to refuse the complexities and opacities within. Now, at the level of what we may call psychic economy, we wonder, on the one hand, what could possibly seduce the subject of such an interpellation? And, on the other hand, how can we interpret the ostensibly nonviolent aspects of a discourse that harbors a fantasy of openness to limitless power? What does such a discourse enable within the subjects whom it addresses? Certainly, no psychic structure emerges from thin air or at the margins of history, even if it may enjoy relative autonomy in its processes and dynamics. As Lauren Berlant notes, determinate historical conditions favor certain subjective or more or less rigid libidinal attachments to the identifications and disidentifications that are put into play by specific forms of subjective

interpellation.⁴⁶ If this is the case, then what are the forms of subjectivity and of social bonds nurtured by the fantasies of community promoted in the discourse that dominates the political sphere in Argentina today?

By identifying “bad subjects,” the image of a community of entrepreneurs and punishers can allow for a certain liberation from subjective anguish. Under conditions of increasing systemic opacity and subjective disorientation, this image offers a neat mapping of the differences between selves and others, between us and them (those who can and those who can’t, those who work hard and those who don’t). In its recurrent use of the stereotype as an imaginary totalization that produces a definite and coherent image of itself and its others, this discourse affirms an “I” eager to do away with uncertainty by latching on to the “evidence” of what is given. This discourse operates not only through an identification of the other, and ultimately through stigma—a brutal reduction of the name—where the subject attains a relative degree of security through the projection of its fears. It also operates by configuring an experience, in vacuous languages, in and through which the subject can divest itself of a disjointed historicity, replete with symbols and flags, and embrace the transparency and simplicity of its own “vital interest.” Such thinned-out languages promise to liberate the subject, one way or another, from conflict, chance, and the burden of collective history that constitutes the subject itself. In other words, the subject is thus “liberated” from the contingency and incoherence at play in the various interpellations in which it is constituted as a social being, finally unhinged from being “caused” in and through interpellation.

“Join us”; “Change”; “Think Positive”; “Cheer up”; “What are you waiting for to take part in the community of those who can do it *all*?” In an irrefutable and familial language, impervious to contradiction and seeking to come ever closer to us, to reach beyond cunning symbolico-political identifications, the discourse of *Cambiamos* endlessly repeats that in order to “take part,” one need only undergo “a change of attitude” and channel the “desire” and “will” to participate here where nothing is missing or necessary except for “you.” From this “personalized” yet abstract, empty, and quasi-tautological call to participate in a limitless community, the subject can extract a paradoxical satisfaction: a fantasy of liberation from the trans-subjective binds that signals an effacement of history. This entails, on the one hand, the effacement of a political dimension to history. In the concrete case of Argentina, this effacement speaks to the neoliberal tendency to deactivate the modes of social and political subjectification tied to the acquisition of democratic rights at diverse historical conjunctures. In brief synthesis, some of these are: Yrigoyenist populism, the Peronist benevolent state, the developmentalism of the 1960s, the sense of a collective struggle for human rights promoted by Alfonsínism, itself consubstantial with the post-dictatorship “democratic pact,” as well as the more recent example of Kirchnerist populism. At all these conjunctures, the

democratic institutions of Argentina emerged in ways that were by no means linear but rather singular and conflictual. Cambiemos and its discourse seek to erase this history, with its superimposed and contaminated temporal strata. Cambiemos instead proposes what we would describe as a logic of moral exceptionality that strives to whisk away the friction in which political symbols were and are constituted, never fully dislodged from each other. On the other hand, this claim to suppress the marks of concrete history (a history whose tensions have been wrought, in the case of Argentina, as we have shown, by diverse and conflicting instantiations of the national-popular) also implies the negation of the very genesis of the subject as divided and dispossessed of origin, as an effect of circumstances that are necessarily opaque to the subject itself.

The substitution of a political dimension by moral interpellations—“good folks,” “honest people,” “the good neighbors”—thus entails not only an attempt to erase the diverse circumstances of emergence, always necessary in hindsight and yet unforeseeable. It also entails the erasure of uncertainty about the future, about what is left unresolved in conflictual coexistence. Indeed, the erasure of history refers not only to the temporal imprint (emergence and expiration) of these calls, but also and especially to their being nonsequential, to their reciprocal frictions. In the recent history of Argentina, the names around which large collectives have been mobilized in public space—names such as the “working people,” “democratic citizenship,” or “empowered people”—neither follow nor overcome each other: they have existed and exist as juxtaposed interpellations, irreducible to one another, in potential conflict.⁴⁷ In each and every one of these opaque and contradictory names there persists echoes of others: the remnants of unruly sonorities that render any neat and unequivocal cut or periodization impossible. All of these act together, destabilizing each other, frustrating the possibility of perfect univocity and thus making impossible any fantasy of a total and harmonious break in the life of either the subject or the political community. The hyper-inclusive and limitless interpellation put into play in the slogans of Cambiemos (“Everything is possible together,” “You are in everything,” “Doing what needs to be done”) seeks to eradicate the space of emergence for this potentially conflictual and never transparent diversity of *partial* interpellations, in order to instead encourage a fantasy of *total* liberation in which the dependence of the subject on situations that exceed it would be superseded once and for all.

Both aspects of its platform—the one that, in the name of a “new politics,” disregards the historical symbols that rendered visible and activated a democratic critique of common life, and the other, which seeks the erasure of the internal rifts and opacities constitutive of the subject—find their point of convergence in their treatment of symbols. If Macri and his followers repeatedly invite us to “exit ideology” and divest ourselves of certain words (left and right) and certain emblematic symbols

of collective memory (the 30,000 people who disappeared during the last dictatorship, for example), this is because it wants to situate itself strategically beyond the signifiers in question. As remnants of the “old politics,” such signifiers—always dangerous in their ability to reactivate unforeseeable scenes and conjunctures—are portrayed by Macrist discourse as being “on the other side.” They are demonized and swiftly identified with the immorality of a discursive hellscape that has finally been surpassed. But when the space of friction among symbolic partialities is sealed shut in this way, the enigmatic multiplicity of calls that constitute us—or that *cause* us as subjects open to interrogation—and the ability of these calls to touch us are whisked away.

To be caused means to be interpellated in scenes where we do not act as sovereign subjects. Furthermore, this occurs in our historical milieu in forms and circumstances that are simply unforeseeable. On the one hand, such a limit set on the possibility of full subjective self-intellection “dispossesses” us of our origin, to employ the term mobilized by Judith Butler; it demonstrates a rift in our self-sufficiency, highlighting our dependence on the Other and on others. As a condition for any ethically oriented action, Butler suggests, that which seems to undermine our liberty—the limit, the necessary assumption of a lack in ourselves and in the other—becomes, paradoxically, the very precondition for ethical action, that is, the instance in which the subject is able to ask after that which is not itself and without which it would not exist. Stated differently, the subject always comes to be, arrives (or not), and forms its ethical bonds with itself and with others on the basis of a question, a space carved out within as self-unknowing. To arrive at an ethical subjectivity is thus, one way or the other, to be capable of not knowing, of opening (and opening oneself to) interrogation.⁴⁸

If the Macrist promise of “liberation” that we have sought to theorize here seems disturbing, this is because, besides effacing the stark reality of political conflict, such a promise furthermore projects a “moral hellscape.” The only exit from this hellscape seems to be the total affirmation of a limitless and uncritical knowledge. When the discourse of *Cambios* takes pride in repeating that we already know who we are, who others are, and what we can expect, it threatens the dissonant multiplicity that allows a self-reflexive subject to emerge, a subject not entirely subsumed by the imperatives of order.⁴⁹ Under attack here is the possibility of a subject that is able to question the fantasies of transparency and totalizing knowledge projected, to a certain extent, by every ideological discourse onto the world, onto others, and onto itself. This danger is exacerbated, however, by the particular ideology that considers any and every political symbology to be “alienating” and that instead affirms the limitlessness of the subject, proclaiming the cessation of all dependency and any and all bonds. If the liberation proposed by the thinned-out languages deployed by *Cambios* implies a paradoxical liberation, this is

because with this liberation we lose or mortify the subjectivity capable of inquiring about the ethical dimension of its agency in the world.

We have sought to specify the operations enabled, at the level of the subjective economy, by an ideological interpellation that establishes a logic of moral exceptionality and a politics of self-alienation from “ancient” symbolic disputes. This form of interpellation thus seeks to deactivate the internal ambivalence of classical interpellations. The symbolic qualities in classical political appeals create a paradox: these appeals reveal at once the conditions of their efficacy—their ideological effects—and the inconcealable signs of their imperfection. These signs disclose a sort of “birth defect,” since the symbol finds itself structurally besieged not only by “external” symbols, its eventual rivals in symbolic dispute, but also, most fundamentally by the echoes of these other symbols, echoes that persist within its own constitution. If the symbol captures us with its semblance of metaphorical closure, it is also not impervious to a metonymic slippage, an allegorical dimension that ultimately places it beside itself. By privileging the literality of immediate “vital interests” and thus attempting to undo this sort of de-totalization and openness to the contingencies of political history—a history whose unfolding implicates us as active participants—the discourse of *Cambíemos* seeks stealthily to create a totalitarian matrix. This matrix in turn undermines autonomous subjectivity. Surrendering to the temptation of an existence that is *once and for all* removed from all constraints, the subject that Macrist interpellations strives to produce is trapped in the false plenitude of an already given immediacy, without the distance granted by a symbol that could still announce the poverty or the lack that inheres in its reality. What takes place where this purportedly “permanent” state of governmental reformism announces itself is actually a perfect adaptation that grants no possibility for transcendence beyond what is already given, the realization of a fantasy that proclaims that whatever exists “lacks nothing.” It would be enough, by this account, to remove the “distortions,” obstacles, and “pathological” additives that prevent us from seeing the world “as it is.”

In the horizon sketched out by this hygienic and self-complacent ideological matrix, there is no longer space for critical interrogation. Aiming to gloss over complications—history, symbols, a non-knowledge of the self and others—the subject that emerges from the Macrist promise of “liberation” appears to attain its unity and its sought-after independence, but in the same process this subject also loses itself. In the final analysis, the liberation promised by Macrist discourse “frees” the subject from the admission of its own dispossession. Hence its dark temptation. This “liberation” is therefore paradoxical, since it also promises to annihilate, without making a sound, the desiring, ethical, and critical subject. The success of this political platform, which seeks to relegate the myriad antagonisms that still divide Argentine society today to the moral realm, will hinge not only on its own merits,

but also on the fierceness and luck mobilized by mass social uprisings that to this day resist the consolidation of the horizonless horizon it seeks to project.

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Notes

1. These include reforms to social security programs, a taking on of foreign debt, an indiscriminate openness to importation, a deregulation or “flexibilization” of labor conditions, the elimination of taxes in agricultural, livestock, and mining exports, and the defunding of social welfare. Chief among the most devastating consequences of these economic policies are a decline in employment, trade, and consumption, a rise in imports, a decrease in the purchasing power of wages, an exponential rise in public service rates, the elimination of subsidies, and a general rise in local prices due to exchange rate shocks.
2. Moments of grave institutional violence include, according to the Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (Center for Legal and Social Studies, CELS), the imprisonment of Parasur leader and deputy Milagro Sala, along with the criminalization of her group, the Organización Barrial Túpac Amaru, in Jujuy province. Recurring episodes of repression affecting indigenous communities have also been reported in the provinces of Chaco and Formosa, as have attacks on sugar plantation workers in the provinces of Salta and Jujuy and on Mapuche communities in the provinces of Chubut, Río Negro, and Neuquén. It was in the context of this last set of violent acts that the deaths of Santiago Maldonado (found dead after he was missing for seventy-eight days) and Rafael Nahuel (who died of a gunshot to the back) took place. Consider as well the violent termination of the teachers who, as a means of demanding wage increases, attempted to start an Itinerant School in the public square in front of the Buenos Aires National Congress. One can add to this list the repression and/or detention of protesters in the context of the International Women’s Strike of 2017, the protests organized by social movements in front of the Ministry of Social Development that same year, the mass mobilizations demanding that Santiago Maldonado return alive, as well as the mass mobilizations against the pension reform that took place in

the City of Buenos Aires in December of 2017. In all of these moments, we bore witness to a spectacular display of militarization that included police forces and border patrol, water cannons, and an indiscriminate “hunt” for protesters (CELS, March 1, 2018). One could also mention the attempt to pass a law known as the “two for one,” which called for a reduction in penalties for those accused of crimes against humanity, coupled with the preemptive imprisonment of political opponents without justifiable cause or previous public trial. As for the *Coordinadora contra la Represión Policial e Institucional* (Coordinator against Police and Institutional Repression, CORREPI), the “Informe contra la Represión” (“Report against Repression”) revealed that in the first 721 days of the new government, 725 deaths were tallied as a result of these practices. She also described the cycle initiated in 2015 as one of the most repressive in the history of Argentina.

3. It is worth noting that in Latin America, the liberal critique of totalitarianism was often just as regressive economically and as authoritarian politically as the object of its critique. Hence the recourse to the term *neoliberalism* proving unsatisfactory, as it too hastily attributes liberal qualities to a phenomenon whose links with liberalism are in fact far from evident.
4. For a discussion of this interpretation, see Tzeiman, *Radiografía*.
5. The words of he who holds the highest authority in office are indicative of this movement toward the domestic sphere. These words were spoken two months after his rise to power: “I believe that the twentieth century lined ideologies up working toward a result. People want to live better. They want to lead healthy lives, to stay hyper-communicated, to project a future for their children, so then they search for someone who will guarantee all this. Then there’s a minority seeking to relate this all to histories and reasons and philosophers. . . . But the truth is that, at the end of the day, what matters is my child. Will he have a better future than me? I mean, this narcissistic love that one channels in a child. We want guarantees, and that’s what the people are looking for.” Fontevecchia, “He tenido días de abrumarme.” As Wendy Brown suggests in her analysis of the current situation in the United States—where she also reads a paradoxical coexistence of conservative and liberal elements—if neoliberalism is associated with privatization, this association is not only economic but also “familial.” According to Brown, the social and the public are not only economized, but also rendered familial by neoliberalism, a fact which threatens the principles of equality, secularism, pluralism, and inclusion that lie at the heart of modern democratic societies. Neoliberalism replaces these with what Hayek calls the “traditional moral values” of the protected personal sphere.” See Brown, “Neoliberalism’s Frankenstein.”
6. See Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*. With his emphasis on the “point of view of reproduction”—already manifest in the title of the book that contains his celebrated essay, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,”—the Althusserian claim went beyond merely granting ideology a larger relevance than the one given to superstructures by descriptive interpretations in Marxist thought. It involved, as well, a critique of the implicit reductionism at play in understandings of either base or superstructure as pure instantiations capable of being defined on their own terms and not as “overdetermined.” In this case, to assume the point of view of reproduction allows us to point out the limits of the autonomy of the political, and this also means revising abstract and dehistoricized notions of power. At the same time, Althusser also urged us to conceptualize an ideological supplement always already operating in production, and his analysis destabilized the sequential logic espoused by technocratic economism.

7. In this sense, Althusser would sternly object to the excessively instrumentalizing descriptions of the function of ideology under neoliberalism discussed in certain passages by Wolfgang Streeck. For example, when the latter describes the idea of present-day capitalism as a “legitimated looting” or when he reads ideology exclusively in terms of motivations for exploitation: “Motivating non-owners [of the means of production] to work hard and diligently in the interest of the owners — requires artful devices — sticks and carrots of the most diverse sorts.” See Streeck, “Capitalism,” 2.
8. Étienne Balibar returns to this issue in his debate with Wendy Brown. See Balibar, *Citizenship*.
9. *Translator’s note*: I have chosen to retain “Macrismo,” the Spanish nominalization of Mauricio Macri’s political project employed by the authors, whenever possible. Other times, I circumvented the noun and opted for possessives (Macri’s) when the logic of the phrasing allowed for such a change.
10. The alliance comprised of Cambiemos, spearheaded by Mauricio Macri, and consisting of Propuesta Republicana (PRO) and Radicalismo, won the presidential election in a second round in November of 2015.
11. See Davies, “New Neoliberalism.”
12. The punitivist transformation of a discourse that began amicably finds its confirmation in the increasing virulence of official state discourse, as well as in the increase in the number of arrests and the policing of protest toward the beginning and end of 2017, after mass mobilizations against the national government (which nonetheless won the midterm election). Regarding the segmentation hypothesis, although we agree that neoliberalism effectively splices — and urges others to splice — “the capable-and-competitive wheat from the incapable-and-noncompetitive chaff,” in Nancy Fraser’s terms, we also believe it important to not lose sight of the fact that ideological punitivism and entrepreneurialism constitute simultaneous interpellations. They affect the entire population, and therefore do not represent two alternate discourses aimed at different social classes. On the segmentation hypothesis, see Fraser, “From Discipline to Flexibilization?” in *Scales of Justice*.
13. Adorno, “Actuality,” 126.
14. See Brown, “Neoliberalism’s Frankenstein.”
15. Judith Butler conceives of this process — overburdening the subject with a blame that demands the acceptance of total and complete responsibility for the subject’s fate, even when structural conditions undermine any possibility of self-sufficiency — as a “discursive appropriation” of the discourse of ethics by neoliberalism. Such an appropriation, Butler writes, confronts us with “a contradiction that can easily drive one mad: we are morally pushed to become precisely the kind of subjects who are structurally foreclosed from realizing that norm.” Butler, *Notes*, 14.
16. Subscribing to this characterization in the case of Argentina, while also aiming to highlight internal differences and thus resisting one-dimensional theorizations, Verónica Gago argues for the existence of a “neoliberalism from below”: a cluster of modes of being and calculating according to which subjects tactically employ neoliberalism as a means to appropriate, ruin, relaunch, and alter that which neoliberalism itself prescribes “from above,” thus eluding their constitution as neoliberalism’s pure victims. See Gago, *Neoliberalism*.

By studying neoliberalism as a dominant ideology in conflict with other ideologies, we too seek to not lose sight of the internal discontinuities that foreclose any possibility of

describing the current social order in the unitary and monolithic terms deployed in more orthodox accounts. However, from our perspective, what detotalizes neoliberalism is not neoliberalism itself, through its (per)version “from below,” but rather a series of counter-tendencies and elements that cannot be explained by neoliberal reason alone. Instead, they represent an overdetermined and overdetermining instance. Nevertheless, our aim in this article is primarily to consider neoliberalism’s new ability to flatten out this play of dissonances and consequently undermine modes of subjectivization and strategies of resistance to the dominant ideology.

17. See Brown, “Neoliberalism and the End.”
18. Davies, “New Neoliberalism,” 139.
19. These forms, Davies argues, “lack any epistemological or semiotic aspiration to represent reality, but are instead ways of reinforcing it. When political leaders say that austerity will result in economic growth, the purpose of such speech acts is to repeat, not to represent. Likewise when benefit claimants are compelled to recite slogans such as ‘My only limits are the ones I set myself,’ these are plainly not statements of truth or fact. They are what Luc Boltanski has termed ‘systems of confirmation,’ performative utterances which seek to preserve the status quo and to occupy the discursive space that might otherwise be filled by empirical or critical questions about the nature of reality.” Davies, “New Neoliberalism,” 142.
20. For an example of this pathologization of critical discourse in the new neoliberalism, we invite our readers to consult the interview with Argentine philosopher Alejandro Rozitchner published in the newspaper *La Nación* in May 2016, where he states that there is “a critical madness that cuts across national thought” and calls for a shift in national educational values so that “the children can be happy, capable, and productive.” Rozitchner, “Con Macri.”
21. This crisis’s climax resulted in steep hyperinflation that ended with the early resignation of the president of the nation at the time.
22. We are referring to those transformations of diverse politico-ideological significance, put forth, on the one hand, by Carlos Menem’s neoliberal governments in the nineties, and on the other hand by the “leftist neopopulist” governments of Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner between 2003 and 2015.
23. In the European case analyzed by Davies, the punitive phase begun in 2008 follows a period of economic growth animated by credit and the subsequent generation of a debt whose “irrationality” imposes, as punishment, a period of painful atonement. However, in the case of Argentina between 2003 and 2015 we see, on the contrary, a substantial cycle of reduction in debt. That is why the arrival of punitivism in the current cycle cannot be justified by the excesses of a previous debt but rather seems aimed at punishing the inclusive aspirations upheld by the progressive governments in the region during the first decade and a half of the current century, when these governments sought to strengthen local markets. We will return to this point in the next section.
24. We agree with Athena Athanasiou when she asserts that contemporary neoliberalism has not merely returned with its previous negative, anti-humanist, and injurious strengths, but rather “in all its repressive, subjugating, brutal, and thanatopolitical force of profit extraction[; it] has not lost its performative bio-productivity in capacitating modes of living subjectivity as well as in inculcating normative fantasies and truth-effects of the “good life.” Athanasiou, in Butler and Athanasiou, *Dispossession*, 30.

25. See, for example, the ad campaign run by the Banco Ciudad de Buenos Aires (Bank of the City of Buenos Aires): www.adlatina.com/publicidad; see also the government initiatives described at www.buenosaires.gob.ar.
26. See, for example, Chevrolet's controversial ad titled "Meritócratas" ("Meritocrats"), made by McCann Erickson's publicity agency especially for Argentina, which premiered in 2016: "Imagine living in a meritocracy. Where each person gets what they deserve; where people are constantly thinking about how to progress forward," the ad begins. See www.youtube.com/watch?v=gKos6wSOMRU.
27. See Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics*; and Boltanski and Chiapello, *New Spirit of Capitalism*.
28. In this regard, one could consult the volume compiled by Gabriel Vommaro and Sergio Morresi, *Hagamos equipo*.
29. Just as Dubet describes in the European case in Dubet, *La préférence*.
30. The terms *planeros* and *ñoquis* pejoratively refer in this discourse to the recipients of social welfare and to state workers, respectively.
31. During his speech regarding negotiations using vulture funds, Alfonso Prat Gay, who was at the time minister of finance, addressed state employees, proclaiming: "We will not keep the militant vermin [*grasa militante*], we will hire the right kind of people, and we will eliminate all the *ñoquis*." See <https://www.lanacion.com.ar/1861924-prat-gay-hablo-de-grasa-militante-y-desato-la-polemica-en-twitter>.
32. "Kirchner's government made it imperative to plant all sorts of flags bearing its name in all kinds of institutional contexts, notoriously even in cases where it would have been preferable that these great symbols be put to rest. But yet again this anxiety seems preferable to the illusory stage in which a globalist political group of financiers and entrepreneurs decides that it does not need to name itself, since it already sees itself as one with nature (in the forest of Capital)... Macrismo displays an apparent lack of names, and it would prefer to be as predictable as an automaton and thus do away with the hazards of history." See González, "Cultura y neutralidad política"; and González, "Filosofía, filialidad y 'vida sana.'"
33. The Argentine legislator for PRO published a series of money-saving tips on Instagram. They can be seen here: www.tiempoar.com.ar/nota/los-insolitos-consejos-de-andy-freire-para-ganar-dinero-en-vacaciones.
34. See Butler, *Notes*.
35. According to Sam Binkley, the idea of happiness is central to the apparatuses mobilized by neoliberal governmentality in all spheres of life. The scope of its reach can be read, among other ways, in relation to the transformations it produces in the experience of temporality and in the idea of futurity. Happiness, in its contemporary form, Binkley notes, demands an anticipatory disposition: the ability to hold onto the expectation and retain the ability to face the challenges posed by an absolutely uncertain future that does not differ in the least from the present (where the idea of "planning ahead" no longer seems to apply). It is necessary, then, to face this future with hopeful eyes and find, so to speak, happiness in pure, affirmative, optimistic, and expectant anticipation for the joy to come. It entails, according to the author, a temporalization of an affective state and of the affectualization of a certain relationship to temporality. See Binkley, *Happiness as Enterprise*. We find Binkley's conceptualization of this dimension of futurity tied to the training of an anticipatory emotional disposition very interesting—"to trust" and "to think ahead," "positively." A comparable kind of training was fervently employed by the current government in Argentina when it incorporated a key concept of "positive psychology," the capacity to "be proactive," into the

- name of its political alliance: PRO. It furthermore has never ceased to insist on the importance of keeping “faith that we are on the right track,” while simultaneously discrediting its detractors for their negative and pessimistic mindset, and characterizing them as incapable of embracing the “change of attitude” needed in order to “grow and improve.”
36. “We here at PRO orient ourselves toward pragmatism, by forging. . . a possible trail into the future that does not head left or right, that is neither Peronism nor Anti-Peronism,” stated an official for Propuesta Republicana, one of the groups belonging to the current government. Likewise, in a pamphlet bearing the title “Questions and Answers” distributed by the party’s cadres in 2011, which sought to clarify the “doctrine” espoused by its followers, the following statement can be found: “To insist on cataloguing political platforms as belonging to either left or right is to apply categories of the past to the present. They confuse more than they clarify. There are several ways of looking at politics. Some are ancient, while others are modern. According to the modern perspective, politics is defined as an undertaking and as service to the citizen.” Quoted in Vommaro and Morresi, *Hagamos equipo*, 179.
 37. This was an official slogan in the parliamentary elections of 2017.
 38. The appeal to the domestic and to the proximity of familial ties neatly expresses what Melinda Cooper argues is a salient feature of neoliberalism. According to Cooper, the centrality of the family in neoliberalism points to a feature of neoliberalism that is often missed by critiques that all too quickly assume that neoliberalism does not contain any traces of conservatism, or that it only seeks to undo and destroy all bonds (even familial ones) rather than strengthen them. On the contrary, Cooper believes that in its withdrawal from an “impersonal” model of social expenditure that centers on the redistribution of income, neoliberalism posits a family beyond the state, as if the family were the product of some spontaneous form of care and mutual aid. This privileging of “personal” ties in a sort of authentic, pre-political, and protected space that acts as a substitute for the state thus becomes the sole purveyor of care for the self and the other. See Cooper, *Family Values*.
 39. By referring to a “heavy legacy,” Cambiemos seeks to discredit the cluster of redistributive politics carried out by the previous government, but the phrase also concisely expresses a complicated sense of being haunted by a contradictory, excessive, and opaque temporality whose effacement becomes a matter of life and death.
 40. The circulating images of former minister of planning and public investment Julio de Vido, of former vice president Amado Boudou, of social leader Milagro Sala, and of countless other militants and political dissidents give evidence of this staged purge. *Translator’s note*: Julio de Vido, who worked in Kirchner’s government, was interned for corruption in 2017. Likewise, Amado Boudou, who served as vice president to Kirchner, was convicted of corruption in 2018. On January 16, 2016, Milagro Sala was arrested on charges of fraud and criminal conspiracy in an alleged embezzlement of ARS \$30 million intended by the government to help the poor.
 41. In all these instances—in the imprisonment of former officials Amado Boudou or Julio de Vido, or of social leader Milagro Salas—a spectacularization of scenes of “detention” is at stake; we witness the repetition and multiplication of scenes of humiliation, scorn, and punishment to which those accused of corruption were (and continue to be) submitted. Such is the media apparatus that seeks to sanction the “evidence” of supposed sin, that highlights the moral perfidy of those accused and construes them as irrefutably “guilty” even prior to any official investigation or trial.

42. Highly moralizing, the repeated slogan of “opening up about the truth” figures as a constant in the government’s discourse. To justify the abrupt decline in the inclusion of wages in the distribution of wealth, the exorbitant rise in fees, reductions in social welfare programs, and layoffs in the public sector, among other regressive policies implemented by the new government, this discourse systematically appeals to the need to “open up about the truth of the economy and to know the exact reality of the country.” See, for example, “Macri insistió con el ‘sinceramiento’ de la economía.”
43. In this regard, we find both Andrés Tzeiman’s claims in *Radiografía política del macrismo* and Martín Cortés’s prologue to the book highly suggestive.
44. There is “Zero Poverty,” as the slogan regurgitated countless times by Cambiemos during its electoral campaign proclaimed. This slogan should be read less as a promise—which would have entailed related policies—and more as a process of repetition that announces the nullification of the reality of poverty in this new ideological framework. Indeed, it seems as if this discourse is able to defend itself against any and all rejoinders precisely through the recourse or privileged operation of endless repetition, as if it could totally do without argumentation or confrontations with reality.
45. Hence this insistence on the “you” (“vos”) in the repeated slogan, “You are in everything” (“En todo estás vos”), or, as the officialist newspaper would state in a headline: “With Macri, the national subject ceases to be the mass, in order to become the person.” Rozitchner, “Con Macri.”
46. According to Berlant, under conditions of extreme economic and affective precarity, the conditions exalted by current neoliberalism, subjects tend to cling fiercely and stubbornly to fantasies that, even in their manifest cruelty (that is, in their capacity to threaten or undermine precisely what they promise to the subjects who cling to them), instill in these subjects a sense of continuity and endurance in a world that otherwise expels and violates them to no end. One could say that cruelty becomes a means through which the subject psychically resolves a conflict between adapting/adjusting or “ceases to be.” See Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 24.
47. “Working People” does not communicate the same thing as—that is, it could never neatly replace—“democratic citizenship,” but neither are these phrases alien to each other. We can sense the faint echoes—more or less audible—of one phrase in the other, if we consider our recent history.
48. In *Giving an Account of Oneself*, Butler presents a series of hypotheses regarding the constitution of an ethical subject within the framework of an experience of consciousness not fully transparent to itself. These hypotheses seek, on the one hand, to distinguish among diverse scenes of interpellation irreducible to the exclusively punitive matrix denounced by Nietzsche in his genealogy of the subject and in his critique of reactionary morality. On the other hand, against a certain tendency in moral philosophy, according to which the limits to total self-knowledge would work to the detriment of the constitution of moral subjectivity, Butler wonders if this very limit—the constitutive opacity of the subject regarding itself—might offer a contribution to the field of ethics. “In a real sense,” Butler writes, “we do not survive without being addressed, which means that the scene of address can and should provide a sustaining condition for ethical deliberation, judgment, and conduct.” See Butler, *Giving an Account*, 49.

We are interested in this hypothesis because it holds that it is precisely in the assumption of a lack of plenitude within the subject—a knowledge of one’s own

dispossession — that we find the basis for ethical responsibility. From this perspective, it follows that, despite Nietzsche’s reductive claims, the scenes of recognition (and interpellation) that constitute us involve more than moral judgement. And although judgement is necessary, not all ethical relations can be reduced to acts of judgement. Likewise, against the claims to subjective self-transparency required by traditional moral philosophy, Butler reminds us that any opening to ethical interpellation, in which a responsible subject can recognize another and give an account of itself, must assume as a necessary precondition the dispossession and vulnerability coextensive with the birth of subjectivity. This dispossession reveals the ideological remainder in the claim to total autonomy: the self is always dispossessed by the social conditions of its emergence, and yet this dispossession does not itself imply the loss of a subjective basis for ethics. Instead it means that ethics is related to critique: to deliberation on the social genesis and the signification of norms.

49. According to Binkley, the current discourse on happiness, which is related to our own conceptualization of the rhetoric of limitless community and its exaltation of individual power, presupposes a subject that seeks to rid itself of inherited interdependencies and habits formed around mutuality and reciprocal obligation. Instead this discourse tries to stimulate an entrepreneurial spirit that is allegedly suffocated by the welfare state. Binkley argues that in this framework individuals assume the need to problematize aspects of their conduct in order to undo, limit, or destroy the web of their mutual interdependencies, with the goal of optimizing their autonomous fields of action. Thus, in order to become entrepreneurial, the subject in question must undo previous interdependencies and obligations toward others and redirect, inward, the demands it would have previously addressed to social institutions. We wonder, however, if, in accepting an equivalence between this “turning inward” and “self-reflexivity” or “autonomy” as such, this account implicitly assumes that the neoliberal definitions of these concepts are valid. This would be to the detriment of the understanding of critique, from Kantian moral philosophy to Adorno, that sees critique as a practice of subjectivization. If something critical persisted in the notions of “autonomy” and “self-reflexivity,” this was precisely because, according to Adorno, in self-reflection the subject also carried out a work of problematization, asking after the heteronomous instantiations that oriented its very critical practice. Thus the subject’s self-reflection, which discloses its own status as conditional, in constant becoming, and non-absolute, is also at the same time a critical reflection on the social nexus. In this sense, only such an inward turn grants the subject space for problematizing the mandate of self-sufficiency. Far from condemning the subject to comply with this mandate, self-reflection makes it possible to recognize it as an active prescription at play in itself. Hence the critical force of self-reflection, and the neoliberal effort employed to exalt autonomy and at the same time undermine the conditions for self-reflexivity’s emergence.

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