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# Morals and politics in the ideology of neo-liberalism

[Bruno Amable](#) ✉

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## Abstract

The aim of this article is to analyse the links between the moral and political aspects of neo-liberal ideology and how appeals to certain ethics may

legitimate the establishment of the institutions of neo-liberal capitalism through political action. It presents the original characteristics of neo-liberal ideology by emphasizing how it differs from classical liberalism. Although pressures and contradictions are inherent in neo-liberalism, it is possible to single out some of its most original characteristics which are far more vital to the analysis of capitalism than vague and commonplace notions such as “market fundamentalism”. It also describes those moral aspects of neo-liberalism which differ from traditional morals and place the ethos of competitiveness at the centre of social life. It shows how the morals of neo-liberalism are linked to neo-liberal politics and policies. Freed in part from public sovereignty, neo-liberal politics must be guided by a moral imperative linked to competition. This paper reveals the consequences of these morals and politics for the definition of social policy. A contract based on reciprocity between the individual and society is substituted for collective rights to social protection and redistribution. This change in perspective is particularly important for the social policy advocated by the “modern” left.

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