



IIPPE TRAINING WORKSHOP 2016

## 2. Ideology and Neoliberalism

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SOAS University of London  
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LIVE

10:42 am ET

**Financial Market Regulators**  
**House Oversight Committee**

C-SPAN



# Lecture Map

IIPPE TRAINING WORKSHOP 2016 IDEOLOGY AND NEOLIBERALISM

## Approaches to Ideology

Marxist legacy - Gramsci  
- Other perspectives

01

## Decoding Neoliberal Keywords

Major sets of  
questions to  
address

02

## Individualism in the Neoliberal Era

History of individualism -  
Making of choice -  
Neoliberal twists -  
Critique

03

04

Conclusion





# 1. Approaches to Ideology

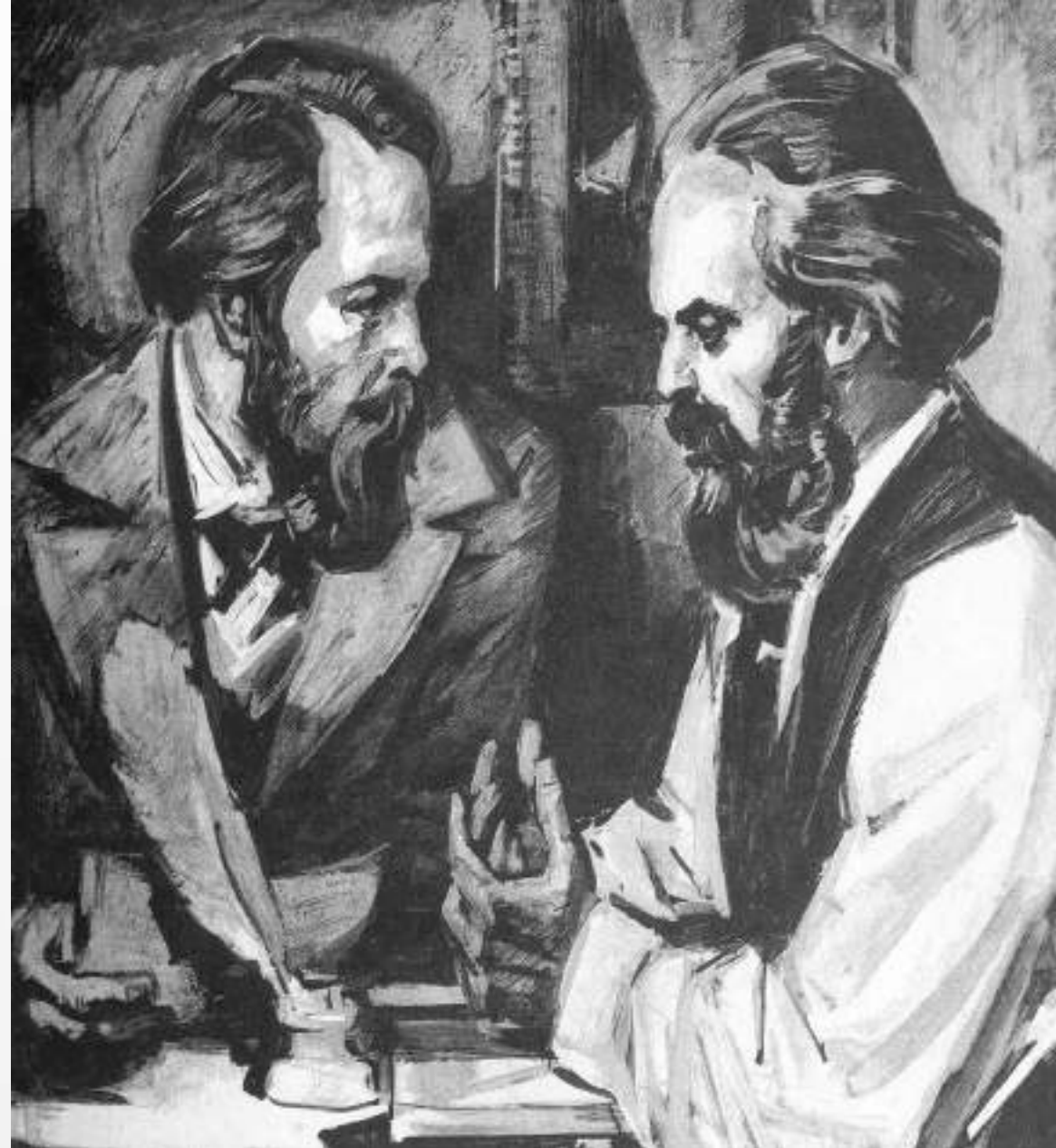


Plus Presentation Template



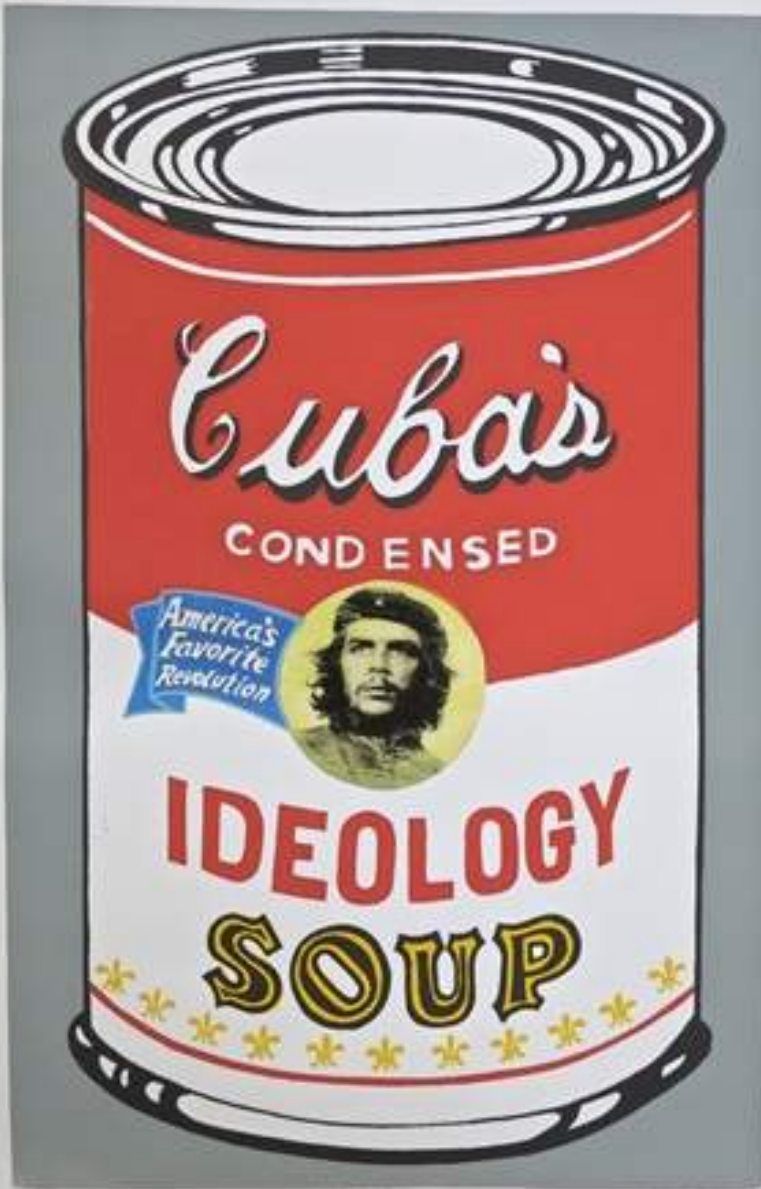
# Marxist perspectives I

- ❑ Ideology defined as 'the production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness' that 'men [sic] say, imagine, conceive'. Ideology found in different spaces in society, including 'politics, laws, morality, religion, and metaphysics' (in total, the superstructure).
- 1. Ideology is strongly informed by the capitalist mode of production.
- 2. Configuration of dominant ideology does not serve all members of society. Rather, tends to mirror the particular interests of elite class fraction.



## Marxist perspectives II

3. Ideology is always focused on making certain material relations appear normal and just, rather than arbitrary and immoral. To legitimise hegemonic forces and obfuscate the violence and exploitation inherent in a class system.
4. Related concept: the notion of false consciousness. How different ideologies are operating beneath the level of conscious deliberation and awareness, with a potential power to paradoxically mislead people to acquiesce to ideas that are not in their own particular interests.





# Criticisms and concerns

- ❑ A lot of analytical weight rests upon contrast between 'true consciousness' vs 'false beliefs'. Yet is the very aspiration to discover pristine 'truth' itself illusory? How can one be sure?
- ❑ Tends to set up an opposition between the knowledgeable scholar and mass of unhappy dupes. Where is the space for different understandings or resistance?
- ❑ Often presents a unitary character to ideology whereby it is conceptualised as part of a single, even total, vision of the socio-political world.







# Gramsci's take on ideology

- ❑ Expands focus on where ideology is produced and consumed. Ideological hegemony not only seen through state force but also various cultural means (the Church, trade unions, schools, mass media, political parties, family). Particularly sharp on role of intellectuals (conservative and revolutionary).
- ❑ Ideology involves the interaction between the economic and the cultural. Explores how (re)making of ideology should be understood as a practice in the world, rather than an abstract thing imposed upon society.

# Freedden's interpretation of ideology

- ✓ **Basic definition**  
A set of ideas, beliefs, opinions and values that: (1) exhibit a recurring pattern; (2) are held by significant groups; (3) compete over providing and controlling public policy; and (4) aim to justify socio-political arrangements and processes.
- ✓ **Ideologies as characterised by a 'surplus of meaning'**  
Borrowing from Ricoeur, argues one should be open to positive and negative aspects. Ideologies are consumed in many ways.
- ✓ **The morphology of ideologies**  
Core and secondary concepts exist in relation to each other, viewed in terms of combinations and clusters.



## 2. Decoding Neoliberal Keywords

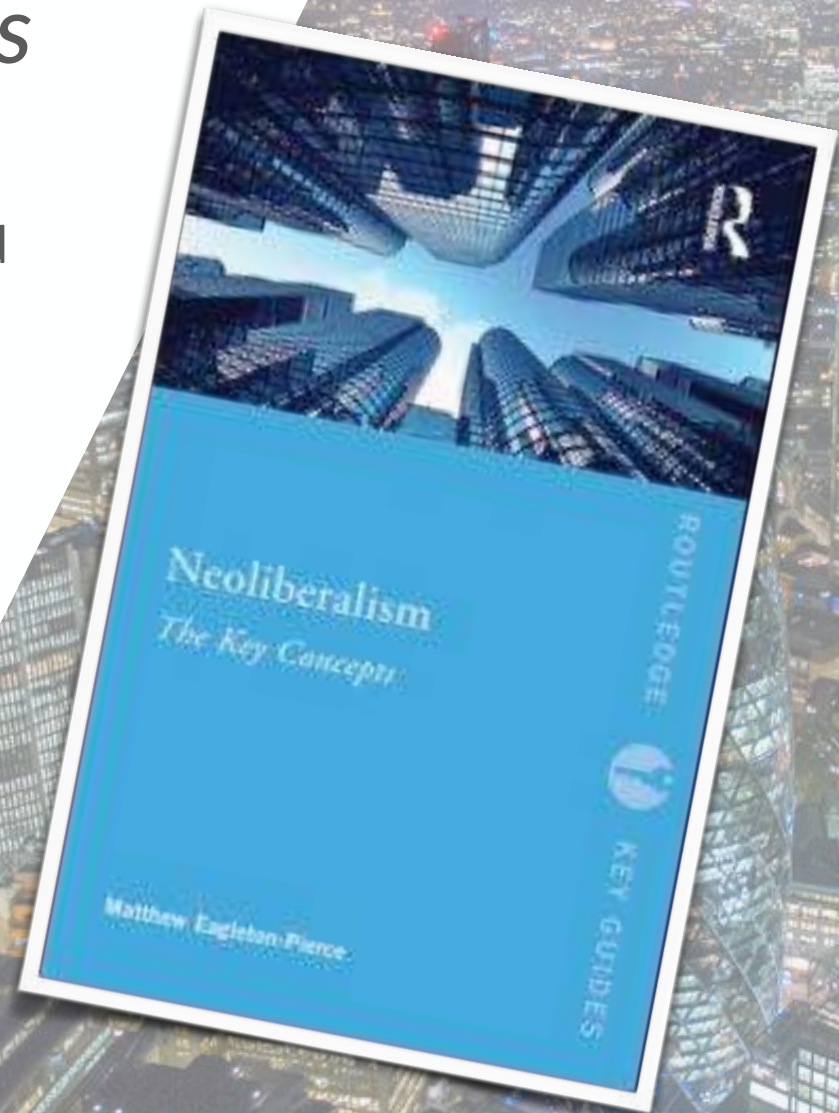
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# Neoliberalism: The Key Concepts

- ❑ Guide to 44 terms that have become associated with neoliberalism, not only the big concepts ('freedom', 'market') but apparently neutral terms ('reform', 'participation', 'flexibility').
- ❑ The neoliberal vocabulary reflects and constitutes a particular capitalist vision of socio-economic organisation and ethical comportment.
- ❑ Two core questions:
  - (1) What is new about neoliberalism?
  - (2) How have processes associated with neoliberalism been justified?



# How to study neoliberal keywords I

## 1. What is the etymology of the term?

- ☐ Initial dictionary definitions
- ☐ Shifts in meanings and senses
- ☐ Identifying forms of contestability

## 2. How has the term been informed by major ideological sources of neoliberalism?

- ☐ Deeper historical background
- ☐ Specialist knowledge fields
- ☐ Management thought
- ☐ Consumerism
- ☐ Alter-capitalist resources (anti-capitalist critique, nationalism...)







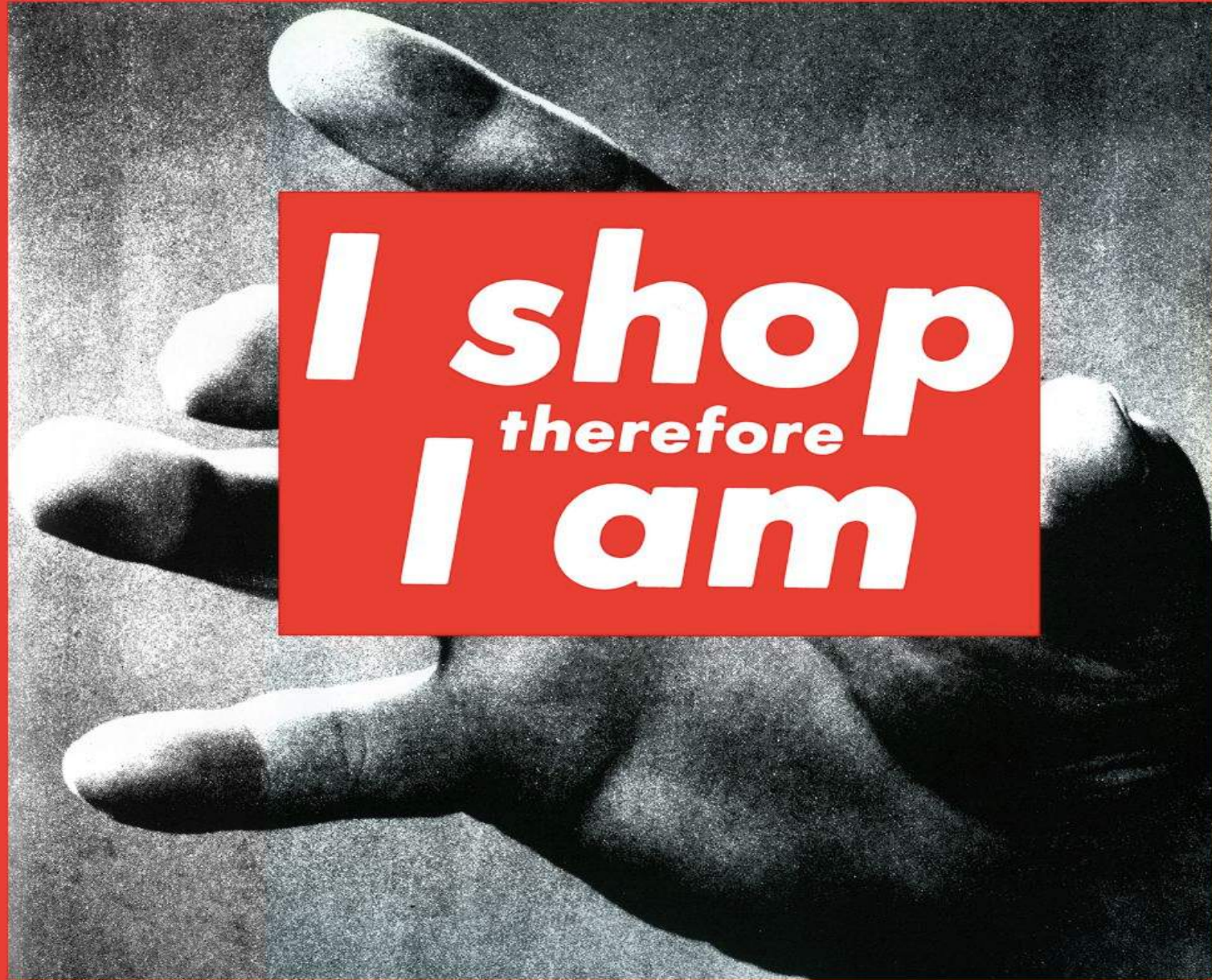
## How to study N keywords II

3. How is the term related to other notions?
  - ☐ Primary and secondary concepts;
  - ☐ Positive versus negative associations: contrasts often implicit or unspoken.
4. What empirical examples reveal the different deployments of the term?
5. How do the patterned uses of the term shape distributional questions?
  - ☐ In sum, aim to explore the relationship between the material and the symbolic.

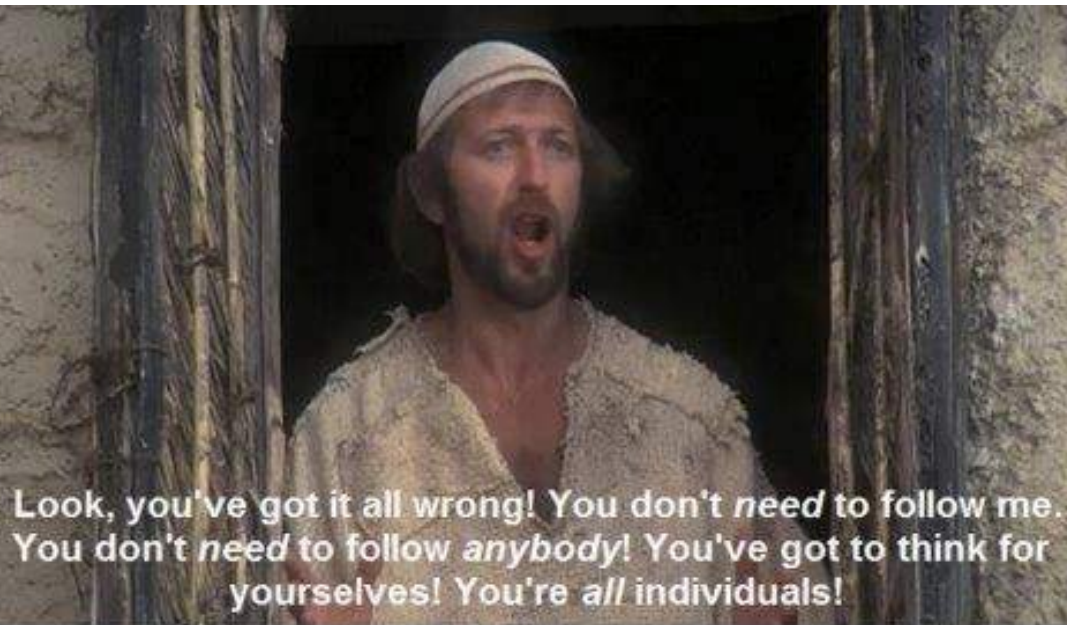




### 3. Individualism in the Liberal Tradition







## You're *all* individuals!

- ❑ Idea of individualism product of the C19; very difficult to summarise genesis of modern sense of individual (or private).
- ❑ Elaborate semantic history: range of meanings informed by national contexts, from glorification to pejorative tones.
- ❑ Linked to dichotomy between 'a positive freedom' and 'a negative other'.
- ❑ Thus, individualism as a touchstone for both supporters and critics of capitalism, from Hayek's (1948) claims for a 'true' theory of individualism, to Marxist arguments of the illusions and alienation of individualism.

# The making of choice

1

## Economics as a 'science of choice'

Individuals make choices in a calculating, materialist-informed manner or, more precisely, are defined as acting *as if* they were fully rational. Incorporation into statehood.

2

## Product marketing

With mass production and mass distribution, understanding consumer behaviour became paramount. Making of brands a key mechanism.

3

## Consumerism in the Cold War

Relationship between consumer choice and social change; partly tied to collapse of Cold War.

4

## Rights-based discourse in social movements (1960s-1970s)

Contestation over conventional structures of power obliquely appropriated into later neoliberal justifications.





# Neoliberal twists

- ❑ Neoliberalism = individualism common critical line. Nurturing of the self, through commodities, is frequently offered as both desirable and necessary.
- ❑ Category of 'the consumer' now extended into other fields, such as politics, education, and health.
- ❑ With valorisation of competitiveness, 'personalisation' is further extension. But 'mass customisation' required innovations in production, trade, and marketing which went beyond 'lean manufacturing' (post-1980s).

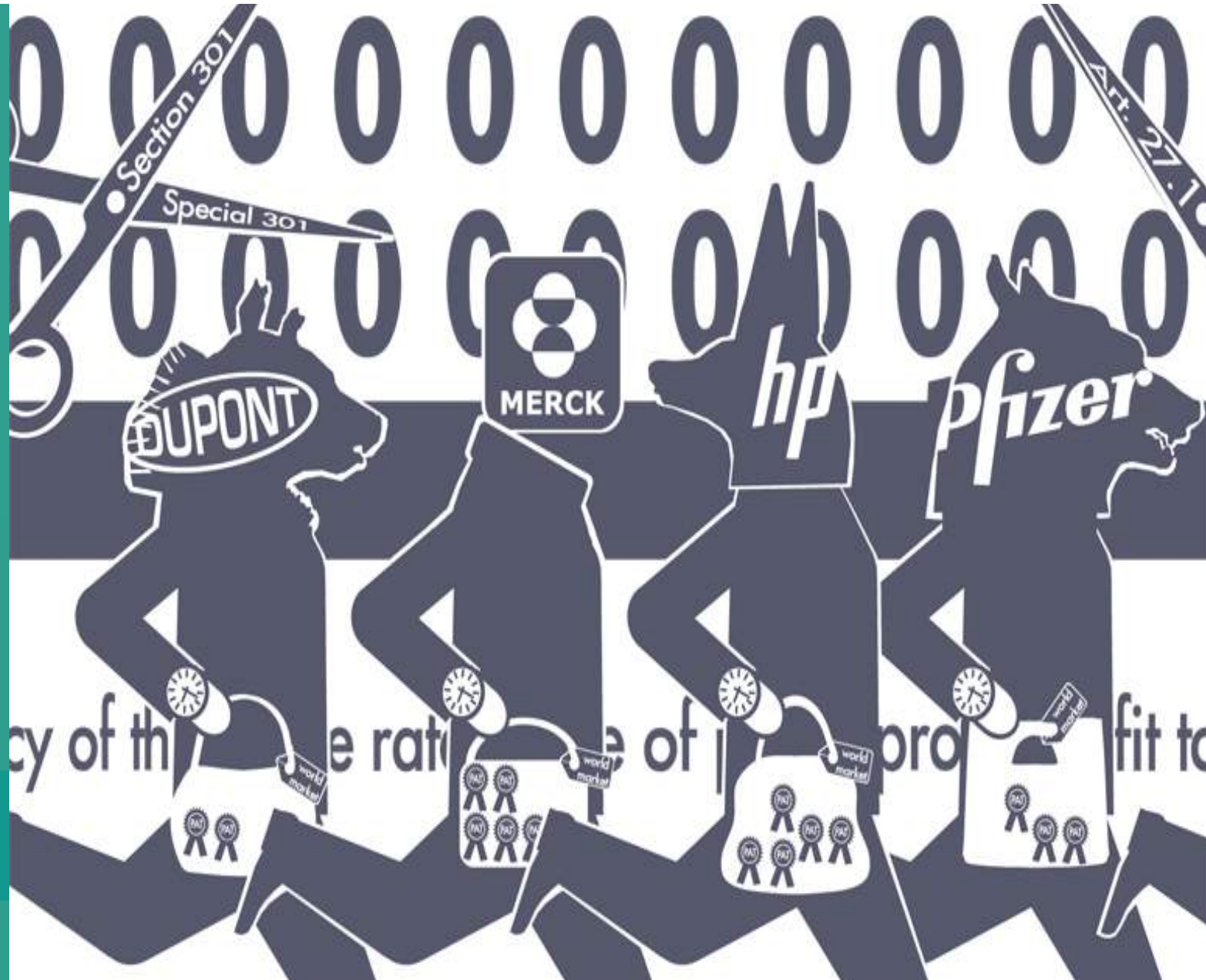


# Re-evaluating neoliberal individualism

- ✓ **Individualism (as bad) vs collectivism (as good) is often polarised**  
Ambiguous tensions between aspiration to fulfil personal individuality and social comfort of fitting into larger collectives.
- ✓ **Capitalist institutions do not see a world of individuals**  
Marketers see categories of populations. Double irony is how some consumers know this, yet still treat relationship as 'personal', as if the *collective belief* in individualism has to be sustained.
- ✓ **The 'perfect' choice, too much choice, 'bad choices', no choice**  
Decision-making anxiety actively cultivated around the 'perfect' choice. But 'overchoice' has become a problem for companies. If failure occurs, individuals directed to regulate themselves. Forms of alienation for those excluded or marginalised.



## 4. Conclusion





# Conclusion

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- ✓ **Neoliberalism as latest ideological 'spirit' in the history of capitalism**  
Attentive to material forces and means by which such phenomena are symbolically justified. How commercial world takes its objectified forms, the problem of commitment, and critique (everyday level).
- ✓ **Ideological infrastructure of individualism**  
Historical legacy of the moral primacy of the individual, associations to freedom and the actual or imminent flourishing of human progress.
- ✓ **Neoliberal revisions and extensions**  
Extension of the market model into spaces relatively insulated from capitalism and the creation of systems of mass personalisation. Advertising and management theory at the vanguard of creating, testing, and defending the neoliberal spirit.



# THANKS FOR LISTENING

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