

THE PLACE OF FANTASY IN A CRITICAL POLITICAL  
ECONOMY:  
THE CASE OF MARKET BOUNDARIES

*Jason Glynos.*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	2374
I. THE PLACE OF FANTASY IN A CRITICAL POLITICAL ECONOMY .....	2375
A. “Go Forth and Shop”: The Moment of Consumption .....	2377
B. Consumption’s Desire as a Psychoanalytic Entry Point .....	2378
C. “It’s the Production (and Appropriation) Stupid!” .....	2379
II. MARKETS AND BOUNDARIES: FROM MEANS TO MEANING .....	2383
A. Markets as Means to Ends .....	2384
B. Markets as Spheres of Monetary Exchange .....	2387
C. Markets as Spheres of Commodity Meanings: “Preferences are Foundational” .....	2389
D. Markets as Part of Complex and Interdependent Systems of Exchange and Nonexchange .....	2395
III. FROM MEANING TO MATTER: MARKET BOUNDARIES, FANTASY, AND IDEOLOGY .....	2398
A. Market Matter: Logics of Calculability .....	2399
1. Calculability Logics and Logics of Care and Attunement .....	2401
2. From Market Matter to Psychoanalytic Matter .....	2403
B. Psychoanalytic Matter: The Role of Enjoyment and Fantasy in a Critical Political Economy .....	2403
1. Enjoyment, Affect, and Fantasy .....	2404

---

. Jason Glynos teaches political theory at the Department of Government, University of Essex. He has published in the areas of poststructuralist political theory and Lacanian psychoanalysis, focusing on theories of ideology, democracy, and freedom, and the philosophy and methodology of social science. He is co-author of *Logics of Critical Explanation in Social and Political Theory* (Routledge, 2007), and co-editor of *Politics and the Unconscious* (Special Issue of *Subjectivity*, 2010). His current research explores the contributions of discourse analysis and psychoanalysis to the development of a critical political economy, looking in particular at alternative community economies, workplace fantasies, and the politics and ideology of the recent financial crisis in the UK. For comments on earlier drafts of this Paper I thank David Howarth, Sheldon Leader, Aletta Norval, Yannis Stavrakakis, and Albert Weale.

2. A Psychoanalytic Perspective on Market Boundaries.....	2407
CONCLUSION.....	2410

## INTRODUCTION

In a context defined by the deficit-reduction imperative, governments the world over appear keener than ever to pluralize the forms and agents of public service delivery. In practice, however, “pluralization,” often means “marketization.” Moreover, in debates prompted by efforts to marketize and privatize public services and utilities the state and market tend to be treated as external to each other, even opposed to each other in a kind of zero-sum tug-of-war, more state meaning less market, and vice versa.

Of course many have questioned the dichotomic picture of the relation between state and market, pointing to the state’s role in instituting the necessary legal and regulatory structures for markets to function in the first place. They also note how market logics are introduced by states themselves as a means of governance and discipline, particularly in the production and delivery of public services. This then raises a more general question about market boundaries and the role market logics can or should play in shaping and governing our relationships with each other. Key questions regarding the future of liberal democratic polities, therefore, concern the character of public service provision: how to justify the extension of the market into, or its withdrawal from, one or another domain of social life; and how we can best account for the way market logics are promoted, implemented, and contested?

This Paper revisits this general debate over “market boundaries” in order to explore what role psychoanalysis can play in ascertaining when and how to extend or restrict the scope of the market in relation to particular domains of social life. In particular, I argue that a turn to fantasy offers us a useful way to explore the scope and limits of a psychoanalytic contribution to this debate. How, for example, can the appeal to fantasy help us critically assess the provision and delivery of goods and services across market, state, and other coordinating agencies? If it is true, as some scholars claim, that potent fantasies of independence underpin marketized forms of service provision and delivery, and if equally powerful fantasies of dependence underpin statist forms of delivery, what can psychoanalysis tell us about their relative merits and demerits? More interestingly perhaps, what light can psychoanalysis throw on other possible modes of provision and delivery, more interdependent modes, for example?

A key objective of this Paper is to bring long-running and ongoing debates about market boundaries into closer contact with a psychoana-

lytically inflected political theory. In order to discharge this objective, I divide my Paper into three parts. Part I offers a general perspective on the question of what role psychoanalytic theory, and the categories of subjectivity and fantasy in particular, can play in developing a critical viewpoint on key aspects of political economy. I argue that the relevance of psychoanalysis to a critical political economy can be “staged” at any number of sites on the economic circuit and at any number of phases of associated policy processes. Part II provides an overview of key perspectives on the character and boundaries of markets, showing how the category of meaning in hermeneutically informed approaches has come to play a crucial role in advancing beyond dominant instrumental conceptualizations of the market. Finally, Part III probes the limits of meaning and discourse when characterizing or evaluating market practices. Approaches linked to the so-called “turn to matter” point to these limits and associated concerns, and so I explore the psychoanalytic contribution to this debate through this prism: what is the “matter” of markets and how does the “matter” of psychoanalysis relate to it? Logics of calculability and fantasy are invoked to argue that psychoanalysis has less to tell us about the merits or demerits of market logics *as such* than about the *ideological conditions* for their extension into, or withdrawal from, one or another domain.

#### I. THE PLACE OF FANTASY IN A CRITICAL POLITICAL ECONOMY

In considering the place of fantasy in a *critical political economy*, it is perhaps worth clarifying what I mean by this term. In a first sweep, I take critical political economy to be a species of *critical political theory*, a domain of thought that takes for granted the primacy of the political moment in critically explaining the reproduction and transformation of social practices, economic practices inclusive. A critical political theory tends to draw on a wide range of philosophical resources to orient problem-driven empirical research and to offer a rationale for both normative and ideological critique.<sup>1</sup>

Classical political economy was of course always about drawing out the connections between economic concepts on the one hand, and features of social, political, and economic practice on the other hand. There was a clear recognition of the way economic life and other domains of life were in a relation of co-constitution.<sup>2</sup> Classical political

---

<sup>1</sup> Jason Glynos, *Fantasy and Identity in Critical Political Theory*, 32 FILOZOFSKI VESTNIK 2, 65–88 (2011).

<sup>2</sup> There is, of course, a sizeable literature that looks at markets’ relation to society more generally. *See, e.g.*, BERNARD HARCOURT, *THE ILLUSION OF FREE MARKETS* (2011); ALBERT O. HIRSCHMAN, *SHIFTING INVOLVEMENTS: PRIVATE INTEREST AND PUBLIC ACTION* (2002); AL-

economy can thus be distinguished from a number of other conceptions of political economy, including the discipline of economics itself, at least insofar as this has been understood to be about principles of economic practice that operate and can be grasped in ways that are autonomous from wider social, political, and historical contexts. A classical political economic sensibility also shares little with the questionable idea that political issues must be studied using the methods and assumptions of the discipline of economics.

A *critical* political economy affirms classical political economy's more capacious understanding of the relationship between economy and other spheres of life. But it emphasizes the critical dimension of associated theoretical efforts, doing so in a number of ways.<sup>3</sup> For example, a critical political economy might seek to revise key economic concepts in order to satisfy alternative normative visions—concepts such as commodity, labour, class, or surplus. A critical political economy might question the ontological privilege accorded to class, for example, showing how it is overdetermined by other features, such as sex, race, culture, etc. Critical political economy, then, defines a domain of thought the aim of which is to pluralize our understandings of economic processes by critically engaging with dominant renditions of the economy. This yields a fairly expansive definition of the field of critical political economy, which would include Marxist, post-Marxist, critical realist, feminist, environmentalist, and poststructuralist approaches within its ambit.<sup>4</sup>

---

BERT O. HIRSCHMAN, *RIVAL VIEWS OF MARKET SOCIETY AND OTHER RECENT ESSAYS* (1992) [hereinafter HIRSCHMAN, *RIVAL VIEWS*]; ROBERT KUTTNER, *EVERYTHING FOR SALE: THE VIRTUES AND LIMITS OF MARKETS* (Chicago Univ. Press 1999); KARL POLANYI, *THE GREAT TRANSFORMATION: THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ORIGINS OF OUR TIME* (2010); DON SLATER & FRAN TONKISS, *MARKET SOCIETY: MARKETS AND MODERN SOCIAL THEORY* (2001); CASS R. SUNSTEIN, *FREE MARKETS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE* (1997).

<sup>3</sup> See GARY K. BROWNING & ANDREW KILMISTER, *CRITICAL AND POST-CRITICAL POLITICAL ECONOMY* (2006).

<sup>4</sup> E.g., MICHAEL H. BEST & WILLIAM E. CONNOLLY, *THE POLITICIZED ECONOMY* (2d ed. 1982); ALEX CALLINICOS, *THE RESOURCES OF CRITIQUE* (2006); COLIN CROUCH, *CAPITALIST DIVERSITY AND CHANGE: RECOMBINANT GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL ENTREPRENEURS* (2005); COLIN CROUCH, *COMMERCIALISATION OR CITIZENSHIP: EDUCATION POLICY AND THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC SERVICES* (2003); J.K. GIBSON-GRAHAM, *THE END OF CAPITALISM (AS WE KNEW IT): A FEMINIST CRITIQUE OF POLITICAL ECONOMY* (Univ. of Minnesota Press 2006) [hereinafter GIBSON-GRAHAM, *THE END OF CAPITALISM*]; J.K. GIBSON-GRAHAM, *POSTCAPITALIST POLITICS* (2006) [hereinafter GIBSON-GRAHAM, *POSTCAPITALIST POLITICS*]; HARCOURT, *supra* note 2; BOB JESSOP, *THE FUTURE OF THE CAPITALIST STATE* (2002); STEPHEN A. RESNICK & RICHARD D. WOLFF, *KNOWLEDGE AND CLASS: A MARXIAN CRITIQUE OF POLITICAL ECONOMY* (1989); DAVID F. RUCCIO & JACK AMARIGLIO, *POSTMODERN MOMENTS IN MODERN ECONOMICS* (2003); Bob Jessop, *Cultural Political Economy and Critical Policy Studies*, 3 *CRITICAL POL'Y STUD.* 336 (2009); Bob Jessop & Stijn Oosterlynck, *Cultural Political Economy: On Making the Cultural Turn Without Falling into Soft Economic Sociology*, 39 *GEOFORUM* 1155 (2008); Colin C. Williams, *The Market Illusion: Re-Reading Work in Advanced Economies*, 25 *INT'L J. SOC. & SOC. POL'Y* 106 (2005).

From a poststructuralist point of view, we can resolve the critical dimension embedded in the notion of a critical political economy along two axes: a normative axis and an ideological axis. As in critical political theory, so too in a critical political economy, normative critique would take aim at the norms of a practice or regime (the norms of a capitalist, neoliberal, or socialist regime for example), while ideological critique would take aim at the *way* we as subjects relate to those norms (or to the institution or contestation of those norms). In this view, one could be a committed socialist, affirm its norms, and yet still launch a devastating critique of the way subjects tend to engage with those norms or the way those norms are promoted, instituted, and defended. Following Ernesto Laclau, ideological critique here takes aim at the “will to closure” or the various “totalizing tendencies,” treating these as relatively autonomous from the normative framework at stake.<sup>5</sup>

This poststructuralist understanding of a critical political theory forms the immediate backdrop of my objective to contribute to the development of a critical political economy by drawing on key concepts of psychoanalysis, particularly the concept of fantasy. I begin this process by appealing to one of the most obvious ways we can think about the relation between psychoanalytic theory and political economy: through the moment of consumption.

#### A. “Go Forth and Shop”: *The Moment of Consumption*

We live in an era where leaders of advanced liberal democracies can—without irony—call on its citizens to “go forth and shop” as a way of discharging their patriotic duty, particularly and most urgently when confronted with an economic crisis. An economic crisis can be understood to be a crisis of consumption when it threatens people’s way of life—a way of life understood here as inextricably tied to our capacity to consume: having the spending power to consume, but also having the commodities available to consume. Consumption thus becomes a kind of horizon of intelligibility wherein a nation’s economic growth is tied to its citizens’ consumption habits, and people’s consumption habits both shape, and are shaped by, the nature of their life as such, including especially their working life and spending power, for example, their wages and access to credit.

Many commentators agree that Anglo-American market capitalism has generated stupendous rises in standards of living for many workers, but many also note that this rise has been accompanied by vast inequali-

---

<sup>5</sup> Ernesto Laclau, *The Impossibility of Society*, 15 CANADIAN J. POL. & SOC. THEORY. 24 (1991).

ties of wealth and income, and much exploitation both within and beyond national boundaries. It has been noted how Adam Smith was deeply sensitive to this mixed bag of good and bad, and so his hopes for a secure capitalism rested on people's rising absolute level of consumption as a way of compensating for various forms of labour exploitation and rising inequalities of wealth.<sup>6</sup>

From within this horizon, then, an economic crisis consists of "any period of time in which workers would face extended decreases rather than increases in their standards of consumption. Falling workers' consumption . . . [would threaten] their acceptance of capitalist exploitation by depriving them of the compensation for it."<sup>7</sup> For some, both neoclassical and Keynesian responses to the crisis, as well as many labour union responses to the crisis, while different in the relative importance they attribute to individual, regulatory, or collective factors in their diagnoses and demands, can nevertheless be understood to be differences falling *within* this horizon.<sup>8</sup> In other words, these perspectives can be seen to offer different responses to a shared understanding of the crisis as a crisis of consumption: how can we best restore some sense of "consumption as usual," in order to put us back again on the virtuous cycle of economic growth?<sup>9</sup> And vice versa.

### B. *Consumption's Desire as a Psychoanalytic Entry Point*

Given the preeminent importance attributed to consumption in academic and policy-making circles, as well as quotidian practices, it is perhaps not so surprising that the moment of consumption serves as a popular "entry point" for psychoanalytic interventions into, and critical engagements with, questions of political economy. A key move in psychoanalytic interventions has been its single-minded determination to make subjectivity central to its analysis, specifically the notion of split subjectivity and its satellite concepts of desire, enjoyment, and fantasy.<sup>10</sup>

The significance of this move is sometimes highlighted by contrasting the psychoanalytic conception of desire with the standard mar-

---

<sup>6</sup> This might be construed as a form of legitimation corresponding to a particular regime of accumulation.

<sup>7</sup> STEPHEN A. RESNICK & RICHARD D. WOLFF, *Exploitation, Consumption, and the Uniqueness of US Capitalism*, in *NEW DEPARTURES IN MARXIAN THEORY* 341 (2006).

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> For example, should we let the chips fall where they may, allowing the markets to self-correct and reboot economic growth? Or should we intervene to restore faith in the markets by paying heed to various "animal spirits"?

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., Jason Glynos, *There Is No Other of the Other: Symptoms of a Decline in Symbolic Faith*, 24 *PARAGRAPH* 78 (2001).

ket conceptions of desire, which often entail a somewhat truncated understanding in terms of individual preferences whose rank order is revealed through price signals. Taking preferences as their starting point, however numerous and varied these may be, the business of markets is typically understood to be about facilitating and maximizing their satisfaction. But since standard economic approaches do not ask after the *justification* of preferences, they leave uninterrogated the logic of their formation, reproduction, and transformation. Many psychoanalytically inspired scholars have, on the contrary, opened up these preference-formation processes to psychoanalytic investigation and interrogation. For example, they point out how consumption practices rely on desire as inherently *unsatisfied* and *unsatisfiable*. This is a key insight not lost on the advertising industries of course—industries the business of which is to regularly and widely disseminate a whole array of fantasmatic narratives construed explicitly as product-placement devices.

According to psychoanalytic scholars, Lacanian scholars in particular, there is a constitutive gap separating “subject as lack” (the subject as unsatisfied) from “subject as full” (the subject as satisfied) and this gap accounts for the apparently addictive quality and power that consumer products can exert over citizen-consumers. Interestingly, and some might say somewhat alarmingly, they suggest that a key feature of our western human *ontology* conceived as a function of desire, appears to resonate deeply with the logic of consumption itself. Insofar as market capitalism is understood to privilege the moment of consumption, the critique of market capitalism often becomes coterminous with a critique of those logics of fantasmatic desire and enjoyment that buoy up everyday consumption practices.

### C. “It’s the Production (and Appropriation) Stupid!”

However insightful and productive some of these incursions into the domain of consumption have been, one cannot help but question whether this has come also at the expense of detailed analysis and critical engagement of moments in the economic circuit other than the moment of consumption—for example, the moment of production.<sup>11</sup> Slavoj Žižek, for example, has been criticized for precisely this reason, especially evident in many remarks that betray a fascination with, and grudging respect for, the power of capital to constantly reinvent and

---

<sup>11</sup> In regulation-theoretic terms, one might say that this is equivalent to overemphasizing the deficiencies and malleability of the *mode of regulation* or *form of justification*, while leaving uninterrogated the presupposed *regime of accumulation*.

reproduce itself.<sup>12</sup> In this view, the monolithic *drive* of capital accumulation and reproduction is opposed to the malleable and potentially treatable *desire* for commodities. Detailed analytical treatment of consumption's desires and fantasies stand in stark contrast to fairly abrupt calls to make a political or ethical stand against the relentless drive of production and reproduction, for example by calling for *negative* economic growth.

However, in shifting one's perspective from capitalism conceived as a monolithic and homogeneous force or drive to one conceived as an unstable and complex hegemonic formation one can readily draw on the work of what could be called the Amherst School of Marxian political economy, based, but not by any means restricted to, the economics department of the University of Massachusetts, and linked to the journal *Rethinking Marxism*.<sup>13</sup> Their approach is informed by a detailed rereading of key texts by Marx focused around the notion of "class process."<sup>14</sup> Class can be and has often been conceived in terms of identity or position. However, putting the accent on process tends to shift the focus from questions of *being* to questions of *becoming*. Class processes are here understood not in terms of income, wealth, or property, but rather

---

<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., Jason Glynos, *Capitalism and the Act: From Content to Form and Back Again*, in LACAN, DISCOURSE, EVENT: NEW ANALYSIS OF TEXTUAL INDETERMINACY (David Pavón Cuéllar & Ian Parker eds., forthcoming 2013); Ceren Özselçuk & Yahya M. Madra, *Economy, Surplus, Politics: Some Questions on Slavoj Žižek's Political Economy Critique of Capitalism*, in DID SOMEBODY SAY IDEOLOGY? ON SLAVOJ ŽIŽEK AND CONSEQUENCES 78 (Fabio Vighi & Heiko Feldner eds., 2007).

<sup>13</sup> See ECONOMIC REPRESENTATIONS: ACADEMIC AND EVERYDAY (David F. Ruccio ed., 2008); GIBSON-GRAHAM, THE END OF CAPITALISM, *supra* note 4; GIBSON-GRAHAM, POSTCAPITALIST POLITICS, *supra* note 4; POSTMODERN MATERIALISM AND THE FUTURE OF MARXIST THEORY: ESSAYS IN THE ALTHUSSERIAN TRADITION (Antonio Callari et al. eds., 1996); RE/PRESENTING CLASS: ESSAYS IN POSTMODERN MARXISM (J.K. Gibson-Graham et al. eds., 2001); RESNICK & WOLFF, *supra* note 4; RUCCIO & AMARIGLIO, *supra* note 4; Ceren Özselçuk & Yahya M. Madra, *Enjoyment as an Economic Factor: Reading Marx with Lacan*, 3 SUBJECTIVITY 323 (2010) [hereinafter Özselçuk & Madra, *Enjoyment as an Economic Factor*]; Özselçuk & Madra, *supra* note 12; Ceren Özselçuk, *Mourning, Melancholy, and the Politics of Class Transformation*, 18 RETHINKING MARXISM 225 (2006); Ceren Özselçuk & Yahya M. Madra, *Psychoanalysis and Marxism: From Capitalist-All to Communist Non-All*, 10 PSYCHOANALYSIS, CULTURE & SOC'Y 79 (2005); STEPHEN A. RESNICK & RICHARD D. WOLFF, *Rethinking Complexity in Economic Theory: The Challenge of Overdetermination*, in NEW DEPARTURES IN MARXIAN THEORY, *supra* note 7, at 51; STEPHEN A. RESNICK & RICHARD D. WOLFF, *Communism: Between Class and Classless*, in NEW DEPARTURES IN MARXIAN THEORY, *supra* note 7, at 137; Yahya M. Madra, *Questions of Communism: Ethics, Ontology, Subjectivity*, 18 RETHINKING MARXISM 205 (2006).

<sup>14</sup> The Amherst School of Marxian political economy is by no means incompatible with the Essex School of post-Marxism, see ERNESTO LACLAU & CHANTAL MOUFFE, HEGEMONY AND SOCIALIST STRATEGY: TOWARDS A RADICAL DEMOCRATIC POLITICS (2d ed. 2001); JASON GLYNOS & DAVID HOWARTH, LOGICS OF CRITICAL EXPLANATION IN SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THEORY (2007), where references to the writings of people like Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe are not uncommon, nor with many aspects of the Lancaster School of Cultural Political Economy, see Jessop, *supra* note 4, at 336–56; Jessop & Oosterlynck, *supra* note 4.



in terms of *surplus labour*.<sup>15</sup> Class processes are those processes by which surplus labour is produced, appropriated, distributed, exchanged, and consumed.<sup>16</sup>

From a critical point of view, one important benefit conferred by highlighting a range of moments on the economic circuit is that it thereby also pluralizes the sites of psychoanalytic, not merely political and normative, entry points. Viewing the economy as a circuit made up of multiple and overdetermined moments—moments of production, appropriation, distribution, exchange, and consumption—offers a different, even if messier, picture than one based on fairly rigidly defined mechanisms or drives.<sup>17</sup> In addition to thinking of the moment of consumption as a suitable psychoanalytic entry point, then, we can also consider other moments as suitable entry points for more detailed and critical analysis.

Consider the moment of production. One way of understanding the focus of recent studies of the operation of fantasies in the context of the workplace is to see them as making a psychoanalytic intervention or “entry” at the moment of production. One study, for example, finds a

---

<sup>15</sup> Özselçuk and Madra provide a useful commentary on the Lacanian equivalence between surplus *jouissance* and surplus value when they claim that treating production as a function of surplus *value* (when, for example, it is linked by Lacan and Lacanians to surplus *jouissance*) is already to treat the production process in capitalist terms. But if one were to “reclaim ‘the organization of surplus labor,’ rather than “the accumulation of capital,” as the entry point of Marxian discourse to rethink both the impossibility of, and difference in, class relations,” then we could “retheorize surplus value as *one* mode of relating to surplus labour.” Özselçuk & Madra, *supra* note 12, at 85.

If we were to distinguish surplus labour from surplus value and reconstruct the proper homology as one between surplus labour and surplus *jouissance*, then an entirely different picture emerges. In this alternative construction of the homology, not just capitalism but *all* forms of production, appropriation, and distribution are disrupted by the paradoxical topology of surplus *jouissance*.

*Id.* at 91. “By universalizing the psychoanalytical insight, in this manner, to all class formations,” *id.*, we can pose the question of how we might relate to surplus labour in a way different from surplus value, or more generally in a nonexceptional, nonappropriatively, and hence nonexploitative way.

<sup>16</sup> Consider the case of analyzing the capitalist economy. In this case, such a framework could make visible at least three sorts of potentially and politically salient differences: (1) Differences *within* capitalism (i.e., variations at the different moments in the circuit of capital), which can be understood in terms of the different claims on the distributions of surplus value, as well as different forms of production, exchange, and consumption, *given* our understanding of surplus labor as surplus value, see Bob Jessop, *The World Market, Variegated Capitalism and the Crisis of European Integration*, in GLOBALISATION AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION 91 (Petros Nousios et al. eds., 2012); Bob Jessop, *Rethinking the Diversity and Variability of Capitalism: On Variegated Capitalism in the World Market*, in CAPITALIST DIVERSITY AND DIVERSITY WITHIN CAPITALISM 209 (Christel Lane & Geoffrey T. Wood eds., 2011); (2) differences *from* capitalism but still operating *within* class processes (primitive communism, feudalism, slavery, etc); and (3) differences *beyond* class processes (certain nonclass understandings of communism).

<sup>17</sup> As we will see in Part II, this pluralization is apparent in the work of economic sociologists like Mark Harvey’s Instituted Economic Process analysis as much as it is in the work of Class Process analysis.

good portion of fantasies structuring workplace practices to be leadership fantasies—in other words, individuals’ fantasies about their organizational superiors: the caring leader, the accessible leader, the omnipotent leader, and so on.<sup>18</sup> Another study charts a range of fantasmatic contents in the context of workplace practices.<sup>19</sup> For example, one woman’s excessive work rate, welcomed and encouraged by her boss, is accounted for by appealing to a fantasy in which her efforts would one day be rewarded by the long-sought-after recognition of her father. These are instances in which individual fantasies are operative, but instances of collective fantasies can also be cited.<sup>20</sup>

In these studies, fantasies are understood to distract attention away from poor pay and conditions, insecurity and exploitation, as well as the broader sociocultural and politico-economic conditions that make these possible. Such studies are significant because they represent initial attempts to document the content of workplace fantasies, trading on the intuition that they have an important role to play in our understanding of how social practices—in this case workplace practices—are organized, sustained, or potentially transformed. In my view, it is possible to build on these insights by linking them more explicitly and systematically to the question of ideology, and by making the political and normative significance of fantasy clearer.<sup>21</sup>

My intervention thus far has been pitched at a fairly high level of abstraction. The guiding thread has been the general idea that psychoanalysis and critical political economy can be brought together productively insofar as they both, in their own ways, provide a critique of “totality” or of “totalizing tendencies.” While psychoanalysis detotalizes the subject conceived as a self-transparent and rational preference-

---

<sup>18</sup> Yiannis Gabriel, *Meeting God: When Organizational Members Come Face to Face with the Supreme Leader*, 50 HUM. REL. 315, 315–42 (1997).

<sup>19</sup> Valerie Walkerdine, *Freedom, Psychology and the Neoliberal Worker*, 29 SOUNDINGS 47, 47–61 (2005).

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Alessia Contu & Hugh Willmott, *Studying Practice*, 27 ORG. STUD. 1769 (2006); Ken Byrne & Stephen Healy, *Cooperative Subjects: Toward a Post-Fantasmatic Enjoyment of the Economy*, 18 RETHINKING MARXISM 241 (2006); Lynne Layton, *Irrational Exuberance: Neoliberal Subjectivity and the Perversion of Truth*, 3 SUBJECTIVITY 303 (2010); Hugh Willmott, *Identities in Organizations: From Interpretive to Critical Analysis* (Univ. of Cardiff Bus. Sch., 2007).

<sup>21</sup> Jason Glynos, *Ideological Fantasy at Work*, 13 J. POL. IDEOLOGIES 275, 275 (2008); see also Wei-yuan Chang & Jason Glynos, *Ideology and Politics in the Popular Press: The Case of the 2009 UK MPs’ Expenses Scandal*, in DISCOURSE THEORY AND CRITICAL MEDIA POLITICS 106 (Lincoln Dahlberg & Sean Phelan eds., 2011); Jason Glynos, *On the Ideological and Political Significance of Fantasy in the Organization of Work*, 16 PSYCHOANALYSIS, CULTURE & SOC’Y 373 (2011); Glynos, *supra* note 1, at 45–68. There is now a very lively and burgeoning literature in the domain of what is called “critical management studies” that explores similar issues regarding the link between Lacanian theory and the production process. A number of journal special issues have already appeared, and the first edited book on this topic—entitled *Lacan and Organization*—was published in 2010. See LACAN AND ORGANIZATION (Carl Cederström & Casper Hoedemaeker eds., 2010), available at <http://mayflybooks.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/9781906948108LacanAndOrganization.pdf>.

ordering agent, a critical political economy detotalizes the economy, treating it instead as a series of overdetermined moments that are “performed” in different contexts under particular conditions. This suggests that fantasy—insofar as this speaks to the idea of split subjectivity—can be used as a critical “entry point” for any and all moments in such an economic circuit: moments of production, appropriation, distribution, exchange, and consumption.

One can add one final point of substantive and methodological relevance about the “place” of fantasy in a critical political economy. Apart from thinking about the place of fantasy in terms of the possible entry points into, or sites of, an economic circuit, one can also think of the place of fantasy in relation to the policy sphere. Here fantasy is understood to operate at different phases of the policy process, for example, formulation, public justification, as well as implementation.

But how should one think of the role of fantasy with respect to markets, and market boundaries in particular? In moving from general considerations of critical political economy to more focused considerations linked to market boundaries, some preliminary groundwork is in order. More specifically, to evaluate the contribution of psychoanalytic theory to our understanding of market boundaries, it is useful to contextualize this contribution in relation to the debates on this topic and to outline the analytical and critical grids available to us in helping us better negotiate the different positions in the debates. This will be the task of Part II, after which, in Part III, I show how psychoanalytic theory might offer a fresh perspective on this debate, with special reference to the categories of enjoyment and fantasy.

## II. MARKETS AND BOUNDARIES: FROM MEANS TO MEANING

Tackling the question of market *boundaries* presupposes a view about the *character* of markets themselves. In this Part, I review a small subset of these views, choosing to probe perspectives that touch on themes cutting across the domain of critical political economy. In particular, we may see markets as a *means*, serving any number of substantive aims, a view shared by advocates of market capitalism, market socialism, and some “third way” variants; we may home in on *monetary exchange* as a key feature of markets, an important aspect of Michael Walzer’s theory of justice as domination, for example; we might place greater emphasis, instead, on *commodity meanings* in trying to grasp what is most at stake in market practices, treating meaning as more important than the presence or absence of a literal exchange of money. Though not absent in Walzer, this aspect is emphasized by Russell Keat and several cultural economists who draw on the work of Alasdair Mac-

Intyre. Or we might choose to foreground their *interdependence* with nonmarket forms of exchange. Mark Harvey and others associated with the “Instituted Economic Process” (IEP) approach offer one very compelling and clear account of this perspective. Or, finally, we might understand markets as a function of *material calculative devices*, a feature emphasized by Michel Callon and others associated with the Actor Network Theory and Science and Technology Studies scholars. I engage with each of these perspectives in what follows.

A. *Markets as Means to Ends*

We will find out what works, and we will support the successes and stop the failures. We will back anyone—from a multinational company to a community association—if they can deliver the goods.

—Tony Blair, Speech at the Aylesbury Estate,  
Southwark, 2 June 1997<sup>22</sup>

The first set of justifications about the appropriateness of relying on market logics in a particular domain of life can be summarised by the question “Do markets work?” In contemporary political discourse about public service reform, this is often understood to be a question about whether market mechanisms are successful in meeting specific exogenously defined targets: Will they reduce patient queues or waiting times in the context of health care provision? Has the quality of goods and service provision improved? Is such provision efficient? Would it increase user choice and satisfaction? Here, markets are treated as a neutral means of coordinating supply and demand in a way that achieves a set of substantive aims.

The terms of public debate over the role of the market and the scope of its application thus tend to be dominated by the question of whether it can efficiently deliver a particular good: food, healthcare, energy, higher education, transport services, etc. The market is treated as an instrument to be compared to and contrasted with other devices, including centralized forms of coordination, whether state-based or not, as well as other decentralized forms of coordination beyond the market, based on principles of kinship, reciprocity, or other norms of community life. In this context, markets are understood to be largely decentralized systems that rely on price signals to coordinate the production of goods and services, as well as the distribution and exchange of associated property rights.

---

<sup>22</sup> See also TONY BLAIR, THE COURAGE OF OUR CONVICTIONS: WHY REFORM OF THE PUBLIC SERVICES IS THE ROUTE TO SOCIAL JUSTICE (2002).

At this level it is immaterial how price signals are set. These may be set endogenously in the way neoclassical economists favour or exogenously by the state or other regulative bodies, the central point being that price signals comprise a crucial boundary condition shaping the choices of economic actors. But whether prices are calibrated indirectly (e.g., by the relative pressures within and between supply and demand crowds) or directly (e.g., through various state-imposed minimum or maximum wage restrictions), prices are ideally set at a level that encourages competitive behaviour. A market transaction, then, involves the exchange of a sum of money (whose value tracks and embodies the current price) for a good or service offered by a provider under conditions that promote competition. This way of thinking tends to prompt a search for a list of conditions under which it would be possible and desirable to declare a market suitable for implementation. The obverse case, of course, would be the production of a list of potential problems with state provision (moral hazard problems) or voluntary provision (assurance or free-rider problems), which point to the market's suitability by default.

Viewing the market as a means, rather than as an end, suggests that markets are not intrinsically objectionable, their potential virtue or appropriateness being a function of the end to which they serve as a means, as well as their contextual conditions of implementation.<sup>23</sup> In fact, many contemporary theorists of a socialist persuasion acknowledge the unparalleled capacity of markets to cope with the complex problem of matching the production and distribution of goods and services with a heterogeneous and constantly changing demand for goods. For this reason they have sought to disarticulate markets from capitalism in order to press the market in the service of socialist ideals, generating a not insignificant literature on market socialism, which reached a high point in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>24</sup> In fact it is worth pausing here briefly to consid-

---

<sup>23</sup> David Miller, *Why Markets?*, in *MARKET SOCIALISM* 25 (Julian Le Grand & Saul Estrin eds., 1989).

<sup>24</sup> Market socialism has its recent intellectual roots in the calculation debates, specifically Oskar Lange's "competitive solution" challenge to Ludwig von Mises's claim that economic calculation was "impossible in an economy without private ownership and a full set of markets." David Belkin, *Why Market Socialism? From the Critique of Political Economy to Positive Political Economy*, in *WHY MARKET SOCIALISM?: VOICES FROM DISSENT* 3, at 5 (Frank Roosevelt & David Belkin eds., 1994). The intellectual roots of market socialism actually stretch further back to ideas of nineteenth-century thinkers, such as Robert Owen ("Villages of Cooperation"), Charles Fourier ("Phalansteries"), Thomas Hodgskin (*Labour Defended Against the Claims of Capital*), Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Richard Ely, Albert Schaffle (*The Quintessence of Socialism*), and John Stuart Mill (*Principles of Political Economy*). On this, see *id.*; Miller, *supra* note 23; and DAVID MILLER, *MARKET, STATE, AND COMMUNITY: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF MARKET SOCIALISM* (1989). On the calculation debate, see PETER BOETTKE, *SOCIALISM AND THE MARKET: COLLECTIVIST ECONOMIC PLANNING* (2000). On market socialism generally, see, for example, ANTHONY DE JASAY, *MARKET SOCIALISM: A SCRUTINY: "THIS SQUARE CIRCLE"* (1990); *MARKET SOCIALISM: THE DEBATE AMONG SOCIALISTS* (Bertell Ollman ed., 1998);

er the perspective of market socialism in more detail because it tends to foreground this understanding of markets as a means of achieving or promoting exogenously defined ideals.

The strategy of contemporary market socialists is to disconnect socialist ends from traditionally conceived socialist means (state ownership of production, centralised planning of distribution) in order to reconnect them to market means by pointing to the latter's merits or by pointing to the failures of central planning.<sup>25</sup> The crucial insight here involves contesting the assumption of an *essential* link between capitalism and markets. In fact, in the wake of considerable growth in cooperatives—in Britain, from under twenty in 1975 to around 1600 in 1989<sup>26</sup>—David Miller marshals empirical evidence to show that central socialist values like democracy, freedom, equality, and community can be promoted through an appropriately institutionalised market, while maintaining, even enhancing, the virtues of efficiency and entrepreneurship conventionally associated with the market.<sup>27</sup> As to what counts as an “appropriately institutionalised market,” market socialists typically flesh this out as a function of cooperatives buoyed up by a plurality of capital investment agencies. For cooperatives entail the collective ownership and democratic control over the means of production and distribution of surplus labour, thereby promoting the ideal of freedom—both in terms of work and, indirectly, in terms of consumption. And yet such an “appropriately institutionalized market” need not, according to its advocates, foreclose the operation of capitalist markets and firms, only that “the cooperative sector remains the dominant one in the economy, setting employment standards and income norms for the other sectors.”<sup>28</sup>

The central point remains, however, that from the perspective of markets conceived as a means, the difference between market socialism and market capitalism amounts largely to a difference in the objectives they want markets to discharge. Whether market logics are appropriate is a function of how successful they are, under specific contextual con-

---

MARKET SOCIALISM: THE CURRENT DEBATE (Pranab K. Bardhan & John E. Roemer eds., 1993); MARKET SOCIALISM OR RESTORATION OF CAPITALISM? (Anders Åslund ed., 1992); MARKET SOCIALISM, *supra* note 23; MARKET SOCIALISM: WHOSE CHOICE? (Ian Forbes ed., 1987); DAVID MCNALLY, AGAINST THE MARKET: POLITICAL ECONOMY, MARKET SOCIALISM AND THE MARXIST CRITIQUE (1993); MILLER, *supra*; CHRISTOPHER PROUT, MARKET SOCIALISM IN YUGOSLAVIA (1985); WHY MARKET SOCIALISM?, *supra*; JAMES A. YUNKER, ON THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF MARKET SOCIALISM: ESSAYS AND ANALYSES (2001).

<sup>25</sup> Saul Estrin & Julian Le Grand, *Market Socialism*, in MARKET SOCIALISM, *supra* note 23, at 1.

<sup>26</sup> *Id.* at 17. As of 2011, there are around 5500 cooperatives in the United Kingdom. See COOPERATIVES UK, <http://www.uk.coop> (last visited June 16, 2012).

<sup>27</sup> David Miller, *A Vision of Market Socialism: How It Might Work—And Its Problems*, in WHY MARKET SOCIALISM?, *supra* note 24, at 247.

<sup>28</sup> *Id.* at 256.

ditions, in helping to achieve particular purposes and promote specific ideals.<sup>29</sup>

### B. *Markets as Spheres of Monetary Exchange*

Advocates of market socialism accept in principle the potential benefits of market logics but question the necessity of a capitalist framework within which they are meant to operate. Instead of accepting the hegemonic construal of markets as inherently capitalist, they seek to make possible an alternative, socialist use of markets, which is both feasible and desirable. Its feasibility is defended in technical economic and legal terms that recognize the power of consumer choice to shape production volume and priorities, as well as establish discipline and extract efficiencies; and its desirability is couched in terms of its compatibility with, and potential to promote, the value of democratic freedom and equality, particularly in the context of the workplace.

However, even if one accepts the force of this intervention, are there other reasons that may cause us to hesitate before extending market logics into new areas of social life? If, for example, it were possible to institutionalise a market—even a market oriented toward socialist objectives and ideals—in the domain of higher education or health, are there reasons why we might argue that monetary exchange or ability to pay may not be a desirable criterion of distribution? In this Section, I consider the work of Michael Walzer who responds to this question in the affirmative, suggesting that his position can be justified by appeal to the values of institutional integrity and pluralism.

Walzer's views on the proper way to understand the nature and scope of markets stem from more general considerations about how we should understand justice.<sup>30</sup> Unlike monistic approaches to justice of the Rawlsian sort, Walzer understands justice in a radically plural way. Instead of searching for an underlying principle of justice, which would cut across all social domains (whether on the basis of need, desert, equality, fairness, etc.), Walzer treats modern liberal-democratic societies as comprising a plurality of distinct spheres, defined by their goods and the distributive principles shaped by the meaning of these goods.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Issues of feasibility and implementation are compounded in the case of market socialism due to the latter's apparent reliance on path-dependency issues (i.e., market socialism appears more likely to succeed in the wake of a market capitalist environment rather than a communist central planning environment) and collective action issues. *See id.*

<sup>30</sup> MICHAEL WALZER, SPHERES OF JUSTICE: A DEFENSE OF PLURALISM AND EQUALITY (1983).

<sup>31</sup> Central categories of good identified by Walzer (with their distributive criteria) include: money and commodities (ability to pay); security, health, and welfare (need); political power (votes); kinship and love (gift); offices of employment (skills); leisure/free time (desert, intrinsic

Walzer suggests that this sphere pluralism is the product of an “art of separation” which characterizes the development of Western polities, wherein the political power of the state underwent a series of limitations, involving its separation from the personal and the religious.<sup>32</sup>

Justice in this view is understood in terms of keeping spheres distinct by blocking exchanges between them; in other words, by preventing one sphere’s goods from being exchanged for another’s, and consequently preventing what Walzer calls the tyrannical exercise of power by people who possess goods in one sphere over others who possess goods in another sphere. Insofar as each sphere incorporates distinct institutions, justice is internally connected to the values of pluralism and institutional integrity. The specific question of the role and scope of the market can thus be treated as an issue of institutional identity: the ability to pay in the market sphere of commodities should not be allowed to interfere with, or corrupt, the criteria of exchange and distribution of other spheres. In short, we should not permit the use of money (the currency of the commodity sphere) to buy goods of other spheres.

It should be clear, therefore, how Walzer problematizes the earlier set of arguments, which treated the market as a means to some further end (the efficient production and distribution of plentiful goods; the capitalist ideal of individual freedom and property ownership; or the socialist ideal of worker’s democratic freedom and equality). He suggests that the *meaning* of a good raises, and ought to raise, important considerations, which go beyond mere feasibility and efficiency issues and beyond the question of whether broader capitalist or socialist objectives can be met.

Walzer’s approach entails keeping all spheres of justice separate from each other, but he worries about the market’s powerful imperialist tendencies. His solution, as would be the case in any sphere’s tendency to dominate, involves creating the conditions that would discourage or prevent exchanges between the sphere of commodities and other spheres. This would mean blocking, through legal or moral means, the purchase of political favours (as in cash for questions or votes, or policies for campaign contributions), or the exchange of money for any other sphere’s good.

This account of justice is plausible, Walzer argues, because it reflects some very basic intuitions we have about the distinct character of

---

value); education (equality at basic level, capacity to benefit at higher levels); divine grace (piety). Other spheres Walzer covers in his *Spheres of Justice* include recognition/honours, citizenship membership, hard work, and leisure/free time. *Id.*; cf. David Miller, *Introduction*, in PLURALISM, JUSTICE, AND EQUALITY 1, at 5–9 (David Miller & Michael Walzer eds., 1995).

<sup>32</sup> *E.g.*, Michael Walzer, *Liberalism and the Art of Separation*, 12 POL. THEORY 315 (1984).



classes of institutions in general and about the limits of the use of money in particular.<sup>33</sup> As he puts it,

every social good or set of goods constitutes, as it were, a distributive sphere within which only certain criteria and arrangements are appropriate. Money is inappropriate in the sphere of ecclesiastical office; it is an intrusion from another sphere. And piety should make for no advantage in the market place, as the marketplace has commonly been understood.<sup>34</sup>

This suggests that a powerful justification for this view of justice relates very much to the importance we place upon the value of institutional integrity and pluralism.

An attractive feature of Walzer's position is that the integrity of institutional identity (and the pluralism it supports) plays a key role in promoting another important value, the value of equality, or what Walzer calls "complex equality." The idea here is that a *plurality* of inequalities (inhering in the different spheres) will have a cancellation, rather than compounding, effect across the spheres.<sup>35</sup> But Walzer's main argument emerges out of his efforts to foreground the implications of taking the meaning of social goods seriously. The central values of institutional integrity and pluralism point to a notion of injustice conceived as a function of domination through transboundary exchanges. However, perhaps we can ask if dominance can be exercised in a much more subtle way by blurring the boundaries while at the same time maintaining the illegitimacy of *literal* exchanges across boundaries. In other words, there may be a dimension of institutional identity and pluralism that is not adequately addressed by Walzer's solution of blocking literal cross-sphere exchanges.

### C. *Markets as Spheres of Commodity Meanings: "Preferences are Foundational"*

---

<sup>33</sup> WALZER, *supra* note 30, at 100–03.

<sup>34</sup> *Id.* at 10.

<sup>35</sup> Several scholars have pointed out that Walzer has left unclear the precise relationship holding between justice and equality. See Miller, *supra* note 31. As David Miller puts it, "[h]is failure to specify the precise character of the argument connecting pluralism to equality leaves him open to the charge that his egalitarianism is vanishingly weak." David Miller, *Complex Equality*, in PLURALISM, JUSTICE, AND EQUALITY, *supra* note 31, at 197, 205. While Miller accepts the main thrust of this concern, he nevertheless feels that enough resources are to be found both in Walzer's texts and in the literature generally to mount a strong defense of his conception of justice in terms of equality. In treating the link between pluralism and equality as empirical, rather than conceptual, Miller appeals to sociological and social-psychological evidence to defend the thesis that the maintenance of the autonomy of spheres promotes complex equality, or what he prefers to call "equality of status." *Id.*; see also David Miller, *What Kind of Equality Should the Left Pursue?*, in EQUALITY 83 (Jane Franklin ed., 1997).

Walzer seeks to restrict the application of market logics to the commodity sphere, whose boundaries are determined through an examination of the meanings inhering in the notion of “commodity,” conceived as a category of good. Walzer believes that the examination of the meanings associated with a particular category of good are rich enough to define the scope and reach of a sphere, at least in terms of the way goods and services are coordinated via exchanges between providers and users. It justifies blocking the acquisition of one sphere’s good with the currency of another sphere. In the case of the commodity sphere, this translates into a prohibition against the use of money to purchase goods belonging to other spheres. His argument draws on ontological considerations rooted in a view of human beings as meaning-producing animals. It is further bolstered by a mixture of empirical and normative considerations, which David Miller has made explicit and defended. As we saw above, keeping the spheres relatively autonomous means that it is unlikely that any one person will have a monopoly of goods in more than one sphere, thereby promoting equality of status.

However, there are those who feel that Walzer does not take his argument far enough. Even if one accepts that Walzer has made the case for distinct criteria of distribution as a function of a good’s meaning, is it enough to defend pluralism by blocking intersphere exchanges in such a literal way? Consider the relatively common call to inject a private enterprise ethos into non-private sector institutional practices. Does this call not assume that “the generalisation of an enterprise form to the conduct of public administration, for example, will not affect the identity and integrity of public administration but will simply make it ‘work better,’”<sup>36</sup> and would blocking literal exchanges address these sorts of concerns? Walzer’s argument from justice suggests that understanding the market simply as a means, an instrument, or tool, misunderstands or underestimates the role language and meaning play in the functioning of human practices generally and market practices in particular. However, it is unclear whether Walzer’s remedy of blocking literal exchanges is sufficiently calibrated to his hermeneutic insight.

Drawing on the work of Alasdair MacIntyre, Russell Keat highlights the importance of the hermeneutic dimension operative in different spheres of practice.<sup>37</sup> However, he thinks it too restrictive to theorize

---

<sup>36</sup> Paul du Gay, *Organizing Identity: Entrepreneurial Governance and Public Management*, in *QUESTIONS OF CULTURAL IDENTITY* 151, 159 (Stuart Hall & Paul Du Gay eds., 1996); see also PAUL DU GAY, *IN PRAISE OF BUREAUCRACY: WEBER, ORGANISATION, AND ETHICS* (2000).

<sup>37</sup> RUSSELL KEAT, *CULTURAL GOODS AND THE LIMITS OF THE MARKET* (2000); Russell Keat, *Market Boundaries and the Commodification of Culture*, in *CULTURE AND ECONOMY AFTER THE CULTURAL TURN* 92 (Larry J. Ray & R. Andrew Sayer eds., 1999); Russell Keat, *The Moral Boundaries of the Market* [hereinafter Keat, *Moral Boundaries of the Market*], in *ETHICS AND MARKETS: CO-OPERATION AND COMPETITION WITHIN CAPITALIST ECONOMIES* 6 (Colin

the *boundaries* of the market sphere simply by asking whether money has been used to purchase political favours, health services, etc. He argues that the colonizing tendencies of the market are not limited to such literal exchanges, suggesting that they extend to the importation of the market sphere's *meanings* into other spheres, *even if there is no literal exchange of money for another sphere's good*. Indeed, Keat suggests that "an exclusive focus on what can properly be bought and sold may well not fully capture what is at issue, and may even be misleading."<sup>38</sup> Keat is of course taking his cue from an intuition that is expressed by Walzer himself, but, as we noted earlier, Walzer does not fully develop the implications of his own intuitions. There is thus a need to

focus not so much on the purely formal/legal fact of their being 'purchased', but rather on what might be called the social meaning (or perhaps meanings) of such transactions—to what is involved in treating or regarding something *as* a commodity. Once this is recognized, one will also realise that things (including people) may be treated or regarded in this way without literally becoming commodities, in the sense of formally purchasable items; and indeed that it is the former, rather than the latter, that is the morally significant feature here.<sup>39</sup>

Conceiving sphere dominance as a function of imposed patterns of thinking and meaning as well, rather than as a function merely of literal monetary exchanges, presses the argument against market colonization beyond recommending the mere prevention of direct purchase of goods like love, religious absolutism, the outcome of a match, political or legal favours, etc.<sup>40</sup> More precisely, while the appeal to the value of institu-

---

Crouch & David Marquand eds., 1993); *see also* RUSSELL KEAT ET AL., *THE AUTHORITY OF THE CONSUMER* (1994).

<sup>38</sup> *See* Keat, *Moral Boundaries of the Market*, *supra* note 37, at 13.

<sup>39</sup> *Id.* at 14.

<sup>40</sup> The classic example of this type of colonization comes from the attempt to extend cost-benefit analyses to new domains. Consider the case of environmental decision-making. Here, cost-benefit analysis—which ironically is relied upon in the face of market failure, the production of "bad externalities"—begins by asking hypothetical questions about the willingness of actors to pay or be compensated for environmental pollution. More pervasive, however, is the importation of a whole array of market terminology and practices since the heyday of the Reagan and Thatcher eras. Quite apart from the daily confirmation of this phenomenon in the life of most people at work, in their consumption of the media, and in their exposure to political exhortations, this has been extensively documented in the literature. *See, e.g.*, NORMAN FAIRCLOUGH, *NEW LABOUR, NEW LANGUAGE?* (2000); STUART HALL, *THE HARD ROAD TO RENEWAL: THATCHERISM AND THE CRISIS OF THE LEFT* (1988); RUTH LEVITAS, *THE INCLUSIVE SOCIETY? SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND NEW LABOUR* (2nd ed. 2005); RUTH LEVITAS, *THE IDEOLOGY OF THE NEW RIGHT* (1986); RICHARD SENNETT, *THE CORROSION OF CHARACTER: THE PERSONAL CONSEQUENCES OF WORK IN THE NEW CAPITALISM* (1998). The displacement of emphasis from clients or voters to customers, from providers to purchasers, from allocation to competition, from planning to regulation and deregulation, and from equality of outcome to equality of opportunity, are just some of the more clear-cut examples of these language shifts. MARK DRAKEFORD, *PRIVATISATION AND SOCIAL POLICY* 25–27 (2000). Perhaps most striking of all is the shift from the discourse of administration to the discourse of management, which has brought with it a slew of

tional integrity remains the source of such an argument, it suggests we amplify our understanding of institutional identity by extending its scope.

If the value of institutional integrity is embodied in sphere pluralism, the above analysis suggests that the spread of market meanings and practices into—not merely literal exchanges across—other domains results in the weakening of the spheres' distinctiveness. This is because it imposes its own image upon these domains by way of language, goals, norms, and standards.<sup>41</sup> The dominance of market meanings is impoverishing because it drains the life world of its variety by reinforcing a unitary way of acting and thinking. This is clear when, for example, we think about how the commercial enterprise has become the model of choice when reforming the production and delivery of goods and services in as diverse a set of institutions as hospitals, universities, charities, and government departments. While it may not be possible to buy your way to the front of a hospital queue or to buy yourself a place at a university, it is still possible to claim that such discursive dominance tends to homogenize and blur sphere boundaries through the reproduction and reinforcement of market norms and incentives in other spheres, including virtues such as individual self-interest and competitiveness.<sup>42</sup>

Depending on the case, the effects of “imported” market meanings will be felt more in the context of production or in the context of consumption. Here I will focus on the interplay between these two contexts—an interplay mediated most obviously through the notion that user preferences reign supreme. In this view, “a central feature of the market is that consumer preferences require no justification.”<sup>43</sup> But this leads to the problem that

---

associated satellite concepts: accountability, performance indicators and targets, performance-related pay, etc. As Paul du Gay puts it, the “language of change . . . is a constitutive element of contemporary managerial discourse,” wherein the “notion of ‘enterprise’ occupies an absolutely crucial position in contemporary discourse of organizational reform”—to the point where “the character of the entrepreneur can no longer be represented as just one amongst a plurality of ethical personalities but must be seen as assuming an ontological priority.” du Gay, *supra* note 36, at 153, 155, 157.

<sup>41</sup> On this, see Elizabeth Anderson, *The Ethical Limitations of the Market*, 6 *ECON. & PHIL.* 179 (1990).

<sup>42</sup> See du Gay, *supra* note 36, at 155–58.

<sup>43</sup> Keat, *Moral Boundaries of the Market*, *supra* note 37, at 16. This argument—that the importation of market meanings and techniques of conduct actually distorts and homogenizes practices—applies as much to the *consumers* of goods and services as to the *producers* of goods and services. Russell Keat develops this point in relation to the more general account of social practices offered by Alasdair MacIntyre. The key idea here concerns the way markets may serve to promote monetary motivations over other sorts of motivations (or indeed may promote alienation and exploitation, depending on the relative power of producer and appropriator). In *After Virtue*, MacIntyre draws a distinction between internal and external goods. A scientific theory, a football match, or a theatrical performance are considered goods internal to science, football, or theatre; and each of these practices has embedded within it sets of standards or criteria, enabling

there is no guarantee that such preferences will be informed by or in any way respect the “authority” of the goals and standards of the practice concerned: the market refuses to discriminate between preferences, whereas practices insist on doing so. Any particular group of “marketised” cultural practitioners is thus highly vulnerable to competition from rival “producers” who are willing and able to cater, more profitably, for consumers whose preferences may be entirely antithetical to the meaning and standards of the practice concerned.<sup>44</sup>

The potentially deleterious consequences of such moves to “marketisation” is precisely what is evoked, at least in the sphere of political power, with the derogatory use of terms such as “market-driven politics.”<sup>45</sup> Such a market ethos, it is argued, tends to reduce politics to the satisfaction of citizens’ preferences, much in the same way that the market economy attempts to satisfy consumer preferences. It leads to the adoption by governments of a whole set of marketing apparatuses, which are normally the bread-and-butter “techniques of conduct” of private companies: focus groups, opinion polls, etc. Moreover, it encourages governments to capture a larger “voter share” by formulating policies that satisfy people’s “given” preferences, rather than creating the conditions in which such preferences can be shaped collectively through the exercise of public reasoning. And to the extent that politics has been moving in this direction since the rise of public relations in the early twentieth century,<sup>46</sup> it is to be expected that political theories themselves would reflect this trend. Most prominent among such theories are social-choice theories,<sup>47</sup> which treat citizens as satisfaction max-

---

participants to make judgments about whether the goods it produces are good, bad, worthy, unworthy, etc. But these norms are also what make it possible for participants to enjoy those goods and thus to motivate them to produce them by acquiring and exercising relevant skills and capacities. The argument is that the pursuit of external goods, such as money, prestige, customer satisfaction, “whilst by no means necessarily absent, must not come to predominate, especially if this leads to actions that are at odds with the practice’s internal goals and standards.” *Id.* A practice is distorted because part of what it means to engage in such a practice is to be motivated by the enjoyment of its internal goods. The market tends to homogenize a set of practices because the vector of distortion points in the same direction, namely, toward monetary rewards or customer satisfaction as primary motivator. In other words, our understanding of institutional identity may need to reach beyond the view that sphere pluralism remains intact so long as there is no direct purchase of another sphere’s good. Instead, it may be necessary to consider extending the notion of a threat to institutional integrity to include those cases in which the market meanings and techniques of conduct begins to dominate other classes of institutional practice irrespective of whether there are (or are not) direct cross-boundary purchases.

<sup>44</sup> *Id.* at 19.

<sup>45</sup> See, e.g., COLIN LEYS, *MARKET-DRIVEN POLITICS: NEOLIBERAL DEMOCRACY AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST* (2001).

<sup>46</sup> AERON DAVIS, *PUBLIC RELATIONS DEMOCRACY: PUBLIC RELATIONS, POLITICS AND THE MASS MEDIA IN BRITAIN* (2002); LARRY TYE, *THE FATHER OF SPIN: EDWARD L. BERNAYS AND THE BIRTH OF PUBLIC RELATIONS* (Henry Holt & Co. 1998).

<sup>47</sup> E.g., ANTHONY DOWNS, *AN ECONOMIC THEORY OF DEMOCRACY* (1957); LAWRENCE M. MEAD, *BEYOND ENTITLEMENT: THE SOCIAL OBLIGATIONS OF CITIZENSHIP* (1986); CHARLES

imisers and political decision-making as a means of maximising citizen satisfaction. The claim, in this regard, is that such an account of motivation “may lead to [an] over-emphasis on self-interest which will eventually deplete the normative legacy of welfare citizenship.”<sup>48</sup> In other words, the reliance on self-interest by theoreticians acquires a slightly more insidious dimension because of the positive feedback effect it could generate: the more our policies rely on theories that presuppose and thus treat people as self-interested satisfaction maximisers, the more they tend to reinforce and encourage such behaviour and outlook, becoming in this way a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy.

The central objection to this type of “market colonization” resides in the status of preferences that comes with the smuggling in of the notion of “consumer sovereignty.” Keat characterises the spread of market meanings, as opposed to market exchanges, as illegitimate because of “the assimilation of what should be regarded as judgements of value to what are ‘no more than’ the expression of individual preferences: i.e., to those rather mysterious entities which . . . are indicated by a consumer’s willingness to purchase something.”<sup>49</sup> For it is a central feature of the market that consumer preferences require no justification. Indeed it is this feature that is responsible for generating the efficiency gains of this type of distribution. It is the “motor” that affects what and how much of a good is produced.

Of course problems associated with treating given preferences as an independent variable that serves as the bedrock of rational choice, social choice, and utilitarian forms of explanatory and normative understandings have been exhaustively and critically reviewed in the literature. They share a common concern with the tendency to understand rationality rather monolithically and narrowly as instrumental.<sup>50</sup> Such critiques point to the need to make processes of preference *formation* the central focus of critical analysis, both as a way to better understand the practice of producers and consumers and as a way to create the normative space in which considerations of democracy and fuller conceptions of personal and collective autonomy beyond freedom of choice may begin to exert some influence. This is not to say that there are many instances when user preferences can serve as a legitimate means of shaping the way goods and services are produced, distributed, and consumed. Affirming this point, however, presupposes we have a broad enough analytical framework within which such normative judgements

---

MURRAY, *LOSING GROUND: AMERICAN SOCIAL POLICY, 1950–1980* (tenth anniversary ed. 1994); JOSEPH A. SCHUMPETER, *CAPITALISM, SOCIALISM AND DEMOCRACY* (5th ed. 1976).

<sup>48</sup> Peter Taylor-Gooby, *Markets and Motives: Trust and Egoism in Welfare Markets*, 28 J. SOC. POL’Y 97, 99 (1999).

<sup>49</sup> Keat, *Moral Boundaries of the Market*, *supra* note 37, at 16.

<sup>50</sup> For sample surveys of some of this literature, see Taylor-Gooby, *supra* note 48, at 100–01; and HIRSCHMAN, *RIVAL VIEWS*, *supra* note 2, chs. 2, 7.

can be made, one that takes on board the hermeneutic insight outlined earlier, generating descriptive and interpretive nuance within, between, and beyond market practices.

D. *Markets as Part of Complex and Interdependent Systems of Exchange and Nonexchange*

Recent work emerging out of a critical engagement with economic sociology and neoinstitutional economics has sought to present just such a conceptual and analytical framework that respects the specificity, richness, and complexity of market practices and thus also of market boundaries. Inspired by Polanyi's notion of Instituted Economic Process (IEP), this approach emphasizes how markets are best seen as always in the process of being instituted, and how this process of institution, in turn, is best understood using a triple analytical grid. First, "any one set of economic exchange processes is interdependent with others, both market and non-market, forming nexuses of exchange processes and interactions between different markets, as a condition for any given exchange process between a class of sellers and a class of buyers."<sup>51</sup> Second, "differences in the specificities of exchange processes [are] analysed across three aspects: the nature of the entities traded, the specific characteristics of the agents engaged in the exchange process, and the spatial and temporal specificities of exchange processes,"<sup>52</sup> including medium of exchange, as well as the history and context of relations between exchanging agents. These aspects speak directly to the hermeneutical dimension of practices. And finally, such "repositioning of markets" entails viewing them not simply as one of a number of possible exchange processes. This is because the exchange process is itself "but one phase in a process that stretches from production, through distribution to consumption,"<sup>53</sup> and describing and explaining a market's complex articulations with these further phases comprise an additional and equally important part of understanding its functioning and significance. This triple analytical grid, then, seeks to enable researchers to capture "the variety and continual transformation of exchange processes."<sup>54</sup> When the complex interdependencies between different exchange processes, within particular exchange processes, and between different

---

<sup>51</sup> Mark Harvey & Sally Randles, *Markets, the Organisation of Exchanges and 'Instituted Economic Process': An Analytical Perspective*, in *MARKETS, RULES AND INSTITUTIONS OF EXCHANGE* 62, at 77 (Mark Harvey ed., 2010).

<sup>52</sup> *Id.*

<sup>53</sup> Mark Harvey, *Introduction: Putting Markets in Their Place*, in *MARKETS, RULES AND INSTITUTIONS OF EXCHANGE*, *supra* note 51, at 1, 3.

<sup>54</sup> Harvey & Randles, *supra* note 51.

phases in the economic circuit are also understood hermeneutically and discursively and thus in terms of overdetermination, IEP enables a potentially high-resolution explanatory and critical engagement with the social, normative, and political aspects of an economic circuit.

IEP provides a loose yet fine-grained framework for generating critical explanations of markets and other sorts of exchange relations. However, it does not, on its own, furnish specific normative resources with which to consider when and why aspects of a particular sort of market should be introduced into a particular social sphere. It is here that the work of Walzer and Keat may prove helpful, specifically their conceptualization of the market as a sphere of commodity meanings. We recall how they identify the values of pluralism and institutional integrity as key to their critical perspective. This provides us with a fruitful starting point because it furnishes us with initial normative grounds for preventing the market sphere from dominating other social spheres. This is a starting point only because such a perspective does not really help us determine when legitimate *influence* shades into illegitimate *domination*, whether with respect to one or more nonmarket spheres. In other words, the weakness of the argument from pluralism is that it still leaves aspects of the normative framework underspecified. Because it is pitched at a fairly high level of abstraction, it tends to treat all spheres as equally important, resulting in a kind of banal equivalence wherein each sphere is regarded as just as attractive as another.

The problem with remaining at the level of institutional integrity and pluralism can be readily appreciated when we note how the importation of one sphere's meanings into another may actually be normatively *desirable* on some occasions. This is clear when we think of the massive impact effected when the ideal of the equality of the sexes travelled from one sphere to another. As Laclau and Mouffe, among others, have noted, "[i]n the case of feminism, it was a question of gaining access for women first to political rights; later to economic equality; and, with contemporary feminism, to equality in the domain of sexuality."<sup>55</sup> There is thus a displacement along the axis of gender from a critique of political inequality to a critique of economic inequality "which leads to the putting in question of other forms of subordination and the demanding of new rights."<sup>56</sup> The trouble with remaining at the level of institutional integrity and the kind of pluralism it instantiates is the underspecification of the problems associated with the importation of the market ethos into particular social domains beyond the simple empirical hypothesis that it is (or is becoming) hegemonic.<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup> LACLAU & MOUFFE, *supra* note 14, at 156.

<sup>56</sup> *Id.*

<sup>57</sup> See Colin Williams, *The Market Illusion: Re-Reading Work in Advanced Economies*, 25 INT'L J. SOC. & SOC. POL'Y 106 (2005), for a perspective that contests this view.



Perhaps, then, one could argue that there should be a presumption in favour of pluralism (on grounds of institutional integrity and, perhaps, equality), but that this presumption may be rebutted on normative and evidentiary grounds. In other words, the kinds of reasons generated by a perspective rooted in the value of institutional integrity would still carry weight, but they would not be sufficient to accord this value an absolute status. The central worry, however, would remain, namely, that such a perspective does not offer a special argument about why particular aspects of a market (such as literal price-mediated exchanges or the idea that consumer preferences should be treated as foundational) are especially problematic from the point of view of a particular nonmarket sphere's meanings (and vice versa, of course). In order to make more robust one's normative argument in favour or against the extension of market boundaries in a particular case, one will have to be more precise about the relevant aspects of the market that might be problematic from the point of view of the specific dimensions of the practice at stake. In short, when talking about how the aspects of one sphere exert an influence upon another sphere, appeals to terms like "distortion," "colonisation," "imposition," "domination," and "infiltration" tend to carry with them normatively negative connotations that require further justification.

For example: What aspects of the sphere of politics might one consider to be incompatible with which dimensions of the market sphere, and why? According to one view, by privileging preferences over (public) reasoning, the importation of market meanings and techniques of conduct into other domains such as politics depletes social capital by rendering collective action improbable on a range of issues because it quashes public deliberation by marginalizing people's reasoning capacities and tending, even if only by default, to create the space for the proliferation of individual self-interest. Even if (or perhaps *because*) individual self-interest acts as a powerful motivational force in some spheres of life, this should not be allowed to become the dominant motivational force in politics or other domains.<sup>58</sup> This is where one could situate the work of republican theorists of freedom, not to mention a whole host of deliberative theorists of democracy.<sup>59</sup> For they offer us a

---

<sup>58</sup> See, e.g., CITIZENSHIP, MARKETS, AND THE STATE (Colin Crouch et al. eds., 2001); CATHERINE NEEDHAM, CITIZEN-CONSUMERS: NEW LABOUR'S MARKETPLACE DEMOCRACY (2003); Melissa A. Orlie, *The Desire for Freedom and the Consumption of Politics*, 28 PHIL. & SOC. CRITICISM 395 (2002).

<sup>59</sup> In one version of republican freedom, political freedom is conceived as nondomination. PHILIP PETTIT, A THEORY OF FREEDOM: FROM THE PSYCHOLOGY TO THE POLITICS OF AGENCY (2001) [hereinafter PETTIT, A THEORY OF FREEDOM]; PHILIP PETTIT, REPUBLICANISM: A THEORY OF FREEDOM AND GOVERNMENT (1997); Philip Pettit, *Republican Freedom and Contestatory Democracy*, in DEMOCRACY'S VALUE 163 (Ian Shapiro & Casiano Hacker-Cordón eds., 1999). This version of republican freedom carries the thought that no one ought to be subject to another's arbitrary power.

framework within which a politics of reasons can function not only as a space in which another dimension of personal autonomy can flourish, thereby acting as a bulwark against the incursion of the market ethos, but also as a space wherein one can adjudicate the question of where and when it may indeed be *appropriate* to extend market logics into other domains.

### III. FROM MEANING TO MATTER: MARKET BOUNDARIES, FANTASY, AND IDEOLOGY

We have seen how the hermeneutic dimension of practices, when acknowledged and taken seriously, generates a more nuanced and differentiated perspective within which explanatory and critical issues linked to market boundaries can be thematized and debated. A key objective of this final Part is to bring these long-running and ongoing debates about the character of markets and market boundaries into closer contact with a psychoanalytically informed political theory. My strategy in discharging this objective is to start by situating the fields of psychoanalysis and political economy—particularly the objects of their investigation—in relation to a more recent trend—a trend that can be summarized by what I call the “turn to matter” in social and political studies.

In *The New Materialisms*, Diana Coole and Samantha Frost comment that “[e]verywhere we look . . . we are witnessing scattered but insistent demands for more *materialist* modes of analysis and for new ways of thinking about *matter* and processes of *materialization*.”<sup>60</sup> They interpret these trends “as signs that the more textual approaches associated with the so-called cultural turn are increasingly being deemed *inadequate* for understanding contemporary society, particularly in light of some of its most urgent challenges regarding environmental, demo-

---

er’s *capacity* to interfere on an *arbitrary* basis, where the two italicized words point to this ideal’s central distinguishing themes. “The first theme is that the *non-interfering master* takes away the subject’s freedom [because the master has the capacity to interfere arbitrarily]; the second that the *non-mastering interferer* does not [because it is not arbitrary].” PETTIT, A THEORY OF FREEDOM, *supra*, at 145, 144–49 (emphasis added). The justification for this political ideal of freedom is not instrumental: it is not construed as a necessary empirical condition for something else, such as negative individual freedom *a la* Skinner. See QUENTIN SKINNER, LIBERTY BEFORE LIBERALISM (Canto Classics ed. 2012); P.J. Kelly, *Classical Utilitarianism and the Concept of Freedom: A Response to the Republican Critique*, 6 J. POL. IDEOLOGIES 13 (2001); Philip Pettit, *Keeping Republican Freedom Simple: On a Difference with Quentin Skinner*, 30 POL. THEORY 339 (2002). From this point of view, the only way a state can help foster its citizens’ freedom as nondomination “is to make the state, so far as possible, non-arbitrary in its operation.” PETTIT, A THEORY OF FREEDOM, *supra*, at 154. This perspective, then, might open up an interesting vantage point from which to approach the question of market interference.

<sup>60</sup> Diana Coole & Samantha Frost, *Introducing the New Materialisms*, in NEW MATERIALISMS: ONTOLOGY, AGENCY, AND POLITICS 1, 2 (Diana Coole & Samantha Frost eds., 2010).

graphic, geopolitical, and economic change.”<sup>61</sup> In this call to move beyond the cultural turn, however, it is worth emphasizing what is common among these textual and discursive approaches, including approaches linked to well-known cognate “turns”: the linguistic turn, the semiotic turn, the discursive turn, and so on. Especially when viewed against the backdrop of a social science paradigm defined in terms of causal laws and mechanisms, we could say that discursive approaches associated with the cultural turn have in common their affirmation of the hermeneutic insight, namely, that any social study must begin by taking seriously the self-interpretations and wider discursive contexts of subjects embedded in practices.

It is against this background that Coole and Frost conclude that “[o]ur contemporary context demands a theoretical rapprochement with *material* realism.”<sup>62</sup> So we get the idea here that the appeal to “matter” aims to capture something about the *limits* of discourse and meaning, without, however, losing sight of the hermeneutic insight. This generates the following three sets of questions. First, how might we best conceptualize the matter of *markets*? I try to cash this out with the help of Actor Network Theory in terms of “logics of *calculability*.” A second question is how best we might conceptualize the matter of *psychoanalysis*, which I address in terms of “enjoyment” and “logics of fantasy.” My overarching aim is to juxtapose these two perspectives on matter and see what that produces in terms of effects. I ask how we can begin to think the relation between these two sorts of matter and what insights psychoanalytic theory can generate on the question of market boundaries.

#### A. *Market Matter: Logics of Calculability*

In this Section, I focus on an approach to markets mentioned in the introduction but so far not elaborated. This perspective emerges out of a particular strand of economic sociology called Actor Network Theory (ANT), usually associated with the names of Bruno Latour, Michel Callon, and John Law. Drawing on Science and Technology Studies, this approach sets out to describe in detail and with nuance what is specific about market practices and indeed other practices, thereby opening up a space in which to deploy more explicitly normative arguments around the question of market boundaries. One reason for focusing on this approach is that it shares with psychoanalytic theory a sensitivity to the *materiality* of a practice, specifically that which escapes discursive cap-

---

<sup>61</sup> *Id.* at 2–3.

<sup>62</sup> *Id.* at 6.

ture, or rather, what lies at the *limits* of discourse and meaning. Callon's work on markets, for example, focuses on a key condition that makes possible the pricing of goods and services, namely, their "calculability."<sup>63</sup> When it bumps up against the world, markets experience this discursive limit as a perturbation that it needs to tame through a process of formalization, by deploying its logics of calculability. Discursive limits thus have an external source, even if they can only be processed internally using already available discursive resources. Logics of calculability help transform the perturbation into something that is assimilable and understandable by means of a "calculative assemblage" (a whole army of calculative agents and material instruments). Such an approach, moreover,

emphasizes the diversity of possible forms of market organization. A good can be rendered calculable—that is, individualized and objectified—in a multitude of different ways. Calculative agencies are as numerous and diverse as the tools they use and the hybrid collectives to which those tools belong.<sup>64</sup>

Yet, despite this recognition of diversity in the way goods and services are rendered calculable, the idea that markets rely on conditions that make calculation possible remains constant—in other words, logics of calculability appear to play a critical role in the operation of markets. From this perspective, the market ideal of consumer sovereignty and preference-based choice might assume not only that consumer preferences are given or fixed or that consumer preferences require no justification. It assumes two further things in particular. First, it assumes goods and services must be well defined and delimited at the moment of exchange in order to ensure the orderly passage of rights in property from one party to the other (in the form of a discrete transaction); and second, it assumes that the terms of exchange are also well defined in advance. The question of market boundaries might then be reformulated as follows: *When, and in what form, is the introduction of calculability conditions into a particular sphere of practice appropriate?*<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>63</sup> Michel Callon, *Introduction: The Embeddedness of Economic Markets in Economics*, in *THE LAWS OF THE MARKETS* 1, 22–24 (Michel Callon ed., 1998).

<sup>64</sup> Michel Callon & Fabian Muniesa, *Peripheral Vision: Economic Markets as Calculative Collective Devices*, 26 *ORG. STUD.* 1229, 1245 (2005).

<sup>65</sup> Their perspective allows us to pose questions about asymmetries of power, where power is understood in terms of calculative capacity. Relations of domination, then, can be understood to exist where there is a pronounced concentration in the hands of one party of powers of calculation. *See id.* at 1239, 1245. In the case of a supermarket, for example, "irrespective of how strong the consumer's calculative agency that evaluates the attachment of goods to his or her own world may be, it remains weak compared with the calculative power of supply, which is highly equipped, at least in the case of mass retail." *Id.* at 1238. Of course, consumers

continue to calculate, i.e. to evaluate their attachment to a good, but they do so by means of tools designed by the seller. By walking down supermarket aisles, inspecting

So far I have sketched out a picture of one key aspect of markets in terms of logics of calculability. But the question of market boundaries as formulated here also implies having a view about the character and logics of *other* social domains, if only because the sense and significance of market *boundaries* is most forcefully appreciated when market logics start to impinge upon erstwhile *nonmarket* domains such as politics, health, or education. In other words, answering the question of when it is appropriate to extend market logics entails forming a judgement about the character of *other* social domains, too.

If we look to the domain of politics, for example, we can see a whole array of calculative devices being deployed in the service of rendering political entities calculable and thus exchangeable for citizens' votes (e.g., in the form of manifesto promises), at least in democratic polities that rely on aggregative forms of fixed-term elections. These include professional pollsters, survey templates, focus groups, and so on. Market logics of calculability might then be counterposed to logics of collective and public deliberation.

### 1. Calculability Logics and Logics of Care and Attunement

The boundaries and limits of markets can, of course, be drawn with reference to domains other than politics. Annemarie Mol—also drawing on ANT—considers the question of boundaries in relation to the domain of health, diabetic health care in particular, where she counterposes logics of choice and calculation to logics of care.<sup>66</sup> For Mol, there is a clear problem with attempts to introduce market logics into diabetic care practice. This is because the market

requires that some product (device, plus skills training, plus kindness and attention) is delineated as the product on offer. A lot may be in-

---

shelves and reading labels, consumers continue a calculation that was started and framed by qualified professionals. But they can reverse the relationship. In this respect it is appropriate to remember the useful distinction between planned and impulsive buying. The former corresponds to greater autonomy for the consumer, whose equipment, prepared in advance, depends less on that provided by the shop. By contrast, the latter corresponds to a heteronomous position in which the consumer, strolling along without any specific intention, becomes an appendage of the calculative device created by the experts of marketing and stock. . . . In these encounters, whether it is the consumer hesitating between two packets of smoked ham or a couple anxiously following the real estate agent's calculations to assess their debt capacity, radically different values are confronted. When a compromise is reached it *has to be interpreted as a compromise not on values but on the instruments that calculate values.*

*Id.* at 1239 (emphasis added) (internal citation omitted).

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Jason Glynos & Ewen Speed, *Varieties of Co-Production in Public Services: Time-banks in a UK Health Policy Context*, 6 CRITICAL POL'Y STUD. (forthcoming 2012) (on file with author).

cluded in this product, but what is on offer and what is not has to be specified. Then, or so the logic of choice has it, you may choose it or not.<sup>67</sup>

In other words, “a market requires that the product that changes hands in a transaction be clearly defined.”<sup>68</sup> By contrast, diabetic care, and by extension much health care practice, is understood in terms of an open-ended process whose boundaries are negotiated and renegotiated on an ongoing basis. This difference, according to Mol, is irreducible. Moreover, in the logics of care, “offering support is not the same thing as doing what patients want” or think they would choose.<sup>69</sup>

The key “material” point here is that by trying to make diabetic treatment *calculable*, Mol argues that the market cannot accommodate what is specific to care practice. In this view, caring is largely a “practical matter.” She points out, of course, that

[t]his does not mean that nobody ever needs to be make choices [or calculations]. Instead, in this logic “making a choice” appears as yet another practical task [governed by a different logic because it is situated in a different materialist assemblage]. Take the choice [and implied calculation invoked by the question] “shall I play sport seriously or not?” This depends on more than arguments. . . . [Of course], as part of making this [calculation and] choice, you have to figure out if you can get yourself to eat on time, [as well as] measure, [and] adapt your insulin dose. [But, h]ours after your football match or your jogging hour, your blood sugar level may still drop: can you watch out for that?<sup>70</sup>

The idea here is that one cannot in advance anticipate, delimit, or *calculate* what contingencies your body will throw up. It is an essential part of care to experiment and probe the limits of one’s body in different contexts, then adjust the care regime accordingly, including one’s hopes, expectations, and associated meanings. Such adjustments will take place over extended periods of time, sometimes in response to surprising and unexpected findings, and often with the assistance and advice of health professionals. Logics of calculation can thus be contrasted with what one could call logics of “attunement.”<sup>71</sup> There is a gradual and constant adjustment, or *attunement*, of activities on the part of the patient and on the part of the health professionals to each other, to new medical developments, to new contexts, to one’s hermeneutic and normative frameworks, and so on.

---

<sup>67</sup> ANNEMARIE MOL, THE LOGIC OF CARE: HEALTH AND THE PROBLEM OF PATIENT CHOICE 20 (2008).

<sup>68</sup> *Id.* at 23.

<sup>69</sup> *Id.* at 29.

<sup>70</sup> *Id.* at 93.

<sup>71</sup> *See id.* at 58–62.

## 2. From Market Matter to Psychoanalytic Matter

ANT offers a way of thinking about market practices in terms of logics of calculability, contrasting this with health care practices cashed out in terms of logics of attunement. In both cases, we have seen how the material dimension of these logics is essential to their operation, where “matter” is understood with reference to the idea of discursive *limits*. In the case of markets, these limits are approached through various processes of formalization or logics of calculability. In the case of health, these limits are approached through logics of attunement, processes that respond to the contingencies thrown up on an ongoing basis in care practices, most notably by the body. Such a perspective clearly opens up a space to think about why we might hesitate before extending market logics into new domains of social life.

What sorts of question, then, might a psychoanalytic perspective provoke? At the outset of Part III, I invoked the “turn to matter” as a way of framing my argument and, as we have seen so far, it is important for the advocates of the ANT approach to move beyond an exclusive concern with discourse and meaning. In foregrounding, the “material” dimension of practices they point to the myriad ways discourse and matter become inextricably intertwined in what they theorize as “actor-networks”: interlinked instruments, bodies, and minds. In shifting our focus along this axis, then, we might ask what we should take to be the matter of *psychoanalysis*?

### B. *Psychoanalytic Matter: The Role of Enjoyment and Fantasy in a Critical Political Economy*

At first sight, asking after the “matter” of psychoanalysis may seem a tall order. After all, discourse and meaning are central to the psychoanalytic enterprise. Perhaps, however, its key concept—the unconscious—has more to do with the *limits* of discourse and meaning than with discourse and meaning per se? In which case psychoanalysis shares an affinity with the ANT approach insofar as they both appeal to a type of matter construed in terms of *limits* to discourse and meaning. Following this line of thought, we could say that the material dimension of psychoanalytic theory and practice can be summarized in the word *enjoyment*.

In one of his many colourful formulations, this one from Seminar 17, Lacan describes enjoyment as that which “once you have started,

you never know where it will end. It begins with a tickle and ends in a blaze of petrol.”<sup>72</sup> Enjoyment, or what Lacan calls *jouissance*, is closely associated with the Freudian notions of libido, primordial loss, or primary repression. Analysts use this category, along with a set of other concepts such as fantasy, desire, repression, and so on, to account for a symptom’s inertia—its resistance to our conscious attempts to dissolve it.

Inertia serves as a way to grasp the *material* dimension coursing through psychoanalytic practice. And enjoyment (or *unconscious pleasure*) presents itself as a concept with which to understand this inertia. So we could say that Lacan glosses Freud’s notion of a primordial loss as a loss of *enjoyment*, where the notion of primordial loss is, according to Freud and Lacan, constitutive of subjectivity. The “lost object” is primordial in the sense that it is something we never had—and for this reason impossible to recover. Nevertheless, it is said that this lost object structures the desire and being of the subject. So enjoyment is linked to impossibility and its fantasized overcoming. The psychoanalytic claim, in short, is that the subject derives its sense of being through enjoyment. This, then, is one way of conceptualizing the matter of psychoanalysis.

### 1. Enjoyment, Affect, and Fantasy

The focus on enjoyment as part of an enhanced analytical framework can also be seen as partaking in another trend besides the “turn to matter,” often labeled the “*affective* turn,” and culminating now in a thriving “sociology and politics of emotions.”<sup>73</sup> The insight shared by scholars, including Lacanian scholars, is that by taking into account emotion, affect, and passion, one may be able to reach a more thorough understanding of the *material* dimension of discourse as that which “sticks.”<sup>74</sup>

The emphasis placed by Lacanian scholars on emotion, affect, and *enjoyment* may come as a bit of a surprise to an earlier generation much more accustomed to Lacan’s notoriety as a symbolic and intellectual “snob.” But the emphasis placed upon the symbolic order by Lacan is better understood as indicating a complex approach to affect rather than a demotion of emotion. No doubt Lacan cautions against what he sees

---

<sup>72</sup> JACQUES LACAN, THE SEMINAR OF JACQUES LACAN, BOOK XVII: THE OTHER SIDE OF PSYCHOANALYSIS 72 (Jacques-Alain Miller ed., Russell Grigg trans., W.W. Norton & Co. 2007) (1991).

<sup>73</sup> See SIMON WILLIAMS, EMOTION AND SOCIAL THEORY: CORPOREAL REFLECTIONS ON THE (IR)RATIONAL 1 (2001); see also RESEARCH AGENDAS IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF EMOTIONS (Theodore D. Kemper ed., 1990); Jeff Goodwin et al., *Introduction: Why Emotions Matter*, in PASSIONATE POLITICS: EMOTIONS AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS 1 (Jeff Goodwin et al. eds., 2001).

<sup>74</sup> SARA AHMED, THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF EMOTION (2004).



as a temptation to treat emotions as brute factums, in other words, to reify emotions, attributing to them an autonomy and identity that exists independently of their wider discursive framing, a perspective shared of course by many non-Lacanian scholars, too.

Taking affect to represent a quantum of libidinal energy, the suggestion here is that emotion should be understood in terms of the way affect gets caught up in a network of words or signifiers. So Lacan posits a kind of methodological postulate, which we could put in the form of the injunction “Follow the signifier!,” implying that we pay special attention to the “letter” of what is said through multiple displacements of affect. This suggests that a key aspect of understanding the significance of emotions in the organization of social practices involves trying to map them in relation to the underlying *fantasies* that organize enjoyment.<sup>75</sup>

For purposes of offering an initial sketch, we could say, following Freud, that fantasy denotes a framing device which subjects use to “protect” themselves from the anxiety associated with the idea that there is no ultimate guarantee or law underlying and guiding our social existence. This guarantee has been given many names, certainly when one takes the long historical view: God, Reason, the Senses, the Laws of History, and so on. But this guarantee—conceived as a key part of the fantasmatic device used to defend against a form of “Cartesian anxiety”—can take any guise whatsoever.

An important aspect of fantasy is that the status psychoanalysis gives to it is not so much epistemological as it is ontological and ethical. While fantasy may take on a potentially infinite number of different contents, it also has a certain *logic*. For example, we could say that the logic of fantasy is such that there will always be features of its narrative that tend to resist public official disclosure because they are in some way socially prohibited or unsettling. All this is simply to say that the appeal to fantasy should be understood primarily as a means to access the structure of desire and libido, rather than as a means of dismissing a belief or worldview as untrue or irrational because it does not conform to a particular understanding of reality.

Within this general framework, then, we could get at the content of fantasy by exploring, for example, its ideals, the obstacles to achieving such ideals, the way challenges can be overcome, the vision of a successful outcome, and the imagined consequences of failure. Constructing fantasy in this way has clear political implications—for example, normative and policy implications—because the identities of key players and visions in the fantasmatic narrative correspond only to a subset

---

<sup>75</sup> As a side note, it is worth noting how, in the case of the MPs’ expenses scandal, an analysis of the reports during 2009 reveal the contours of at least two such fantasies: fantasies of self-sufficiency and fantasies of paternalism. Chang & Glynos, *supra* note 21.

of possible visions or ideals, thereby structuring and delimiting our ideas about which social norms are worthy of public contestation and how they should be revised.<sup>76</sup>

Having said something about the matter of psychoanalysis, I will now start the journey back to the problem of market boundaries by recalling the way fantasy can work, and has already worked, as a useful “entry point” from the point of view of a general critical political economy. I can summarize in two steps the analytical and critical benefits of focusing on fantasy, whatever moments in the economic circuit one cares to probe. First, such a perspective highlights how fantasy may serve to bolster certain ideals that are not only contestable but also normatively suspect. Second, it reveals how a subject can get hooked into its logic, in the sense that the subject becomes strongly attached to or gripped by it. These two aspects relate to questions of fantasmatic *content* on the one hand, and on the other hand the *mode* by which a subject relates to this content.

This two-fold point is neatly and crisply summarized in Lacan’s claim that even if a patient’s wife really *is* sleeping around with other men, the husband’s jealousy can still be regarded as pathological. Lacan’s point here is that, while it is true that this man’s jealousy is structured around the specific *content* of his fantasy (in which his wife and other men play lead roles), and while this content may—or may not—diverge from our consensus reality (i.e., whether she really *is* sleeping around or not), the manner and degree of investment in this fantasmatic narrative speaks to something other than the content, namely, the *mode* of his enjoyment.

Both these aspects are important of course, but the *mode* of enjoyment aims at something distinctive within the Lacanian framework, namely, the idea of a psychoanalytic *ethic* that can contribute to a theory of ideology, and that takes its distance from standard conceptions of ideology critique premised on the idea of “false-consciousness.” Moreover, as we saw in Part I, fantasy—insofar as this speaks to the idea of split subjectivity—can be used as a critical “entry point” for any and all moments in an economic circuit, including aspects and phases of relevant policy processes.

---

<sup>76</sup> The normative and ideological role of fantasy was especially clear to see in the MPs’ expenses scandal. *See id.*

## 2. A Psychoanalytic Perspective on Market Boundaries

In exploring the implications of these reflections for the question of market boundaries it is helpful to draw together two strands of my argument. The first strand seeks to show how the psychoanalytic intervention can be understood as relevant to a number of “moments” in an economic circuit: moments of production, appropriation, distribution, exchange, and consumption. This means that the categories of subjectivity, enjoyment and fantasy can be understood as potentially pertinent for any one of these moments, including the way they are reflected into different stages of the policy process. Moreover, in this view, markets are understood as highly complex and overdetermined entities that put into question straightforward oppositions between markets and states, free markets and regulation, and so on. In trying to understand processes of marketization in the public sector, for example, it is clear that the moments of production, consumption, and exchange are closely intertwined. In other words, the delivery of public services is a lot messier than the standard supermarket image of the market would lead us to expect, and that this complexity needs to be addressed when evaluating efforts to marketize particular goods or services.

A second strand of my argument, however, seeks to better understand not so much the *site* of psychoanalytic intervention (cashed out in terms of a moment of consumption, production, or exchange, or in terms of a policy stage/level), but the *character* of such an intervention. One way to grasp this, as I have argued above, is through the category of “matter.” But it is still unclear how the idea of a *psychoanalytic* matter can serve as a supplement to the way ANT, for example, deploys the notion of matter in trying to ascertain the limits and boundaries of markets. I will thus briefly compare and contrast the ANT and psychoanalytic approaches to matter, showing how this bears upon the question of markets and market boundaries.

Treating markets in terms of calculative logics seeks to capture something about market practice that is “robust” in the sense that it exceeds conscious attempts by any one individual to modify or alter that practice. This is because such logics are embedded not just in a set of institutional positions and relations, but also in a range of material calculative assemblages comprising agencies, bodies, instruments, and tools. These calculative assemblages work also at the very limits of discourse and meaning, precisely at those moments when perturbations exceed their capacity to discursively and meaningfully process them, at least in any immediate way. The same applies, of course, when we examine the domain of health in terms of logics of care and attunement. In

both cases, the source of the perturbations marking the limits of discourse lie outside the boundaries of their respective domains. The domains of markets and health merely have different means or “logics” by which they seek to process the externally induced discursive perturbations they experience.

The distinct ways in which discursive limits are circumscribed in these two domains becomes more apparent when their respective logics bump up against each other, for example, through various attempts to implement policy reforms that introduce market logics into the domain of health. The health sector, insofar as this is informed by logics of care embodied in material-institutional assemblages, tends to experience these market reform initiatives as intrusions that provoke normative questions. For example, to what extent might importing market logics into the domain of health respect sufficiently the values embedded in social logics of care and attunement, or, if not, do the sorts of values market logics promote compensate for those it will marginalize?

What then does a psychoanalytic perspective add to this picture? My argument here is that fantasy adds a further dimension to our analysis because it takes its bearing largely from a different sort of matter, linked to a limit whose primary source of affective energy is *inherent* to its discourse and not one that is *external* to it. This is because discourse comprises not just meanings, structures of meaning, and institutions that embody and reinforce those structures of meaning. Discourses are also animated by individual and collective subjects who, as subjects of desire, are in the business of constituting and projecting fantasies of one sort or another. Such fantasies respond to the inherent limits of discourse, the impossibility of “saying it all,” thereby structuring a particular sort of matter, distinct from the one that serves as the central object for ANT.<sup>77</sup> This implies that what accounts for the resilience and draw of market practices, or indeed other sorts of practices, are not simply the material calculative or care assemblages, along with the meanings, habits, norms, discourses, and institutional matrices associated with them. These are important for sure; but what accounts for their resilience and draw is also the fantasmatically structured enjoyment that courses through, and in this way also constitutes, such practices.

A psychoanalytic perspective might therefore open up the following sorts of question: What sorts of fantasies can serve as support for the operation of market logics? What fantasmatic narrative might bolster the idea that we can and should delimit in an as precise a manner as possible the goods and services we produce and consume? Do we find

---

<sup>77</sup> This is not to say that these two sorts of matter (i.e., extradiscursive and intradiscursive matter) cannot sometimes become mutually imbricated. On this, see Jason Glynos, *Body, Discourse, and the Turn to Matter*, in LANGUAGE, IDEOLOGY, AND THE HUMAN: NEW INTERVENTIONS (Sanja Bahun & Dušan Radunovic eds, 2012).

fantasies that reinforce or project aspirations of control, mastery, and self-sufficiency? And what precise form and content do they assume? Let's call them fantasies of independence. Conversely, if we look to the various logics informing social and health care practices, might we find there a wish for pastoral or paternal care, a desire for protection or for safe and unconditional containment? Let's call them fantasies of the caring Other or fantasies of dependence. This analysis suggests we situate the psychoanalytic contribution to the debate about market boundaries in the wider context of theories of ideology, because it promises to tell us something about the "grip" that market ideology exercises over us, or indeed the grip that a form of care ideology might exercise over us.<sup>78</sup> A psychoanalytic perspective can thus contribute to the debate over market boundaries by opening up these sorts of explanatory questions for us. But it also aspires to furnish us with a critical vantage point.

From a normative point of view, a psychoanalytic perspective does not, of course, enable us to take sides in any simple way. It does not come out in favour of fantasies of self-sufficiency over fantasies of the caring Other, for example, or vice versa. Nor can we deduce in any straightforward or direct way from psychoanalytic theory itself whether we should support those who seek to introduce the market into health care or those who seek to protect the state, the user, or the medical professionals from such incursions. In a clinical context, of course, some schools of psychoanalysis explicitly caution against analysts making normative interventions. In a social-policy context, however, it is clear that any normative contribution inspired by psychoanalysis will be a product of a complex process of articulation. Psychoanalytic principles can and are brought to bear on those normative impulses immanent in the practices under study, as well as relevant normative theories, but the outcomes of such efforts cannot be determined outside the trajectories and wider contexts of these articulatory processes.

Perhaps, however, the strongest critical contribution of psychoanalytic praxis ought to be situated in an ideological, rather than normative, plane. This can best be seen in its effort to show what fantasies of inde-

---

<sup>78</sup> For a sample of works exploring an area of thought defined by the intersection of Lacanian psychoanalysis, political economy, and theories of ideology, see generally TODD MCGOWAN, *THE END OF DISSATISFACTION? JACQUES LACAN AND THE EMERGING SOCIETY OF ENJOYMENT* (2004); RENATA SALECL, *ON ANXIETY: THINKING IN ACTION* (2004); RENATA SALECL, *THE TYRANNY OF CHOICE* (2010); JEANNE L. SCHROEDER, *THE VESTAL AND THE FASCES: HEGEL, LACAN, PROPERTY, AND THE FEMININE* (1998); SLAVOJ ŽIŽEK, *THE PARALLAX VIEW* (2006); SLAVOJ ŽIŽEK, *THE SUBLIME OBJECT OF IDEOLOGY* (1989); Jason Glynos, *The Grip of Ideology: A Lacanian Approach to the Theory of Ideology*, 6 *J. POL. IDEOLOGIES* 191 (2001); Glynos, *supra* note 10; Özselçuk & Madra, *Enjoyment as an Economic Factor*, *supra* note 13; Özselçuk & Madra, *supra* note 12; Yannis Stavrakakis, *Symbolic Authority, Fantasmatic Enjoyment and the Spirits of Capitalism: Genealogies of Mutual Engagement*, in *LACAN AND ORGANIZATION*, *supra* note 21, at 59.

pendence and fantasies dependence have *in common*, namely, the promise of a guarantee, or, to put it in other terms, the promise of subjective suture. Whether rooted in the individual user, the state official, or the medical professional, subjects can use these figures to flee the contingency of social relations or, to put it another way, to flee the uncertainty and ambiguities of *interdependence*.

This insight generates a different sort of question because it suggests there might be another way to respond to ambiguity and uncertainty. The worry motivating this thought is linked to the idea that the more invested we are in the guarantee that fantasy conjures, the more susceptible we become to what we could call the “theft of enjoyment” temptation. This temptation involves projecting the inherent impossibility linked to subjectivity as such—the idea of a split subjectivity—onto an external figure who is then treated as an obstacle to the realization of our ideals: the inefficient or lazy public servant, or the greedy private provider chasing after a fast buck, for example. One question this generates, then, is under what conditions might one move beyond market fantasies of self-sufficiency and independence without falling into equally problematic dependency fantasies of the State or Professional *qua* Caring Others?<sup>79</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

In the case of market boundaries, perhaps we can approach this last question by exploring modes of interdependence in various experimental community economies, such as time banking, local exchange trading systems, as well as other sorts of local currency and forms of exchange. In a climate of spending cuts, it is not surprising that the idea of *coproduction*, pioneered by Elinor Ostrom, is being revived and actively promoted in policy circles. But what the above analysis shows is that it is not just the normative principles that are at stake when thinking about the role and scope of markets in the provision of public services. At stake also are the fantasies that underpin relevant practices and policy shifts.

If the phrase “mediatized politics”<sup>80</sup> accurately signals the contemporary blurring of the mediatic and political aspects of news stories, it

---

<sup>79</sup> The logics approach I have developed in collaboration with David Howarth can be understood as a way of bringing into focus the critical potential of a Lacanian conception of fantasy by situating fantasmatic logics in relation to what we call, following the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, social and political logics. GLYNOS & HOWARTH, *supra* note 14. The claim, in other words, is that appeal to social and political logics helps make clearer the normative, political, and ethical implications of fantasy.

<sup>80</sup> MAARTEN A. HAJER, *AUTHORITATIVE GOVERNANCE: POLICY-MAKING IN THE AGE OF MEDIATIZATION* (2009).

becomes increasingly important to rethink the notion of normative and ideological critique in a way that is sensitive to this terrain of common sense construction. From the point of view of a critical political economy, this means acknowledging the porous and overdetermined character of the entire economic circuit, whether in existing economic processes or in new experimental community economies. Each of the moments of an economic circuit is heavily implicated in, its degrees of movement and maneuver shaped by, the discourse of mediatized popular story telling as well as more elite-level policy-making. I have argued that there are good reasons to believe that a psychoanalytic perspective may help contribute to the task of evaluating such developments at the ideological level, supplementing and complicating existing efforts to intervene at explanatory and normative levels.