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**Late Capitalism and the Imperative of Authenticity: The
Governance of Authenticity in the Neoliberal Era**

Romanos Lyritsas

DPhil candidate in Social & Political Thought

Department of Philosophy

School of History, Art History and Philosophy

University of Sussex

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been previously submitted, whether in the same or different form, to this or any other University for a degree.

Signature:

Abstract

Along with the birth of the modern subject the demand for the authenticity of the self emerges. Until a certain point in its history, capitalism has been seen as a homogenizing system that suppresses diversity and the authentic core of the self; consequently, until that point, the demand for authenticity, despite its co-emergence with capitalism, had a radical anticapitalistic aspect. In contrast today, late capitalist societies integrate rather than suppress diversity and value pluralism; rather than drive for homogeneity they thrive on heterogeneity. In contrast to previous stages of capitalism, late capitalist societies not only have embraced the idea of authenticity, but they have been increasing its demand.

The aim of this thesis is to examine the redefinition of the relationship between capitalism and authenticity. The analysis aims at moving beyond the opposition between the fake and the authentic, to examine the ways that the contemporary self is shaped by the conditions of late capitalism and neoliberal government. Such an analysis requires the acknowledgement of the biopolitical nature of capitalism and its immanent relationship with the production of subjectivity.

The first chapter of the thesis critically reviews attempts in recent social theory that examine the relationship of late capitalism with authenticity. The second chapter examines the economic and power relations that defined the subject in industrial capitalism. It is shown that the individual was subjected to the homogenizing forces of disciplinary technologies of power and liberal forms of government. The third chapter examines the different ways that conformity is achieved as a result of neoliberal governmentality and the new modes of surveillance that underpin it. The fourth chapter deals with the characteristics of the entrepreneurial subject and the new subjective form that emerges in the conditions established by late capitalism and neoliberal government. It is argued that the entrepreneurial self is a self-responsible, autonomous subject who has to construct their life-project through calculated choices in all aspects of their life. The last chapter claims that the entrepreneurial self, in addition to all the other responsibilities, is weighted with the imperative to be authentic, with the responsibility to construct their own authentic identity. It is argued that the imposition of the obligation to “be yourself” has negative consequences for the subject but also for our common, political life.

Key Words: Late capitalism, Authenticity, Liberalism, Neoliberalism, Biopower, Governmentality, the Entrepreneurial Self

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INTRODUCTION: CAPITALISM AND AUTHENTICITY

In recent times the ideal of authenticity has come to dominate the economic, political, and cultural discourses of Western societies. Authenticity is promoted in business and managerial handbooks, lifestyle magazines, and self-help books. It is presented as a political value and an electoral asset. The authenticity of the self has become a goal to be striven for, a path to happiness, a social and professional skill, and a healing power. Today, anything other than “being yourself” seems inappropriate. The imperative of authenticity has become all powerful (Gilmore, and Pine, 2007; Filed, 2007; George and Bennis, 2008; Robbin, 2009; Anastaze, 2015; Dillard, 2015; Joseph, 2016; Tacker, 2016).¹

But what do we really mean by the term “authenticity”? According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word authenticity signifies the genuineness or originality of an object or a subject: for something or someone to be authentic means it being “*in accordance with fact*”, it “being true in substance”, or it “being what it *professes* to be in origin or authorship; being genuine” (OED, emphases mine). The meaning of the term is more complicated than it might appear at first. Its complexity lies in those italicized words: “in accordance with” and “professes”. Although authenticity is understood as an integral quality of an object or a person, this quality must be disclosed externally in order for said object or subject to be considered authentic. Something or someone is qualified as authentic when *what it, or she, professes to be is in accordance with its, or her, integral characteristics*. Thus, authenticity is by definition an evaluative concept that measures the degree of consistency between the supposedly integral characteristics of an object or a subject and that which is disclosed on the outside (for authenticity as an evaluative term see Vannini and Williams, 2016: 3). When human beings are deemed “authentic”, the notion of authenticity acquires another important characteristic. In order to be authentic (or inauthentic), a person must *profess* to be a certain way or possess a certain characteristic. A person is considered to be authentic when she acts in accordance with her true character, thoughts, emotions, or beliefs, when how she acts or expresses herself measures up to how she really is. In this sense, the notion of authenticity is performative. This means that authenticity requires the subject to construct and maintain her authenticity through verbal or non-verbal acts of

¹ These are just some of the many ways in which mainstream publications have uncritically reproduced the imperative of authenticity. Such publications celebrate authenticity as a quality that benefits all aspects of a person’s life, promising everything from professional success to personal happiness.

communication.² Lastly, when the concept is attributed to human beings, authenticity acquires an ethical character.

In his provocative *The Ethics of Authenticity* (1991), and before that in his *Sources of the Self* (1989), Charles Taylor discusses the ethical character of the notion of authenticity. Taylor suggests that the concept of authenticity has been central to the construction of the modern self, and he argues against critics who condemn the concept of authenticity as egocentric or as lacking any ethical orientation. Taylor emphasizes that, although the ethics of authenticity do signify an inward turn on the part of the modern subject, authenticity has always also been connected with the community or society to which someone belongs: “authenticity is not the enemy of demands that emanate from beyond the self; it presupposes such demands” (Taylor 1991: 41).

Taylor’s statement can be better understood when seen in the light of a Foucauldian understanding of ethics. In his later work, after his so-called “ethical turn”, Foucault moves away from analysing the subject simply as constituted by discursive practices and power relations and explores the sense in which the modern subject is a self-constituted moral agent as well as a self subjected to power–knowledge apparatuses.³ For Foucault, morality consists of three components: the moral codes, the morality of behaviours, and ethics. Moral codes are those values and rules of action laid down for individuals by “prescriptive agencies” such as the family and educational or religious institutions. The morality of behaviours refers to the actions and behaviours of individuals in relation to the prescribed moral codes set by those agencies. Finally, ethics refers to the relationship one develops to oneself in order to constitute oneself as an ethical subject within a certain environment of prescribed values and rules.⁴ For this to be achieved, the subject engages in certain “practices of the self” through which the self is constructed in a way that serves the subject’s moral goals (Foucault, 1985: 25–32). Foucault thus offers a relational

² I am referring to the notion of performativity as developed by Judith Butler. For this see Butler (1990; 2006). For authenticity as a performative concept see Banet-Weiser (2012: 60).

³ In several interviews later in his life, Foucault admits that in his earlier work he was overly insistent on the idea of the constitution of the subject by discursive practices and power technologies (i.e. Foucault, 2000a: 177). However, he also suggests that the notion of the self-constitution of the subject is present in his earlier work (Foucault, 2000b: 262). With these remarks, Foucault effectively argues against an understanding of his thought as divided between his earlier work and his so-called “ethical turn”.

⁴ According to Foucault this relationship has four aspects: the ethical substance, which is the way that individuals constitute a certain part of themselves as the material of their moral conduct; the mode of subjection, the way that individuals establish their relationship with the prescribed moral codes; the ethical work, that is, the self-forming activity that one performs in order to transform oneself into an ethical subject; and finally the telos, the mode of being that one aims to develop as an ethical subject (Foucault, 1995: 26, 27, 28; see also Davidson, 2005: 126).

understanding of morality that emphasizes the relationship between power institutions and moral codes, between the subject and those codes, and between the subject and herself (Foucault, 1985: 28). On this view, the subject is understood as the point at which discursive practices and power relations merge with ethics.

Combining Foucault's relational understanding of ethics and subjectivity with what I have said above about the ethical character of the notion of authenticity allows us to see that authenticity is a normative ideal according to which individuals shape themselves within a certain field of power relations, discursive practices, and moral codes. The aim of this thesis is to examine how the ideal of authenticity relates to the power relations and discursive practices of late capitalism and neoliberalism.

I will argue that, despite the presentation of the ideal of authenticity in mainstream discourse as suggesting a liberation from social constraints, it in fact functions as a source of normativity that reconciles individuals to late capitalist social relations and the neoliberal rationale. However, before pursuing this argument, I briefly examine the history of the ideal of authenticity and the way that the relationship between authenticity and capitalism has been theorized by political and social theorists.

Because of this dominance, the demand for authenticity might nowadays seem natural, something to be taken for granted, but it is in fact the product of recent history. In *Sincerity and Authenticity* (1971) Lionel Trilling suggests that the demand of authenticity was inconceivable until modernity and did not fully develop until the second half of the twentieth century (Trilling, 1971). In order to understand Trilling's statement we have to consider the fact that before modernity the notion of the self had a completely different meaning. In premodern societies, personhood was taken to be an intrinsic part of a wider totality that was derived from God's will. The premodern self was experienced as an extended self, which means that someone's identity was indistinguishable from the wider social structure, the kinship system, the family, the tribe or community, and the religious beliefs and order (Guignon, 2004: 10). The sense of personal identity was derived from the roles imposed by a rigid and hierarchical social structure. Identities were ascribed to people based on ancestry, they tied people permanently and were impossible to transcend (Berman, 2009: 89, 142). Thus, in this period the only way one could "be true to oneself" was by following the normative demand of sincerity. The notion of sincerity implies that one should act in accordance with one's prescribed social roles in the socially expected way, so as not to compromise the trust others have in those roles (Umbach and Humphrey,

2018: 4). In premodern societies, one's "truthfulness" could only be measured in relation to the wider totality (of the present and the future). The idea of being true to oneself implied that what someone was at a given moment could be contrasted with what that person would become when they realized their predetermined potential (or destiny) as part of that totality. Any notion of "being true to oneself" implied the existence of that pre-given and unquestionable order within which people could find their selves (Guignon, 2004: 10).

The demand of authenticity could not have been raised until the advent of modernity led to the imposition of a clear distinction between the inner and the outer (Taylor, 1989). As the structures of modernity developed, the self disengaged from the outside world and acquired a sense of inwardness. The Cartesian philosophy represents the clearest, most significant, and most influential expression of this process of internalization. In Descartes's epistemology, reason obtains a hegemonic role and becomes the mediating principle within the subject in its effort to know and represent the outside world: "I can have no knowledge of what is *outside* me except by means of the ideas I have *within me*" (Descartes, 1970: 123 emphasis mine). The Cartesian knowing subject expresses an experience of a new self, a nuclear self that is clearly distinguished from the external, objective world. This conception of the self is an essential presupposition of the notion of authenticity. The ideal of authenticity presupposes that within each individual there is a unique core, a "true self" that is different and distinguishable from the outside world; this is the self in accordance with which an authentic person should act, think, and express themselves (Guignon, 2004: 7).

The distinction between the subject and the objective world implies more than just an epistemological or existential break with premodern concepts of the self. It develops into two distinct spheres of life. Modernity is the first time in history that the private sphere emerges as distinct from the public sphere (Guignon, 2004: 18).⁵ The former is taken to be the sphere in which the qualities of the inner self can be fully developed and expressed, and the latter is taken to be the sphere in which the individual finds herself repressed by social demands. The inner qualities of the self are thus understood as being in tension with society. Berman rightly points out that this constitutes a major paradox of modernity. On the one hand, as we have seen, it is only within the economic and political structures of modernity that the demand of authenticity can be raised. Modern society makes it possible for the first time for people to perceive themselves as individuals with inner qualities that are distinguished from the rest of the world. At the same time, those very social structures

⁵ For a thorough account of the issue see Sennett (1992).

that gave birth to the individual and allowed the premise of authenticity to arise as a problem become the cause of the alienation of the subject from its true, authentic self, and society comes to be perceived as a homogenizing force (Berman, 2009). Thus, the demand of authenticity is merely political, and as such it has preoccupied political philosophy and social theory for the last few centuries.

Enlightenment: Authenticity and politics

Enlightenment thought was extensively preoccupied with the demand of authenticity and acknowledged its political dimensions. Although a work of literature, the *Persian Letters*, written in 1721 by Montesquieu, constitutes a thoroughgoing political discussion of the issue. The text presents an exchange of letters between two Persian noblemen who are visiting the metropolis of Paris, Uzbek and Rica, and their loved ones in Persia. Montesquieu uses the dialogue to contrast traditional feudal societies with the bourgeois society emerging in Paris.⁶ He claims that nature grants each human being a unique personality and condemns traditional societies for going against nature by forcing people into prescribed roles. Montesquieu celebrates the emerging social structures, suggesting that they emancipate individuals from the chains of tradition, restore the natural order, and allow each unique individual to blossom (Montesquieu, 2008).⁷

Although he rarely uses the term “authenticity”, Rousseau is considered by Taylor the most important of those philosophers of the Enlightenment who reflected upon the question of the authenticity of the subject in the modern world (Taylor, 1991). His autobiographical writings, such as his *Confessions* – a venture “unique in its kind” (Rousseau, 1953) – are attempts at introspection into his inner self, a project that is indicative of the modern turn into the “inwardness of the subject”.⁸ Nonetheless, despite the fact that Rousseau’s autobiographical work is characterized by introversion and an asocial tone, he conceives of the problem of authenticity in a deeply political way (for extensive discussion see Berman, 2009, Ferrara, 1993, Morgenstern, 1996).

⁶ The text is intended as a satire which targets the authoritarian French state of the time and the system of John Law. For an overview of the historical and political context of the text, see Andrew Kahn’s introduction (viii–xiii) to the Oxford Classics Edition.

⁷ For a thorough examination of the text see Berman (2009).

⁸ Rousseau’s autobiographical texts present a process of confession. Through this process Rousseau seeks to unmask himself, to bring “his authentic self into being” (Berman, 2009: 86). According to Berman, this proves that Rousseau’s project is much more radical than is usually acknowledged because it shows that, for Rousseau, the true self is not a fixed inner quality to be uncovered but something to be actively constructed (Berman, 2009: 86).

Rousseau was writing in the middle of the eighteenth century, at the very height of the Enlightenment. However, he did not share the admiration for the emerging social structures of many of his contemporaries. While Montesquieu saw in the emerging bourgeois society the conditions that would allow everyone to express themselves, Rousseau claimed – through the words of his hero Saint-Preux – that in Paris “no one dares to be himself” (Rousseau, 1997: 205, Pl., II, 248–250). For Rousseau the metropolis was an insincere and hypocritical environment. It compelled individuals to conceal themselves behind masks or behind “the deceptive veil of politeness” of bourgeois manners (Rousseau, *Arts and Sciences* as cited in Berman, 2009: 84). Modern society imposed a uniformity which was, for Rousseau, just as alienating as the one experienced in traditional societies. As Saint-Preux writes to his beloved Julie, society gives people “a being other than their own” (Rousseau, 1997: 223, Pl., II, 271–273).

The reasons for this inauthenticity and alienation from the true self are twofold and are connected with the capitalist society that was then emerging. According to Rousseau, the first motive underlying inauthenticity is self-love (*amour propre*)⁹, which can only be obtained through the recognition of others. In modern societies, social roles are no longer simply ascribed to individuals, and so status and social recognition are not guaranteed. Because of this desire for social acceptance, Rousseau claims, social life in bourgeois societies is characterized by hypocrisy. The desire for social status in a society in which social recognition is not guaranteed also makes people egotistic and competitive. The second root of inauthenticity is, for Rousseau, private property. Modern capitalist societies establish new social hierarchies and forms of social status that are no longer based on privileges and law but on the power of property and wealth (Berman, 2009: 119–123). Private property makes economic self-interest and competitiveness the general modes of living. It creates conditions in which each has to fight for her own interest against every other. Unlike Hobbes, Rousseau does not see competitiveness and rivalry as the natural human condition. Instead, he alleges that these characteristics result from modern social structures and the institution of private property (Berman, 2009: 133, 134). Thus, for Rousseau private property, fosters the pursuit of self-interest which becomes the reason that insincerity and inauthenticity arise. Rousseau believes that in a society based on private property, all skills, talents, and powers are made to serve in the quest for profit, property, and domination over others rather than in the quest to achieve authentic self-expression.

⁹ There are two concepts in Rousseau that can be translated as ‘self-love’ (*amour de soi* and *amour propre*) The latter is what Rousseau thinks is problematic, since it is based on the opinion others have for someone and the desire to have a certain standing in the eyes of others

For these reasons, Rousseau was very critical of the emerging bourgeois society. While other political thinkers were confident that legal equality was enough to guarantee social equality and allow all individuals to be themselves, Rousseau foresaw that the liberal market economy would not eliminate inequalities; indeed, he believed it would reinforce them. He suggested that self-interest and competitiveness reinforce hypocrisy and egoism. Under these conditions, individuals are not able to express themselves authentically.

For Rousseau, the demand of authenticity implies a need to change those social relations that impose inauthenticity on individuals both in their relations with themselves and in their relations with others. Thus, in Rousseau's work authenticity acquires a radical political content: the authentic self and society are impossible as long as exploitative relations and private property remain.

Capitalism and alienation

Rousseau's interpretation of authenticity can be seen as a forerunner of another theory of inauthentic experience, the theory of alienation developed by Marx. He developed this theory in his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1844, which constitutes an early expression of Marx's critique of the capitalist economy and wage labour and his theory of money (Vandenberghe, 2009: 33–36).¹⁰ Marx's notion of alienation has been a crucial point of reference for critics who allege that the capitalist economy causes inauthenticity.

The notion of alienation presupposes a philosophical anthropology, which Marx also introduces in his 1844 work. According to this view, a human being, unlike other animals, is “a being for himself”, a “species being”. What Marx is claiming is that humans are self-conscious beings who consciously set goals and reflect upon their actions, their position in the world, and their relationships with others. Most importantly, humans are capable of understanding themselves as members of their species and of developing a universal consciousness (Marx, 1988: 75).

¹⁰ The notion of alienation has been the subject of many disputes between different Marxist schools of thought. For some, such as Althusser, Balibar, Macherey, Rancière, Poulantzas, and others – usually associated with structural Marxism – the young Marx, with his theory of alienation, had not yet broken with the idealistic inheritance from Hegel and Feuerbach. This view is based on the fact that the concept of alienation relies on a non-historical understanding of the human essence, the notion of species being. The same scholars claim that between his early and mature works there is an “epistemological break”, after which Marx abandons the notion of alienation. This break signifies Marx's turn towards a scientific examination of capitalism, the development of his theory of historical materialism, and the notion of commodity fetishism. Others suggest that the concept of alienation remains the basis of Marx's later work and do not accept that there is a clear break between the early and later work. Among them are leading Marxists such as Lefebvre, Lukács, and the members of the Frankfurt school, who all seek to build upon the notion of alienation. For a comprehensive introduction to the concept of alienation see Vandenberghe (2009)

Labour is a fundamental part of Marx's philosophical anthropology. Through labour humans produce their material life and transform the natural world while at the same time transforming themselves. Again, what distinguishes humans from other animals is that, although both humans and other animals actively shape their environments through their "life-activity" is only humans that are conscious of their labour: "Man makes his life-activity itself the object of his will and of his consciousness. He has conscious life-activity" (Marx, 1988: 76). According to Marx, through labour an individual "really proves himself to be a species being" (Marx, 1988: 77); the product of labour is "the objectification of man's species life" (Marx, 1988: 77). For Marx labour is the process through which universal consciousness, the sense humans have of being part of a universal human society, is materialized. This is confirmed, Marx claims, by the fact that humans produce not only in order to survive and satisfy their natural needs but also in accordance with aesthetic criteria. Thus, labour is essentially a social activity that builds social relationships and connects people with nature.

However, according to Marx, capitalism alienates humans from their essence. In the regime of wage labour the worker does not own the product of his labour, which rather "confronts him as something hostile and alien" (Marx, 1988, 72). Workers are not only alienated from the product of their labour but also from themselves and others. Labour, which once was the medium of the worker's self-realization, now becomes a mere means for survival and loses its essence. At the same time, the worker is alienated from the rest of society because alienated labour is no longer the means for the materialization of the universality of the human species. Private property and the imposed division of labour undermines the communality of labour. It should be noted that, according to Marx, capitalist production not only alienates workers but also, indirectly, capitalists, because the products they generate in the production process are distributed by the market and are not directly consumed by them (Marx, 1988).

In sum, the Marxian theory of alienation implies that in a capitalist society individuality cannot truly develop or express itself. Individuality can only flourish when private property and wage labour are abolished. According to this view, communism will emancipate all individuals from the alienating conditions of wage labour, and only then will authentic existence be possible (Engels and Marx: 2002).

Mass culture: The Frankfurt School

The members of the Frankfurt school articulate a trenchant critique of capitalism and industrial society that builds on Marx's notion of alienation.¹¹ They point out new forms of alienation which do not derive from the sphere of production and alienated labour but result from the sphere of leisure. This amounts to a serious critique of the inauthenticity caused by the massification and standardization of individuals in advanced capitalist societies.

In one of his last books, *The Jargon of Authenticity* (1964), Adorno attacks Heidegger's ontological interpretation of the term "authenticity" and suggests that it cannot be achieved without challenging the social conditions that produce inauthenticity. However, Adorno, along with other members of the Frankfurt School, had been preoccupied with the issue of authenticity long before these criticisms of Heidegger. In their seminal *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947), Adorno and Horkheimer develop a radical critique of the whole Enlightenment project, which they interpret as essentially alienating. They suggest that the primacy Enlightenment thought attributed to reason led to the repression of human desire and, therefore, alienation from human nature. They claim that the epistemology of positivism is a myth and that technological rationality is a means of dominating nature and other people. In the book's second chapter, entitled "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception", Adorno and Horkheimer focus their critique on the capitalist societies of their day and attack the emerging phenomenon of mass culture, which they interpret as a means of manipulating, controlling, and molding human consciousness.¹²

For Adorno and Horkheimer, the emerging culture industry in advanced capitalist societies and the transformation of culture into a commodity were both the causes and the evidence of the utterly alienating nature of advanced capitalist economies. In their view, the culture industry has supplanted the genuine production of culture and resulted in the production of mass culture. With this term they mean to refer to all the products of the culture industry, such as mainstream literature, cinema, TV programs, mainstream music, and mass-media products, all of which are produced for commercial purposes and to appeal to

¹¹ Critical theory was critical of actually existing socialism as well as of capitalism. In the view of critical theorists, the former failed to implement the Marxist vision of non-alienated labour and did not fully break with the structures of capitalism (Held, 1980: 14).

¹² Their interest in mass culture dates back to their period of exile in the USA, where Adorno and Horkheimer co-wrote *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Their experience of the rapidly emerging culture industry in the USA, along with that of the manipulation of culture and spectacle by the Nazis, provoked their interest in the power of culture to captivate and manipulate people (Σαράντας, 1984: 11). For discussion of their encounter with US society and academic life, see Wheatland (2009) and Jenemann (2007).

the general public.¹³ The term as they use it has nothing to do with popular culture, which is produced *by* the people; instead it refers to industrially produced cultural products intended to be sold as commodities *to* the populations of industrial societies.¹⁴ Under the conditions of industrial production and commodification, mass culture is deprived of any power to challenge the dominant order, since its commercial character reproduces the exploitative and alienating structures of the capitalist economy. Further, mass culture functions as a palliative, mitigating the discontent that results from the rationalized technocratic order of industrial civilization, and therefore serves to support that order (Adorn and Horkheimer, 2002). Adorno and Horkheimer are critical not only of the way mass culture is produced but also of its content, which is characterized by the constant repetition of patterns and themes and the resuscitation and manipulation of classical or folk culture. In their view, mass culture makes authentic expression and the production of any genuine culture impossible (Brantlinger, 2016: 226, 227). Consequently, mass culture becomes a standardizing and homogenizing force and ceases to fulfil its genuine role as “the perennial protestation of the particular against the general, as long as the latter remains irreconcilable with the particular” (Adorno, 1978).

In his book *One Dimensional Man* (1964), Marcuse follows Adorno and Horkheimer in criticizing “advanced industrial civilization” as a new type of totalitarianism in which technological rationality, mass culture, consumerism, and mass media have discarded any sense of meaningful opposition to the prevailing order. Marcuse acknowledges that capitalism and industrial production have resulted in marked economic growth which has been also beneficial, in economic terms, for the working class. The proletariat, which once stood in opposition to the capitalist order, has been fully integrated into the capitalist economy. Incorporated into technological production and trapped in the conformity that economic growth has produced, the working class has been transformed into a class of consumers who aim only to satisfy their individual needs (Marcuse, 2008). But the neutralization of any form of collective political opposition is only one form that the total homogenization of advanced capitalist society takes. According to Marcuse, capitalism poses a threat not only to the expression of collective opposition but also to individuality itself. In a critique of those apologists for capitalism who celebrate economic liberalism as

¹³ The term “mass culture” suggests that the products of the culture industry are intended for and consumed by the majority of the population and by the different classes of capitalist society. Therefore, the alienating effects of mass culture apply to the bourgeoisie as much as to the working class (Σαράντζας, 1984).

¹⁴ Therefore, the term does not imply any particular aesthetic standards; it refers, again, to the conditions under which culture is produced and to its commodified character. Thus, the criticism of Adorno and Horkheimer as elitist is misguided and ignores the point of their argument (Jarvis, 2006: 72).

allowing for the expression of individuality, Marcuse suggests that in advanced capitalism the individual, absorbed by consumerism and the quest for profit, becomes “one-dimensional”. In Marcuse’s view, advertisements and mass media create and impose “false needs” (Marcuse, 2006: 7). Although pursuing the satisfaction of these needs may lead to transitory pleasure, it eventually reproduces exploitation and repression. Consequently, mass consumer societies impose a standardized way of life in which individuals are compelled “to behave and consume in accordance with the advertisements, to love and hate what others love and hate” (Marcuse, 2006: 7). As a result, the individual is alienated from her authentic nature, from her capacities for creativity and self-determination, and ends up reproducing mechanical, stereotypical, and inauthentic modes of being and expression.

Authenticity as simulacrum

Guy Debord’s *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967) takes aim at the falsity of capitalist society. Debord develops a theory of capitalism according to which images and spectacle have colonized every sphere of human life. Because “all that once was directly lived has become mere representation”, authentic living within capitalism has been rendered impossible (Debord, 1995: 12). The importance of Debord’s argument lies in the fact that he does not reduce the spectacle to an aggregate of images but conceives it as “a social relation between people that is mediated by images” (Debord, 1995: 12). His theory goes beyond an understanding of the spectacle as a misrepresentation of reality; he conceives it instead as a real, lived experience. For Debord the dominance of the spectacle is so complete that nothing can exist outside of it. It becomes the only possible reality: “reality erupts within the spectacle, and the spectacle is real. This reciprocal alienation is the essence and underpinning of society as it exists” (Debord, 1995: 14). Debord distinguishes between two primary forms of spectacle: the “concentrated spectacle”, which he associates with totalitarian regimes such as fascism, Stalinism, and other types of military dictatorship, and the “diffuse spectacle”, which he associates with advanced democratic capitalist societies, which overflow with commodities and images (Debord, 1995, see also Anselm, 2018: 5-18). As he explains in his later *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle* (1988), these two forms coexist and produce what he calls the “integrated spectacle”, with which the dominance of the spectacle becomes total. In a society of the spectacle, authenticity is not suppressed, but it can only exist through its representation. Authenticity becomes an image of itself.

Jean Baudrillard develops a theory of capitalism similar to Debord's, according to which the boundaries between reality and simulation blur into what he calls "hyper-reality" (Baudrillard, 1994). According to this view, simulation becomes the general characteristic of capitalist societies as a result of the turn of the capitalist economy towards the production of signs and the increased role of the mass media (Baudrillard, 1994).¹⁵ Baudrillard claims that these developments are as important as those undergone during the industrial revolution. In contrast to the industrial stage of capitalism, which was based on the control of the means of production and on commodities, in advanced capitalism the importance shifts to the control of the code and the signs (Baudrillard, 1975; Baudrillard, 1981).¹⁶ Capitalism no longer depends on the production and consumption of commodities but on the consumption and production of signifiers. In the world of the simulacrum that Baudrillard describes, the value of commodities does not derive either from use value or exchange value but from the value of commodities as signs. In his book *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (1976), in which he introduces the concept of simulation, Baudrillard acknowledges that use value has always been related to signifiers and what they signify. Under the conditions of capitalist production, exchange value prevails over use value. The value of a certain commodity, including that of human labour, ceases to refer to its use value and refers instead to the general equivalent of money. After 1929, capitalist societies came to be characterized by a total breakdown of any reference between commodities and real use value or real need. Gradually the "structural law of value", the code, came to replace all forms of value. Value – whether that of commodities or of human labour – ceases to have any relationship to reality and becomes its own simulacrum (Baudrillard, 1994). Thus, the distinction between reality and its representation becomes meaningless. Any sense of the reality or originality of either objects or people dissolves. For Baudrillard, capitalist relations of production do not mask reality – as traditional Marxist theory suggests – but result in a hyper-reality. Neither the original nor the copy, neither the real nor the fake, exist; there is only the simulacrum. The new era of capitalist hyper-reality is the era in which authenticity and falsity can no longer be distinguished; the distinction is

¹⁵ Baudrillard's critique of the media differs from the mainstream critique of mass media. Baudrillard does not make any distinction between real and fake news or between objective and ideological messages; he suggests, rather, that images and signs substitute for reality. The real is what is presented in the media (Cubitt, 2001: 47, 48). For an extensive discussion of the subject see William (2006).

¹⁶ Baudrillard traces the dominance of the simulacrum in capitalist societies back to the stock market crash of 1929 (Cubitt, 2001: 42; Baudrillard, 1993: 33).

rendered irrelevant as a result of the indifference of the simulacrum towards them both (Cubitt, 2001: 46).

Late capitalism and authenticity: A new relationship but an old understanding

Because of its alienating consequences for the individual and the associated massification and standardization of lifestyles, capitalism has been criticized by social theorists, activists, and the general public as a force that suppresses the uniqueness of the individual and jeopardizes authenticity. In more recent times, however, capitalism has demonstrated a remarkable flexibility in being able to develop a more intimate relationship towards diversity and authenticity.¹⁷

Several scholars who have examined the relationship between late capitalism and authenticity have suggested that this closer relationship with authenticity is based on the commodification of the latter (Boyle, 2004; Heath, J and Potter, 2006; Potter, 2011; York, 2014). Without a doubt, commodification is an important aspect of the relationship between late capitalism and authenticity. In my view, however, interpretations that remain attached to the notion of commodification have two main problems. The first is that they do not examine the economic and political transformations, the historical conditions, through which the ideal of authenticity acquired its value. In order for authenticity to be commodified it must be considered valuable to people, something that these theories fail to explain. Consequently, such approaches reverse the casual relationship, proposing that the effect, the commodification of authenticity, is actually the cause of the changed relationship between late capitalism and authenticity. In order to avoid this, a macro-sociological perspective is required: a perspective that takes into account the transformations of capitalism that enabled the value of authenticity to emerge in the dominant way that it has – even if these transformations might at first seem unrelated to this value. Such attempts have been made and they will be systematically examined in the first chapter of the thesis. The second problem with these interpretations is that they reproduce the dualism between authentic and fake, and claim that what is promoted and commodified as “authentic” is in fact a con (York, 2014). These interpretations suppose that authenticity exists in a pure form outside of social relations, in a non-commercial paradise that resembles a kind of premodern society. Thus, they totally neglect the fact that the ideal of authenticity emerged

¹⁷ This does not mean that discrimination on the basis of race or ethnicity has disappeared in late capitalist societies. Alana Lentin argues that contemporary racist discourse is precisely based on the premise that other civilizations do not allow for self-differentiation and consequently are totalitarian. See Lentin (2011) and Lentin and Titley (2011).

within modern social structures. What underlies the authentic/fake opposition is a non-historical, idealistic version of authenticity and the assumption that authenticity is a quality that exists within people, outside of social relations. I suggest that the opposition between authenticity and falseness derives from a limited understanding of power that is restricted to its negative aspects. This understanding neglects the productive aspects of power and power's constitutive and immanent relation to the production of knowledge, truth and subjectivity and instead focuses on its relation to ideology, and the alienation of the individual. As a result these views reproduce the idea that late capitalism is still a cause of inauthenticity and imply that we may yet uncover a truly authentic experience and our authentic selves. Unfortunately, these interpretations promote an anticapitalistic critique that is very easily neutralized by the ability of capitalism to adapt to diversity and thus fails to challenge capitalism's fundamental structures.

Methods, aims, and contribution of this thesis

In order to move beyond the authentic/fake dualism, we need to break away from a repressive, juridical model of power, common to both orthodox Marxism and psychoanalysis, according to which power is understood as a sovereign law (political or moral) imposed upon individuals (Balibar, 1992). This thesis follows Foucault in adopting an understanding of power as a productive force. Such an understanding of power stands in opposition to the notion of alienation, which implies that the individual is subjected to an external authority and so is alienated from her true, natural essence (Balibar, 1992: 43). It also stands in opposition to the notion of ideology as false consciousness, which suggests a confrontational relationship between power and truth.¹⁸ Instead it acknowledges an immanent relationship between power, subjectivity, and truth (Foucault, 2002a; 2002b).¹⁹ This thesis adopts the Foucauldian premise that “that truth is not by nature free – nor error servile – but that its production is thoroughly imbued with relations of power” (Foucault 1998: 60). Thus, I propose that authenticity should be conceived as constructed within certain social relations. However, as Judith Butler reminds us in relation to the case of gender, the fact that a category is socially constructed does not mean that it is not real (Butler, 2006; 2011).

¹⁸ On this point, it is interesting to consider the issues raised by Lukes (2011) and the response by Harcourt (2011).

¹⁹ Even though this thesis distances itself from orthodox Marxist theoretical schemes (alienation, ideology) it does not distance itself from Marx himself. After all, it was Marx who, in his famous “Theses on Feuerbach”, claimed: “The human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations” (Marx, 1970). Thus, Marx was the first to acknowledge the productive nature of power, the way in which it produces modes of life, subjectivity, and truth rather than just alienation and false consciousness

However, adopting Foucault's interpretation of power as a productive force does not mean that we must uncritically adopt his theory of power and the modern subject. I suggest that in Foucault's conception of power as a "diagram" that is not limited to any single organizing principle, such as the economy or the state – the aspect of Foucault's work that has most often been taken to render it incompatible with Marx's theory – power seems to exist in itself, detached from the materiality of the economy and independent of the class division of capitalist societies (for this critique see Poulantzas, 2000: 67- 69). Consequently, Foucault neglects the class aspects of biopower, which on his telling affects the working class and the bourgeois class in the same way. As a result, Foucault's theory of subjectivity neglects the distinctive ways in which biopower affects individuals in different class positions; as I will explain in what follows, the quality and the intensity of the biopolitical technologies of power to which the population is subjected differ according to class. I suggest that an analysis that aspires to explain the relationship between capitalism and authenticity cannot but take into consideration the division of labour in the capitalist economy and the classed structure of capitalist societies. For this reason, we require a Marxist perspective. In Marx's view, the division of a society into classes results from the distribution of the means of production, thus from the different positions people occupy within the production process. A class is defined as a social group that shares the same relationship to the means of production. In capitalism, society is characterized by two main classes, the bourgeoisie, who own the means of production, and the working class or the proletariat, who are deprived of the means of production and as a result are forced to sell their labour power to the bourgeoisie. In developed capitalist countries, standing in between these two classes is the *petite bourgeoisie*, which comprises the owners of small businesses – employers of small numbers of wage labourers – and higher-paid professionals such as managers, lawyers, bank employees, doctors, architects, and so on.

One of the challenges of this thesis is to combine Foucault and Marx in a productive and useful way in order to produce sociological knowledge. Of course, this major undertaking has already been attempted by scholars who have acknowledged the fact that Marx's and Foucault's works are more complementary than incompatible (e.g. Balibar, 1992, Bidet, 2016, Macherey, 2015, Poulantzas, 2000, Read, 2003). I argue that it is only possible to combine Marx and Foucault if two conditions are fulfilled. Firstly, as Poulantzas argues, we must adopt the correct conception of "the economic", that is, define the economic as the relations of production and the division of labour they entail. This requires us to discard Foucault's vague idea of the economy, which comprises the characteristics of capitalist

development, such as demographic changes, new techniques of production (industrialization), and the market economy, but does not capture the essence of the capitalist economy: the relations of production and the division of labour. Secondly, I argue that we must also acknowledge that biopower is manifested not only in the sphere of reproduction but also in the production process; the wage relationship is essentially biopolitical, because by the time the worker enters the production process she has been subjected to norms set by the owner of the means of production (Macherey, 2015). When deployed in this manner, Foucault's theory provides the tools that allow us to examine capitalist social relations in detail and to acknowledge their biopolitical nature and immanent relationship with the construction of subjectivity. Foucault's notions of biopower and governmentality mediate between macro-sociological and micro-sociological perspectives of analysis and allow us to connect social and economic relations with self-governing practices (Lemke, 2012).

This thesis proposes that the dominance of the imperative of authenticity should not be traced either to the ideological sphere or to the emergence of new consumption trends. Throughout the thesis it will be argued that the relationship between late capitalism and authenticity is not based on the commodification of the ideal of authenticity or on the ideological transformations of capitalism (although undeniably it is expressed in both of these ways); rather, I argue that this relationship is grounded in the way that the contemporary subject is constituted within late capitalist social relations and neoliberal governmentality. Thus, the aim of this thesis is to examine the developments in the capitalist economy, the power mechanisms, and the discourses that have shaped contemporary subjectivity and the notion of the self in late capitalist societies and show how these relate to the dominance of the imperative of authenticity. I will argue that late capitalism and neoliberal governmentality constitute a biopolitical environment which results in the construction of the entrepreneurial self and its subjection to the imperative of authenticity. It will be shown that this imperative functions as a normative ideal that reconciles individuals to late capitalist social relations and neoliberal governmentality. Thus, I will argue that although the ideal of authenticity may seem emancipatory it does not challenge the capitalist order. Instead, the imperative of authenticity goes hand in hand with the power relations and exploitation of late capitalism and in fact reproduces them. Consequently, this thesis questions not only the anticapitalist critique of capitalism as a source of inauthenticity but, more importantly, the apparent radicalness and value of the imperative to "be authentic". Moreover, not only does the imperative of authenticity not

result in a healthy relation with oneself, as some mainstream writers claim it does; it actually has detrimental effects for individuals' mental health, especially for members of the working class. Finally, I discuss the political implications of the imperative of authenticity and suggest that it undermines collective political struggles, such as collective identity struggles and class politics. In light of these findings, I propose a revision to the prevailing view that capitalism is a cause of inauthenticity and call for an anticapitalism that moves beyond the authentic/inauthentic dichotomy.

Chapter outline

The first chapter provides a critical review of recent literature that addresses the relationship between late capitalism and authenticity. My review will focus on three approaches that have been influential and that are representative of recent trends in social theory. Firstly, I will examine a Marxist approach, expressed mainly in the work of David Harvey, Fredric Jameson, and Terry Eagleton. On this view, the rise of postmodern culture is the result of the passage from Fordism to flexible accumulation. This interpretation suggests that postmodernism is the cultural expression of the alienated, commodified relationship that late capitalism has developed towards diversity and authenticity. Secondly, I will discuss the post-Weberian approach proposed by Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello. According to their view, late capitalism has appropriated the critique developed by the social movements of the 1960s and developed a new value system. In contrast to the conservative spirit of the Protestant ethic, the "new spirit of capitalism" values diversity, authenticity, self-expression, and self-realization. Thirdly, I will examine the poststructuralist interpretation of capitalism adopted by post-Marxist scholars of the Italian autonomist Marxist tradition, such as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Maurizio Lazzarato, Paolo Virno, Franco Berardi, and others. According to this view, late capitalism has become biopolitical as a result of the turn of the economy towards immaterial production. Consequently, capitalist production develops an immanent relationship with the production of life, which allows for the emergence of authentic modes of being.

The second chapter examines the constitution of subjectivity in industrial capitalist societies. The analysis goes beyond the understanding of the industrial subject as an alienated figure. It also moves away from an understanding of power as merely coercive, acknowledging it as a productive relationship that is constitutive of subjectivity. In this chapter, I will suggest that from the early stages of capitalism up until the mature stages of

industrial society at the end of the 1960s, capitalism was associated with liberal government and the panoptical surveillance of society. This mode of government was supported both by disciplinary mechanisms and by the biopolitical regulation of the population, which found its most mature expression in the development of the welfare state and the government of “the social”. Together, these complementary mechanisms functioned as normalizing forces that reformed subjects in accordance with acceptable moral norms and identities, and thus tended towards uniformity. I conclude that industrial capitalism, supported by state welfare policies, resulted in a homogenization of the whole social body. Thus, although capitalist society generated the idea of the unique self, it simultaneously suppressed it by subjecting it to homogenous norms and to imposed national identities. In this sense, the imperative of authenticity may be seen as a radical demand that is opposed to the demands of industrial capitalist society (Berman, 2009).

The third chapter examines the transformation of capitalism through the emergence of neoliberal governmentality and the post-panoptic modes of surveillance that underpin it. As we will see, in contrast to disciplinary mechanisms, post-panoptic surveillance is characterized by moral neutrality. Instead of aiming at the moral normalization and reformation of the subject, it focuses on the fragments of each individual’s existence and regulates the actions of the subject according to the network the subject is participating in at a specific moment in time. Contemporary modes of surveillance do not aim to subsume the subject under a hegemonic value system. They are indifferent towards the subject’s morality and do not aim to produce a coherent individual with a stable identity. Further, profit-oriented surveillance that aims to collect and commodify data favours, rather than suppresses, the expression of particularity. I conclude by suggesting that neoliberal government and post-panoptic surveillance allows for and even promotes diversity in values and lifestyles – as long as these lifestyles do not interrupt the functioning of the capitalist system.

In the fourth chapter I discuss the constitution of entrepreneurial subjectivity that results from the prevalence of neoliberal governmentality in late capitalist societies. The contemporary self is constituted in order to be an entrepreneur of their own human capital and to be an active, autonomous, self-responsible, and self-managed individual. They are obliged to make calculative choices upon every aspect of their life: work, consumption, education, healthcare, and financial investments. Under these conditions, life comes to be constituted by the aggregate of personal choices and becomes a personal project.

In the fifth and final chapter, I suggest that when life becomes a private project the imperative of self-differentiation and authenticity becomes an existential responsibility. The neoliberal subject of late capitalism is tasked with the obligation of becoming the creator of its own “authentic self” by developing techniques of self-branding or by making certain consumer choices. As we will see, the imperative of authenticity presents an impossible task, the burden of which has harmful psychological consequences. This burden is even greater for those lowest down in the class stratification since they are the ones with the fewest means to achieve this (in any case impossible) goal. Additionally, I will suggest that the demand of authenticity undermines collective action by promoting individual solutions to social problems.

CHAPTER 1: LATE CAPITALISM AND AUTHENTICITY – PERSPECTIVES IN SOCIAL THEORY

In recent decades the subjects of identity and diversity have become central political issues, especially in the Western world. Embracing diversity has become a primary concern of governments, public institutions, non-governmental organizations, private agencies, and social movements. The right to be different, or, as we might put it, the right to be oneself, has become a central topic in public discourse. It seems as though the dominant discourse of modernity, which favoured the value of homogeneity and upheld the principle of a common human nature, has now given way to a discourse that holds everyone responsible for searching for their own “essence” and champions diversity (Tsoukalas, 2010: 17). Nowadays we are, more than at any other time in human history, faced with the imperative to be authentic. Unfortunately, the celebration of self-differentiation and the value of authenticity neglects the issue of undesired differences emanating from social inequality and economic exploitation. One of the reasons for this is that the discourse of diversity and authenticity is rarely related to the broader political and economic picture in contemporary society. Social and human scientists bear a large part of the responsibility for this since for many years the social sciences have tended to avoid critical approaches to capitalism. This general tendency in the human and social sciences has meant that the imperative of authenticity has rarely been theorized in relation to the transformations of capitalism that took place over the last few decades. Nevertheless, there have been some attempts by contemporary social theorists to construe the new dominant vocabulary of identity recognition, diversity, self-differentiation, and authenticity in relation to late capitalism.

Before examining these attempts, it will be useful to define the term “late capitalism” and to detail those characteristics that distinguish it from previous stages of capitalism. It should be noted, first, that the term refers to some general features of contemporary capitalism. Thus, its use should not distract us from the fact that capitalism has developed differently in different countries. We must always keep in mind that capitalism is essentially dynamic and always changing. As historical, economic, and sociological studies have shown, capitalism takes on different characteristics in different regions and in different periods. Therefore, it is fruitful to think of capitalism as a noun that should only be used in a plural form – that is, “capitalisms” – and to acknowledge the particular ways in which it develops, instead of giving a general theory of what capitalism is and how it works. As Piketty acknowledges in his *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*: “There is no single variety of

capitalism or organization of production [...]. This will continue to be true in the future, no doubt more than ever: new forms of organization and ownership remain to be invented” (Piketty, 2014: 483). Nevertheless, despite the different varieties of late capitalism, it has some specific characteristics that allow us to distinguish it from previous stages of capitalism.

The first major characteristic of late capitalism is the expansion of capitalism on a global scale. In 1973 the collapse of the Bretton Woods agreement, which had defined the post-World War II international economy, and the deregulation of markets imposed in the early 1980s through the neoliberal policies of the governments of Reagan in the USA and of Thatcher in the UK established an international financial system. The unrestricted mobility of capital led to the unification of financial economies and the creation of a global financial market. The collapse of actually existing socialism in 1990 removed the last obstacle that stood in the way of the unleashing of the forces of capital throughout the world. The tremendous progress of information and transportation technologies gave a further boost to capital mobility. For the first time in history, the overwhelming majority of countries were fully integrated into the capitalist economy. This new global capitalism is qualitatively different from previous forms. While previous stages of capitalism did involve a transnational market for commodities, the contemporary global economy involves, further, a global network of productive structures. Armed with the forces of advanced transportation and information technologies, big companies are able to offshore large parts of their production to developing countries where the costs of production are much cheaper because of low labour and material costs. Consequently, late capitalism introduces a new global division of labour in which most industrial production has been transported to developing countries, while advanced capitalist economies focus on immaterial production, namely, the production of knowledge, information, audiovisuals, software, cultural activities, and services.

The dominance of immaterial production in Western countries is the second important feature of late capitalism. Immaterial production is based on new ways of organizing work, new kinds of commodity, and new forms of technology. As the result of this transformation, value is no longer only produced during working hours and at the workplace. It is now produced through all aspects of life, creating a social factory.

The dominance of immaterial production leads to another characteristic of late capitalism, which is the abandonment of the rigid structures of Fordism and the turn to a flexible

production and distribution system. The organization structures of contemporary companies have shifted from the strict hierarchical organization of the factory towards network-based structures in which each worker is encouraged to take responsibility and take the initiative (Lazzarato, 2006). As part of this shift, companies have adopted a type of organization known as “lean production”. Big companies outsource large parts of production to subcontractors or other, smaller companies (Marazzi, 2007: 19). Another characteristic of the post-Fordist era is the abandonment of the mass production/mass consumption project of Fordism in favour of what has come to be known as “just-in-time production”. In an attempt to respond as quickly as possible to shifts in demand and in the tastes of consumers, big companies have adopted the logic of producing a variety of goods in smaller quantities, rather than large quantities of goods (Harvey: 1989). Of course, this logic can only be profitable with the right strategies of manipulation and the right analyses of tendencies in consumption. Information and communication technologies have been crucial in this venture, for the effectiveness of zero-stock production depends on the ability of technologies such as barcodes and credit card payments to collect all sorts of data regarding consumers’ tastes and behaviours. This leads to a reversal in the relation between production and consumption: whereas in the Fordist paradigm production defined consuming tendencies, in the post-Fordist era production is defined by consumption and the observation of the market’s response (Marazzi, 2007: 21, 22).

Another significant aspect of late capitalism is the increased financialization of the economy and the establishment of an international financial system. The financialization of the economy has become so total that it has led to the view that the financial economy is separate from the processes of production and distribution – the so-called “real economy”. In contrast to this view, Marazzi suggests that the process of financialization and the changes in the worlds of production, distribution, and consumption are two sides of the same coin (Marazzi: 2011b: 48). As Marazzi rightly argues, finance is consubstantial with production and consumption since it fuels the creation of additional demand through credit mechanisms (Marazzi, 2011b: 27). As Harvey notes, the need to increase demand led governments and financial institutions to promote the indebtedness of American and European households, who, however, did not see their incomes rise. Thus, as Marazzi points out, the increase in private indebtedness in the USA and Europe was as important to the function of post-Fordist capitalism as the welfare state was for the mass consumption project of Fordism (Marazzi, 2011b, 32). Unlike in earlier stages of capitalism, nowadays the financial economy reaches the majority of society. Today, most people are connected to

the process of financialization either through private debt or through investment in the stock market, something that was encouraged by neoliberal policies (Deutschmann, 2011).

Having noted the characteristics of late capitalism, I now turn to a critical discussion of the attempts that have been made to relate late capitalism to the rise of the imperative of authenticity. The discussion will be focused on the three approaches which have been the most influential in recent social theory. The first is the Marxist approach of David Harvey, Fredric Jameson, and Terry Eagleton. These three scholars share the same scepticism towards postmodernism, which they interpret as, in Jameson's words, "the cultural logic of late capitalism" (Jameson, 1990). In their view, the only experience of diversity and authenticity available to us in our postmodern era is an alienated and commercialized one. The second position is that of Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, who pursue a Weberian approach. They claim that social actors need strong moral reasons to justify their engagement with capitalism. According to Boltanski and Chiapello, as a result of the anticapitalistic critiques that emerged in the late 1960s and later, capitalism was reorganized and developed a "new spirit" that embraces the values of diversity and authenticity. The third approach comes from the post-Marxist scholars of the Italian autonomist Marxist tradition. While my analysis will focus more on the work of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, I will also draw on the work of Maurizio Lazzarato, Paolo Virno, Franco Berardi, and other representatives of this school of thought. In general, they all agree that capitalism's turn to immaterial production has caused capitalism to become biopolitical. Contemporary capitalism is a new biopolitical environment in which subjectivity is shaped in new ways, and this raises new challenges but also offers opportunities for diversity and authenticity to blossom.

The condition of postmodernity: Authenticity, or, the cultural logic of late capitalism

The concepts of postmodernity and postmodernism have been the subjects of multiple debates in social theory during recent decades. To put it simply, the term "postmodernity" refers to a historical period that supposedly breaks with and follows modernity, and "postmodernism" refers to the epistemological, aesthetic, and cultural changes that characterize this new era (Eagleton, 1996). Postmodernism is associated with a scepticism towards reason, objective truths (scientific or moral), and grand narratives, and it celebrates pluralism and diversity. Contemporary Marxists have criticized the premises of postmodernism (Callinicos, 1989; Eagleton, 1996; Harvey, 1989; Jameson, 1991). Two of

the most notable critiques of postmodernism are articulated by two insightful Marxist scholars, David Harvey and Fredric Jameson. Consistent with their Marxist approach, Harvey and Jameson interpret the cultural transformations that we associate with postmodernism as being the result of developments in the capitalist economy after 1970. Their dialectical materialist approach leads them to adopt a critical stance towards postmodernism, which they perceive as, in Jameson's words, "the cultural logic of late capitalism" (Jameson, 1991).

An obvious difference between their works is that Harvey's analysis focuses more on the material conditions which led to the emergence of postmodern culture, whereas Jameson focuses more on the cultural critique of postmodernism and the aesthetic analysis of contemporary art. Jameson focuses more on what he sees as a distinctive characteristic of late capitalism, namely, the fact that cultural production has been fully integrated into commodity production in general, with the result that cultural and economic production now overlap (Jameson, 1991: 3).²⁰ However, despite their different approaches both Harvey and Jameson see in late capitalism the construction of new spatial and temporal experiences that have led to the emergence of postmodern culture and the celebration of aesthetic instability, ephemerality, and difference (Harvey, 1989: 156). Both Harvey and Jameson recognize that our perception of time and space is not completely objective but instead is socially constructed and undergirded by material processes. Therefore, as capitalism changes, our spatial and temporal experiences also change (Harvey, 1989: 204). Thus, Harvey's work and Jameson's work can be understood as complementary, and although they do not directly discuss the issue of self-differentiation and authenticity in connection with developments in contemporary capitalism, their remarks on postmodernity offer valuable insights into the subject.

In *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1989), Harvey attempts an "enquiry into the origins of cultural change". From the beginning of the book, Harvey is interested in the sensitivity that postmodern culture shows towards diversity and marginalized identities. Although Harvey acknowledges that the attention postmodernism pays to diversity has a positive social influence, he is concerned about postmodernism's political dimension:

Does [postmodernism] have a revolutionary potential by virtue of its opposition to all forms of metanarratives (including Marxism, Freudianism, and all forms of

²⁰ As this implies, Jameson disputes the traditional base–superstructure scheme, according to which culture is understood as part of the superstructure.

Enlightenment reason) and its close attention to “other worlds” and to “other voices” that have far too long been silenced (women, gays, blacks, colonized people with their own histories)? Or is it simply the commercialization and domestication of modernism, and a reduction of the latter’s already tarnished aspirations to a *laissez-faire*, “anything goes” market eclecticism? (Harvey, 1989: 42)

Harvey attempts to make sense of postmodernism by tracing the economic and political transformations that took place during the last decades of the twentieth century: the passage from Fordism and Keynesianism to a new regime of capital accumulation and a different form of political and social regulation, which he calls “flexible accumulation” (Harvey, 1989: 145).²¹ Harvey clarifies that the basic rules of the capitalist mode of production are still the same and continue to shape the historical and geographical development of contemporary societies. However, he argues that during the last decades of the twentieth century radical changes occurred in the labour process, in consumer behaviour, in the governing strategies of the state, and in the geopolitical structures of capitalism, all of which have been decisive factors in the emergence of postmodern culture (Harvey, 1989: 121).

Harvey suggests that the economic growth that took place after the Second World War from 1945 to 1973 was based on a Fordist-Keynesian configuration (Harvey, 1989: 124).²² Following the thought of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, Harvey claims that Fordism is much more than an organizational and technological innovation which seeks to increase productivity through the rational division of labour, the calculation of labour activity, and the imposition of hierarchical forms of control over workers. To a much greater degree than is usually assumed, Fordism is a productive system which aims not only to organize the production process but also to shape the way of life of the entire population. The mass production project of Fordism had to be combined with mass consumerism, a new aesthetics, and a psychology. Fordism, Gramsci argues, is “inseparable from a specific mode of living and of thinking and feeling life” (Gramsci as cited in Harvey, 1989: 126). However, despite Ford’s own attempts to provide his workers with the conditions that would allow them to become consumers, Fordism could not create the mass consumption

²¹ The term “flexible accumulation” was first introduced by the group of economics scholars known as the “regulation school”. The most prominent figure in this group is considered to be Michel Aglietta, who developed the school’s basic arguments in his book *A Theory of Capitalist Regulation: The US Experience* (1976). Other notable names in the group are Alain Lipietz, Robert Boyer, Bob Jessop, Jamie Peck, and André Orléan. For a comprehensive discussion of the topic see Boyer (1990).

²² “I broadly accept the view that the long postwar boom, from 1945 to 1973, was built upon a certain set of labour control practices, technological mixes, consumption habits, and configurations of political-economic power, and that this configuration can reasonably be called Fordist-Keynesian” (Harvey, 1989: 124).

required for mass production to be transformed into profit.²³ Fordism could not ensure its own efficiency and stability without the support of state mechanisms to promote relatively stable demand conditions. This issue was resolved only after 1945, when, according to Harvey, Fordism grew to its full maturity and developed as a distinctive regime of accumulation (Harvey, 1989: 129).

The postwar period was characterized by what Harvey, in his book *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* of 2005, calls a “class compromise between capital and labour” (Harvey, 2005: 10). The state followed the Keynesian strategy of being active in sectors like transportation and public utilities, developing social policy mechanisms, and contributing to the social wage by covering expenses like social security, health, and education. At the same time, governments intervened to affect wage agreements and protect the workers’ rights in production, which ensured a decent income for the majority of the population (Harvey, 1989: 135). All these policies were vital for the growth and stability of mass production and mass consumption since they ensured relatively full-time employment and decent purchasing power for the majority of the population. Nevertheless, during the years between 1965 and 1973, it became obvious that Fordism and Keynesianism could not constrain the inherent contradictions of capitalism. Fordism’s rigidity became its fatal flaw. The investments of capital in mass production projects, a labour market and rigid labour contracts that were supported by a strong and organized working class, and the increasing responsibilities of the welfare state created an environment that restricted rather than enabled capital accumulation (Harvey, 1989: 142). After the economic crisis of 1973, the restructuring of economic, political, and social life seemed to be necessary.

The solution to the problems created by the rigid structures of Fordism was the transition to the regime of “flexible accumulation”, a term that Harvey uses to describe the flexible structures that were put in place during the 1970s and 1980s. This transition found its political expression in the rise of neoliberalism in Western Europe and North America, which by the end of the 1970s was signalled by the electoral victories of Thatcher in the UK (1979) and Reagan in the USA (1980) (Harvey, 1989: 166, 1967).²⁴ Flexible

²³ Part of Ford’s own attempt was the institution of the five-dollar, eight-hour working day, which according to Harvey aimed not only to secure worker compliance but also to provide sufficient pay and free time for workers to consume (Harvey, 1989: 126).

²⁴ In his analysis of neoliberalism Harvey explains that the role of the neoliberal state changes from being active in the economy, as in the case of the Keynesian state, to simply setting the institutional framework in which free trade can bloom, guaranteeing the quality of money, securing private property rights through legal structures, and intervening to create markets where they do not exist through privatization policies (Harvey, 2005: 7).

accumulation is characterized by a drastic restructuring of the labour market. The weakening of union power and increases in unemployment allows capitalists to impose more flexible work regimes and labour contracts that gradually lead to the reduction of permanent and full-time employment in favour of part-time, temporary, or sub-contracted work arrangements (Harvey, 1989: 150). In addition, flexible accumulation is characterized by the organizational restructuring of the production process towards horizontal integration, rather than the vertical integration of Fordism, in an effort to accelerate capital accumulation. However, the acceleration in the process of production would be pointless if it were not supported by similar developments in exchange and consumption. Thus, advanced distribution techniques supported by improved information networks are also introduced, which leads to the acceleration of the circulation of commodities on the market. This is also reinforced by new financial services based on new technologies (electronic banking, credit and debit cards). At the same time, the economies of scale that characterized Fordism and mass production lose ground to the new production rationality, which favours the production of a variety of goods in smaller quantities. Again, flexible accumulation and the need for increased differentiation in consumption patterns proved to be compatible with neoliberal rhetoric and policy, which promoted the expansion of free markets and fostered the perception that individual freedom could be achieved through the market and through different consumption practices and lifestyle choices (Harvey, 2005: 7).²⁵ This logic, however, would not be profitable if it were not coupled with new consumption habits that favoured the consumption of products with low “life expectancies”. Therefore, flexible production and distribution structures are supported by advanced marketing techniques and advertising policies that promote rapidly changing fashions and the construction of new needs. Marketing and fashion are used on a grander scale, targeted not only at traditional markets such as the clothing industry but at a wider range of products, like sports equipment, music, video games, etc. (Harvey, 1989: 157). Lastly, the need to accelerate turnover time in consumption leads capital to invest not only in services like education and health but also in the cultural industry, since cultural products have almost zero turnover time (Harvey, 1989: 157, 285).

²⁵ Harvey identifies in neoliberalism a cultural change towards valuing diversity. Although this is not wrong, I suggest that Harvey’s view of neoliberalism is rather limited as he sees neoliberalism simply as an ideology and a set of economic and political policies that promote the free market and individual freedom. As I will demonstrate at length in this thesis, neoliberalism constitutes a governmental rationality that shapes every domain of human conduct and creates a certain type of subject, the entrepreneurial self (Foucault, 2010; also Brown 2015; Dardot and Laval, 2013; Rose, 2004).

Thus, the passage from Fordism to flexible accumulation changed production and consumption practices. But Harvey argues, further, that the crisis of Fordism was also a crisis of the spatial and temporal forms that dominated in modernity. Thus, the transition to flexible accumulation also had serious implications for temporal and spatial experience, resulting in what Harvey calls the “time-space compression” which underlies the turn to the cultural practices and discourses of postmodernism (Harvey, 1989: 197). Time-space compression results from the development and implementation of technological innovations that allow for the reduction of circulation costs and time for capital and commodities and the overcoming of physical barriers that slow down the circulation process; it thus shrinks temporal and spatial distances to the minimum and, by doing so, accelerates the turnover time of capital (Harvey, 1989: 284, 285)²⁶.

The acceleration of production, circulation, and consumption practices leads to a different temporal experience and to what Harvey calls “time compression”. In a world overrun by constantly changing fashions and images, the virtues of the ephemeral and instantaneity dominate over any sense of continuity (Harvey, 1989: 291). Like Harvey, Jameson argues that the intensity with which we are exposed to image-commodities in late capitalism leads to the deterioration of our memory of the past, which is finally effaced completely (Jameson, 1991: 18). Consequently, the postmodern era is characterized by a loss of historicity. As a result, the contemporary subject loses its capacity to extend itself into the past or the future and to have a coherent experience of time. Thus, a conception of the present as an eternal experience prevails over the sense of the past or the future, something which encourages a schizophrenic perception of time (Jameson, 1990: 25, 26, 27).²⁷ Harvey argues that the ephemerality of the new temporal experience creates a need that at first seems contradictory: the void of the ephemeral leads to the need for us to search for a greater, eternal truth within us. According to Harvey, this explains the revival of religion and the quest for spirituality in the postmodern world; both are to be understood as efforts to find true meaning and authenticity. These quests are sometimes expressed through turns to tradition or nationalism, as these both foster a sense of community (Harvey, 1989: 293).

²⁶ Harvey’s concept of “time-space compression” takes its lead from Marx’s remark, in the *Grundrisse* (1939 [1858]), about the “annihilation of space by time” by capital. In the *Grundrisse*, Marx examines in detail the phenomenon of circulation costs and capital’s need to overcome physical barriers in the circulation process.

²⁷ The inability to confront history has major political consequences. As Jameson notes, the sense of historicity is the lived possibility of experiencing history in an active way. However, under the schizophrenic circumstances of postmodernity, the subject conceives time only as a perpetual present and is therefore incapable of envisaging or creating a different future (Jameson, 1991: 21).

The consequences of flexible accumulation for our contemporary spatial experience is no less significant. Global capitalism has introduced a new geographical distribution of production and consumption practices. The dramatic reduction of transportation costs has allowed for the imposition of a global division of labour. Nowadays, a company can distribute its production process over several different countries on the basis of the quality and the cost of labour offered in those places. The overcoming of objective spatial restrictions has also radically transformed consumption practices by filling the market with myriad products from countless different places. Take, for example, food and drink consumption: while particular gastronomic habits were once considered distinctive features of different regions and cultures, nowadays the market is full of foods, beverages, and restaurants from the world's most distant and – until recently – unfamiliar cuisines. Gastronomy is just one example of how a particular region can be made accessible to the overwhelming majority of consumers in Western countries. Similarly, our lives are flooded with TV shows, books, music, and movies from all over the world. Contemporary capitalism has developed this dynamic of the annihilation of space through time even further. New communications systems make communication over any distance immediate and, most importantly, cheap. At the same time, the widespread use of TV (and nowadays the internet) and the low cost of travel have created an image of the globe as a place where distance does not matter (Harvey, 1989: 293).²⁸ This does not mean, however, that our ability to conceive of space has been enriched: quite the contrary. Jameson argues that in late capitalism individuals suffer a sense of loss and placelessness and that this constitutes the new spatial experience of postmodernism. In his view, the new spatial environment that global capitalism imposes has developed to such a degree that it exceeds the capacities of individual perception. Postmodernity creates a hyperspace in which subjects are completely disoriented and lost (Jameson, 1991: 44).²⁹

²⁸ The irony is that the collapse of spatial barriers increases the importance of locality and spatial differentiation. In late capitalism the uniqueness of a certain place or territory is highly important, since it gives capitalists the opportunity to take advantage of any different characteristics the place has to offer, such as different labour supplies, infrastructure, or resources (Harvey, 1989: 294). This also implies competition between places in the attempt to differentiate themselves to attract tourists or capital investment. The recent case of different cities competing to host Amazon's new headquarters is only one striking example among many others (for the case of Amazon see Helmond E. (2017, November, 08), Rushe, D. (2018, January 18), Solon, O. (2018, January 19)

²⁹ According to Jameson, postmodern architecture and, particularly, buildings like the Westin Bonaventure Hotel, which is so big and complicated that it is almost impossible to orientate oneself inside it, are solid examples of our inability to position ourselves in postmodern space (Jameson, 1991, 38-44).

Time-space compression leads us to value the ephemeral and difference, but it does so through the culture of the simulacrum, in which “the image has become the final form of commodity reification” (Debord as cited in Jameson, 1991: 19). According to Harvey, the postmodern experience is not only alienated – because mediated through the consumption of products bought on the market – but also reified, because our existence is composed of products and images whose origin, underlying labour processes, and related social relations we cannot understand or trace (Harvey, 1989: 300). Under conditions of flexible accumulation, the postmodern ontological landscape of pluralism and fragmentation prevails, and different cultures and worlds are juxtaposed with one another within the same space. According to Harvey, this explains “the emergence since 1970 of a fragmented politics of divergent special and regional interest groups” (Harvey, 1989: 302). Again, the collapse of spatial barriers in global capitalism ends up promoting locality and the distinction of place as the only palpable realities through which personal or collective identities can be expressed. In the same way, the loss of historicity entailed by time compression leads to a turn to tradition. But our inability to locate this tradition in a historical perspective results in the revival of tradition through commodification, through images and simulacra, through the imitation of an image of tradition rather than the return to or the reconstruction of the structures and relations that produced it (Harvey, 1989: 301).

The Marxist critique of postmodernism offers valuable lessons about how political economy informs cultural practices. In particular, Harvey’s work on the condition of postmodernity shows with great clarity how the passage from the Fordist-Keynesian configuration to the regime of flexible accumulation led to the emergence of postmodern culture. However, Harvey and Jameson remain wedded to an understanding of postmodern culture as a veil that conceals the structures of capitalist production. Thus, on this view, the values of difference, uniqueness, and authenticity that emerge with postmodernism are understood as sham values. The result is the commodification of difference and authenticity and their consumption by the alienated postmodern individual. Although the argument about the commodification of diversity and the simulacrum of authenticity is correct, I believe that the issue is much more complicated than their perspective suggests. The alienating consequences of capitalism and the veiling effects of ideology – as these ideas are put forward by traditional Marxism – are only particular aspects of how power is manifested. As Foucault argues, modern forms of power are indistinguishable from the production of knowledge and truth. Moreover, the subject does not exist outside of power

and economic relations but is constructed by them. Thus, we should not assume that the subject has a pure essence that comes to be alienated through the capitalist process. Rather, the contemporary subject is constructed through power relations. With this I do not mean to downplay the importance of production relations in these processes. In fact, I suggest that Harvey's position reduces the production process to the production and consumption of commodities. Harvey's attempts to highlight the role of production relations in forming people's habits and desires are reduced to some insights. This neglects one of capitalism's most crucial abilities: its ability to form subjectivity.

The new spirit of capitalism: Justification through authenticity

In one of the most influential works of contemporary social theory, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (1999), the French sociologist Luc Boltanski and the management theorist Eve Chiapello describe the organizational and ideological transformations of capitalism after the 1960s.³⁰ They claim that capitalism's transformations took place in parallel with the assimilation of the criticisms of capitalism propounded by the countercultural social movements of the 1960s. Taking France as their case study, Boltanski and Chiapello describe how the ideological transformation of capitalism undermined anticapitalist social movements and critics in the years that followed the uprising of 1968, even though the period between 1985 and 1995 saw a deteriorating social situation in France.³¹ Boltanski and Chiapello's work is based on textual analyses of management literature that aims to provide moral education for business practices, and their goal is to examine the emerging forms of ideology – or the “spirit of capital” – that led to the pacification of anticapitalist critique (Chiapello, 2003: 162).

Boltanski and Chiapello provide a minimal definition of capitalism: capitalism is the economic system that aims at the “unlimited accumulation of capital by peaceful means” (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007: 4). According to them, the main characteristic of capitalism is the constant reintroduction of capital into circulation in order eventually to produce profit that will, in turn, be reinvested. This is what gives capitalism its dynamic nature and its astonishing transformative power (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007: 5). The deficiency of

³⁰ For a comprehensive overview of Boltanski and Chiapello's seminal text that examines in depth the arguments, methods, and tools employed in the work, as well as its power and relevance for contemporary social theory, see Du Gay and Morgan (2014).

³¹ It should be noted that although their analysis focuses on the case of France Boltanski and Chiapello argue that similar process took place in most industrialized countries (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007: xxi).

their definition of capitalism, while partly problematic, does not detract from the value of the book, for its aim is not to examine capitalist economic relations but to understand the way that social actors justify their engagement with capitalism. For Boltanski and Chiapello, it is by no means natural or to be taken for granted that people do in fact participate in capitalism. On the contrary, they note that a lot of people who engage with capitalism have many reasons not to do so. The wage-earning class has been deprived of the products of their labour, and capitalists are caught in a pointless quest for profit which has little to do with their consumer needs, even if they are the most extravagant. Boltanski and Chiapello adopt a Weberian approach. They claim that people need strong moral reasons to integrate themselves into the capitalist process. They maintain that without an ideology that justifies people's engagement with capitalism – which is what they call a “spirit of capitalism” – the regime of capital accumulation would be dysfunctional (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007: 7, 8, 9). They define the spirit of capitalism more precisely as “the set of beliefs associated with the capitalist order that helps to justify this order and, by legitimating them, to sustain the forms of action and predispositions compatible with it” (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007: 10). Boltanski and Chiapello clarify, however, that a spirit of capitalism does not always support capital accumulation. A spirit of capitalism can be a hindrance to capital accumulation if it does not find legitimization in the normative conceptions of the social order (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007: 25, 26, 27). Thus, just as it supports the capitalist process, a spirit of capitalism can also impose certain moral constraints on it as to the means of accumulation which are considered fair, legitimate, and socially acceptable.

A significant part of their argument is based on the assumption that critique plays a crucial role in the development of a spirit of capitalism. Boltanski and Chiapello argue that capitalism is by definition an amoral system: it simply accumulates capital. Therefore, critique is very important for capitalism if it is to develop a value system that ensures that people engage with it. The enemies and critics of capitalism end up providing capitalism with the moral foundations that it cannot provide itself (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007: 27). Transformations of spirits of capitalism also depend upon the forces of critique. As this implies, Boltanski and Chiapello's approach to ideology is significantly different from the Marxist approach. In their view, ideology is not a reflection of economic relations but a result of the dialectical relationship between the hitherto dominant value system and a contrasting critique. In addition, their interpretation of ideology implies a rejection of the claim, also prevalent in the Marxist tradition, that ideology is false consciousness. An

ideology-as-false-consciousness approach emphasizes the distorting effects of ideology and sees it as veiling material conditions and allowing the dominant class to preserve its power over the workers (Chiapello, 2003: 156). By contrast, Boltanski and Chiapello argue that the fact that capitalism needs a dominant ideology in order to function does not mean that ideology is a veil that allows the dominant to rule the dominated. All agents involved in the capitalist process rely on the spirit of capitalism in order to justify their involvement (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007: 11). At the same time, Boltanski and Chiapello reject the dichotomy between base and superstructure that distinguishes mere ideas from the more “real” production process. They suggest that ideas play an important role in this process and that the relationship between production and ideology is reciprocal (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007: xx).

According to Boltanski and Chiapello, the main arguments that support and justify capitalism are drawn from economic theory. These arguments focus on the material progress that the capitalist economy offers, its efficiency in the satisfaction of needs, and the fact that economic freedom is associated with liberal political regimes. Therefore, the spirit of capitalism includes all three of these important elements. However, the stable character of these elements in capitalistic history, and the fact that, as the authors argue, these reasons do not suffice for people in their everyday and working lives to engage with capitalism, and so Boltanski and Chiapello focus on other aspects of the spirit of capitalism (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007: 14). According to Boltanski and Chiapello, three dimensions help to provide a concrete expression of the spirit of capitalism:

1. The first dimension indicates what is “*exciting*” about an involvement with capitalism – in other words, how this system can help people to blossom, and how it can generate enthusiasm. This “stimulating” dimension is usually related to the different forms of “liberation” that capitalism offers.
2. A second set of arguments emphasizes the forms of *security* that is offered to those who are involved, both for themselves and for their children.
3. Finally, a third set of arguments (and one that is especially important for our demonstration) invokes the notion of *justice* (or *fairness*), explaining how capitalism is coherent with a sense of justice, and how it contributes to the common good. (Chiapello, 2003: 164)

Boltanski and Chiapello use these dimensions to identify three spirits of capitalism that have appeared since the nineteenth century. The first is the one that characterized

capitalism at the end of nineteenth century. It corresponds to a domestic form of capitalism in which family firms dominated and the figure of individual bourgeois entrepreneur emerged. The freedom that capitalism offered from the local community was considered to be stimulating and liberating, and security was understood as based on personal property, family relations, and charity. The sense that capitalism served the common good was based on a belief in progress, science, technology, and industry, in combination with a belief in charity and family assistance (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007: 17).

The second spirit of capitalism was dominant between the 1930s and the 1960s. During this time, the capital accumulation process was supported less by the individual entrepreneur than by big, centralized, bureaucratic industrial firms, which developed mass production projects and new techniques for expanding markets and were based on economies of scale, standardization of products, and the rational organization of work. The stimulating aspect of this period was the fact that it offered young people the ability to attain positions of power and offered significant consumer power to the large majority. The feeling of security was achieved through the ability of people to make long-term plans thanks to the relative stability of career paths and the rise of the welfare state. The notion of the common good was satisfied by a sense of meritocracy that valued effectiveness, the belief that industrial capitalism contributed to a more equal distribution of wealth and the consumer power of the masses, and the sense that the capitalist economy, in cooperation with the state, secured social justice (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007: 18).

The third spirit, which is the main subject of Boltanski and Chiapello's analyses, emerged during the 1980s. As we have already seen, the transformation of a spirit of capitalism results from the emergence of an anticapitalist critique that consequently suggests that capitalism must be reorganized. In the case of the third spirit, in the face of the critique that emerged in the years that led up to and followed May 1968, capitalism reorganized itself and developed a new value system that could elicit commitment from people.

Boltanski and Chiapello argue that the anticapitalist movement of the 1960s focused less on what they call "social critique", namely, criticism that highlights social stratification issues such as economic exploitation and inequality, poverty, and individualism, and more on what they call "artistic critique". The latter accused capitalism of being a source of inauthenticity and a disruptor of human relations as a result of the way it subjects life to the blind forces of the market and capital accumulation. Moreover, the artistic critique

considered capitalism to be a source of oppression, an economic system that denies people's freedom, autonomy, and creativity by imposing a disciplined, rationalized, and hierarchical working environment (Boltanski and Chiapello: 37, 38, 39). The authors claim that, until this point in its history, capitalism had never really had to respond to authenticity-based critiques; with the formation of the "third spirit", capitalism responded to these criticisms for the first time (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007: 438).

The artistic critique targeted the industrial stage of capitalism, which, as we have seen, is associated with the second spirit. It attacked the standardizing and massifying powers of capitalism, which had led, in Boltanski and Chiapello's words, to "a loss of difference between entities, whether these are objects or human beings" (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007: 439). The authors explain that the main factor underlying the standardization of objects was Fordist mass production. Mass production resulted in a massive amount of products entering the market, and these were identical products that were used in a standardized way by the consumer. This standardization entailed the massification of social actors, who, whether consciously or not, were reproducing these uniform consumption practices. The massification of individuals was deepened by the development of advertising. The introduction into the market of all kinds of commodities had to be supported by the meticulous manipulation of human desire. The development of advertising had as a result the abolition of qualitative differences between the desires of different subjects and the massification of human beings as consumers with standard desires. In addition, the work discipline introduced by Taylorism deprived human work of its value as an expression of a set of particular skills and subordinated it to the assembly line. The qualitative differences between one set of skills and another were abolished as a result of the subordination of the worker to the machine. Lastly, the mass media that developed alongside industrial capitalism imposed a uniformity on human thoughts and ideas (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007: 439, 440).

Capitalism responded to these criticisms and to the increased demand for the de-standardization of life by commodifying difference. It incorporated the 1960s critiques by offering consumers options rather than the standardized products of Fordism. This was made possible through the production of a greater variety of goods and the expansion of the logic of the market into spheres that were previously outside of the market. The logic of commodification expanded into domains such as culture, leisure, and tourism, areas in which authentic and non-alienated experiences were typically pursued (Boltanski and

Chiapello, 2007: 441, 442). However, this led to a different critique, which challenged inauthenticity from another perspective. The perception of the inauthentic as resulting from mass production and standardization of lifestyles gave way to an understanding of the inauthentic as the reproduction of difference for commercial purposes. The inauthentic here is discredited for intentional promotion of instrumental authenticity as opposed to genuine or spontaneous authenticity (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007: 449, 450).³² This eventually resulted in a redefinition of authenticity and inauthenticity.

The commercialization of difference was not the only way capitalism assimilated the critique of standardization and the demand for authenticity. In response to the artistic critique, new non-hierarchical forms of work organization were developed. Based on their analyses of managerial discourse, Boltanski and Chiapello conclude that, in the decades following the 1960s, the rigid, bureaucratic, and hierarchical firm structures that had previously prevailed, and that had based their profits on mass production and mass consumption, were no longer taken to be justified. Hierarchy and bureaucracy were seen as forms of domination that threatened autonomy and creativity in individuals' working lives. Thus, a new form of organization was created. During the 1990s, managerial discourse emphasized the dissatisfaction of French managers and the problems of large firms, and it began to maintain that firms should work as networks with multiple participants. The new management discourse advocated the networked organization of work based on teams, projects, and workforce mobilization. It also emphasized, as we have seen, the need for a variety of differentiated products to cater to different consumer choices (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007: 73).

The gradual changes gradual in firm organization, technology and managerial discourse are put in a more detailed examination through the conceptual framework of "cities" or apparatuses of justification which was initially developed by Boltanski and Laurent Thevenot in their book *On Justification* (1991). Boltanski and Thevenot were attempting to make sense of the way people justify their actions and, to do that, they described six different cities characterized by different principles of evaluation: the inspirational city, the domestic city, the city of renown, the civic city, the market city, and the industrial city. In *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Boltanski and Chiapello introduce a seventh justificatory apparatus, the "projective city", which refers to a form of fairness that is appropriate to a

³² This view found its philosophical expression in the analyses of Guy Debord in *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967) and the work of Jean Baudrillard on "consumer society", the simulacrum, and hyper-reality. For more on this see the introduction of this thesis. See also Boltanski and Chiapello (2007: 450, note 82, page 478).

world organized through networks and the constant development of projects (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007: 105).³³ Boltanski and Chiapello argue that in a projective city the principle of evaluation, the principle according to which people, things, and actions are judged and measured, is the principle of activity. Activity is linked to the value of developing projects and constructing networks between people. What is crucial is that the notion of activity blurs the distinction between work and leisure time. One can and should be active, creative, and constructing networks throughout one's entire life. One's life is to be understood as a succession of projects, and the more varied these projects, the more they are to be valued. The constant development of one's self and one's employability are considered to be crucial in avoiding social exclusion (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007: 110, 111).

In the realm of the projective city, making connections and forming networks is considered to be the natural state of things. Therefore, in such a justificatory regime the "great person" is the one who is enthusiastic, involved, communicative, trusting, tolerant, and adaptable to different people and situations. As Boltanski and Chiapello describe it, the leaders of the new networked firms are urged to "manage not in authoritarian fashion, but by listening to others, with tolerance, recognizing and respecting differences. They are not (hierarchical) bosses, but integrators, facilitators, an inspiration, unifiers of energies, enhancers of life, meaning and autonomy" (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007: 115). In fact, in the new networked and project-oriented firm, the most important values are tolerance, adaptability, and the acceptance of difference. These are important not only because they imply a rejection of hierarchy and authoritarianism but, even more crucially, because they are considered necessary for building connections and creating networks:

Great men in the projective city are also streamlined in that they are liberated from the burden of their own passions and values: open to differences (unlike rigid, absolutist personalities attached to the defense of universal values). For the same reasons, they are not critical (except when it comes to defending tolerance and difference). Nothing must get the upper hand over the imperative of adjustment, or hamper their movements. They are determined exclusively by factors deriving from the situation and connections they are caught up in, which completely define them. (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007: 123)

³³ It should be noted that while each city does not provide the only justification for each spirit of capitalism, the projective city is associated with the third spirit of capitalism and the industrial city with the second spirit. (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007:).

Boltanski and Chiapello's analysis of management discourse reveals that in the new spirit of capitalism the dimension of stimulation and liberation is justified by the belief that people can be innovative and creative in their work and that authoritarian bosses belong in the past. The sense of security derives from the valorisation of self-control. The dimension of fairness is supported by a meritocracy that values mobility and the ability to construct networks. At the same time, each project one participates in gives one an opportunity to develop one's skills and employability and opens the door to another project. Boltanski and Chiapello's claim is that the development of the third spirit and the reorganization of firms as networks results in the neutralization of the artistic critique and capitalism's assimilation of the social demand of authenticity. However, the assimilation of authenticity entails an inherent contradiction. This assimilation is achieved by validating and affirming the demand of authenticity by commodifying it, but this creates a world in which such a demand is, at least in its traditional sense, no longer valid. As Boltanski and Chiapello explain, the traditional notion of authenticity, "as loyalty to self, as the subject's resistance to pressure from others, as the demand for truth in the sense of conformity to an ideal", has been deconstructed in order to fit the demands of the new networked world: "In a connectionist world, loyalty to the self looks like inflexibility; resistance to others seems like a refusal to make connections" (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007: 451)³⁴. Thus, under the new spirit of capitalism, the concept of authenticity is transformed. Authenticity can no longer be a measure of a self's consistency with its original, non-alienated essence, as it was taken to be in the first half of the twentieth century. In the networked world, the demand of authenticity takes the form of constant change in which one is called not to be loyal to one's essence but to actively construct one's own authenticity. In the networked world of contemporary capitalism, "the new demand of authenticity must always be formulated in an ironic distance from itself" (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007: 452).

In conclusion, Boltanski and Chiapello's work highlights capitalism's need to absorb critique, and its effectiveness in doing so, in order to renew itself ideologically and at the same time to maintain its essence, which is the accumulation of capital. The artistic critique of the social movements of the 1960s created the need for an ideological transformation of capitalism and led to its organizational reformation so that people could justify their engagement with capitalism to themselves. The new spirit of capitalism emphasizes the

³⁴ With the term "connexionist world" Boltanski and Chiapello describe the world of networked structured capitalism, the world of the "new spirit of capitalism", to which the projective city applies (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007: 130-132, 135, 345, 355, 362-3, 372, 449, 522, 535)

values of autonomy, creativity, diversity, and authenticity. The neutralization of the artistic critique was achieved through the commodification of authenticity and the networked organization of companies, which creates a working environment in which personal initiative, autonomy, creativity, and sensitivity towards all kinds of difference are extremely valuable. Although none of the points made by Boltanski and Chiapello are wholly incorrect, there are many problems with their account. Their assumption that people's engagement with capitalism is grounded in moral values neglects the fact that people's engagement with capitalist relations is compelled: it seems to be the only available option and the only way to survive. Another problematic aspect of their work is the fact that, because their methodology is based on the analysis of management discourse, they place great emphasis on the justifications people make regarding their working life, and this reduces engagement with capitalism to engagement with the realm of production. Boltanski and Chiapello's analysis fails to explain the way people justify their consuming practices, neglecting the fact that, when someone goes to the cinema or buys shampoo, deodorant, or a book of critical theory, she is engaging with capitalism. The most important limitation of their analysis, however, is that it does not sufficiently consider the way the ideological and organizational transformations that they describe relate to the constitution of subjectivity. Their analysis is restricted to an examination of changes in the values and ideological schemes through which actors justify their actions, but it does not explore the way that the new managerial discourse and networked capitalism shape the modern self. Boltanski and Chiapello do not take into consideration the biopolitical nature of capitalism or the transformation in modes of government and modes of subjection. As a result, individual actors appear to possess stable characteristics, and they seem to change their behaviour because of the emergence of different cultural and ideological schemes (for a similar critique see Dardot and Laval, 2013: 262).

Immaterial production and authenticity

An important contribution to our understanding of contemporary capitalism has been made by a group of post-Marxist theorists in the Italian autonomist Marxist tradition. Although we cannot speak here of a homogeneous body of political theorists, we can trace, in the work of Antonio Negri, Michael Hardt, Maurizio Lazzarato, Paolo Virno, Franco Berardi, and others, common themes, concepts, and methods that constitute a consistent theoretical basis for a critical interpretation of contemporary capitalism. Their work introduced a biopolitical understanding of capitalism, which had previously been absent from social theory, and examined the capitalist mode of production in relation to the

production of subjectivity. Their interpretation is based on a theoretical conjunction between Marxist thought and the poststructuralist theories of Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, and Foucault. Largely responsible for the theoretical revitalization of autonomist Marxism are Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, who have been the school's leading figures. The publication of their book *Empire* in 2000 shook up the intellectual left since it questioned the basic theoretical assumptions of traditional Marxism. The book was followed by their *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (2004) and *Commonwealth* (2011), completing a trilogy that aims at an interdisciplinary critique of contemporary capitalism.

With the term “Empire”, Hardt and Negri describe the economic and political structures of global capitalism, which, in their view, constitutes a new phase in capitalism's history distinct from the previous stages of capitalism and the political mechanisms of modernity. Historically, the rise of the “Empire” dates back to the last decades of the twentieth century, when the abolition of the colonial order and, later, the collapse of the Soviet Union led to the globalization of capital and cultural flows (Hardt and Negri, 2000: xi). Thus, the term “Empire” refers to a new stage in capitalist history in which capitalism has become global and the economies of all states and regions are interconnected. The emergence of the globalized market and the free circulation of capital coincides with the rise of a new global order, a completely new form of sovereignty (Hardt and Negri, 2000: xi). The latter is characterized by the growing importance of transnational political organizations such as the United Nations, the European Union, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization and the reduced political power and importance of nation states (Hardt and Negri: 2000).³⁵ According to Hardt and Negri, the diminished sovereignty of nation states, one of the most significant symptoms of the times of Empire, signals the end of imperialism. The latter was based on the sovereignty that nation states had over their territory, which was the centre from which their power was exerted over external territories. In contrast to imperialism, Empire does not establish its power on a territorial centre, nor does it rely on boundaries and barriers. It is, rather, a completely new “paradigm” of a non-centre, non-place sovereignty, “a *decentered* and *detritorializing* apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontiers” (Hardt and Negri, 2000: xii).

³⁵ Hardt and Negri emphasize that it is not only weak nation states but also those nation states that seem to have a privileged role in the process of globalization, like the United States, that are unable to regulate economic and cultural flows (Hardt and Negri, 2000: xiv).

What distinguishes global capitalism, the world of Empire, from the previous stages of capitalism is not only the weakening of the sovereignty of the nation state but also the transformation of the capitalistic mode of production and the turn from industrial to immaterial production. Hardt and Negri suggest that just as modernity was characterized by a process of industrialization, namely the passage from the dominance of agriculture to that of industrial production, postmodernity is characterized by a process of “informatization”, in which the domination of industry gives way to cultural and informational production and services (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 280). Of course, it would be naïve to think that industrial production and commodities have vanished. The dominance of immaterial production is based on the establishment of a global division of labour and the export of industrial production to developing economies: without this, developed economies’ turn towards immaterial production would be impossible. However, as Hardt and Negri explain, when fixed capital is exported, it is in the most productive form possible. Therefore, the industrialization that takes place in countries in the developing world is based on a technological infrastructure that qualifies those countries as informational economies as well (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 287). Thus, the process of informatization affects both Western countries and the developing countries: “today all economic activity tends to come under the dominance of the informational economy and to be qualitatively transformed by it” (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 288).

The turn towards immaterial production radically changes basic aspects of economic and social life, such as the nature of labour, the form of commodities (knowledge, information, audiovisuals, software, cultural activities, and services), the measurement of value, and the spatiotemporal characteristics of production (Hardt and Negri, 2000: xiii). The transformation of the production process leads to the dominance of “immaterial labour”. Maurizio Lazzarato explains that the notion of immaterial labour has various aspects. Immaterial labour includes contemporary forms of labour in industrial or tertiary sectors in which the skills involved are increasingly skills that refer to cybernetics, computer control, and communication as an outcome of the computerization and informatization of industrial production. Thus, the fact that manual labour increasingly involves intellectual qualifications erases the distinction between manual and immaterial labour and indicates the increasing superiority of the latter. The other aspect of immaterial labour has to do with forms of labour that produce the “cultural content” of a commodity. This labour includes all the activities that define cultural standards, fashions, tastes, consumer norms, and public opinion: the kind of labour that is associated with the informational or cultural worker

(Lazzarato, 2006). Moreover, immaterial labour refers to physical activity that aims at the production or the manipulation of the affects and emotions of the consumers. The culture industry is maybe the clearest example of this kind of labour (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 293).

The dominance of immaterial production radically alters the space of production, which is now “deterritorialized” (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 294). In an informational economy, the aggregation of productive forces and labour is no longer necessary, since the development of telecommunication and information technologies enables the organization and control of production at a distance. Thus, the networked structure of new corporations does not require face-to-face relationships, especially when production involves the manipulation of knowledge and information. As a result, the physical space of production in modern capitalism, the factory, comes to be replaced by the virtual reality of networks and a decentralized process of production (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 294, 295). Similarly, the distribution of commodities no longer presupposes any physical contact since their immaterial form makes their transportation possible via electronic networks. This obviously reduces distribution time to zero. What is important, however, is not the deterritorialization of the working environment per se. The supremacy of immaterial production means that the production process is not restricted to the working environment or to working hours, as it was in industrial capitalism. Immaterial production diffuses the production of value throughout the whole of the social space. The skills that immaterial labour depends on, such as creativity and intellectual and social skills, are put to work all day long, not just during working hours. Under the regime of immaterial production, it is hard to make the distinction between leisure time and work time and impossible to say where and when value is produced (Lazzarato, 2006). This results in the convergence of economic and social life and transforms the whole social sphere into what Mario Tronti (1966) has called a “social factory” in which 'the whole society is placed at the disposal of profit' (Negri, 1989: 79). Thus, in the regime of immaterial production, value is produced in the entire spatial and temporal space and all spheres of life are subordinated to capitalist exploitation, from which there is no escape.

The fact that immaterial production subordinates all aspects of life to capital accumulation underlies the main claim of the autonomist Marxist school, which is that contemporary capitalist production is biopolitical. Although the notion of biopolitical production clearly draws heavily on Foucault, the autonomist Marxists make a distinction between the notions of biopower and biopolitics, which marks an important difference from Foucault's understanding of biopower (for the distinction between biopower and biopolitics, see

Lazzarato, 2002). According to this view, “biopower stands above society, transcendent, as a sovereign authority and imposes its order. Biopolitical production, in contrast, is immanent to society and creates social relations and forms through collaborative forms of labour” (Hardt and Negri as cited in Lemke, 2004: 94, 95). According to this view, in previous stages of capitalism biopolitical technologies were still limited. Biopower was restricted to the realm of reproduction and was limited by spaces of enclosure and disciplinary mechanisms (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 23, 24). Industrial capitalism was a disciplinary society in which social control was exercised through disciplinary institutions like the prison, the factory, the hospital, and the school, which functioned as mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, sanctioning and prescribing what was normal and what deviant (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 23). The shift from industrial to immaterial production in recent decades marks the weakening of the disciplinary society. As the space of production is extended to the whole of society, biopolitical regulation is no longer restricted to spaces of enclosure but extends throughout the social sphere. Immaterial production involves all aspects of life and becomes biopolitical because the production of profit overlaps with the production of social relations and subjectivities. Late capitalism resembles what Deleuze describes as a society of control, a society in which “power ... extends throughout the depths of the consciousness and bodies of the population – and at the same time across the entirety of social relations” (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 24; see also Deleuze, 1992). At this point, however, the autonomist Marxists use of the notion of biopower is somewhat problematic since it applies only to discipline or control mechanisms in industrial or immaterial capitalism, respectively. This view, as Thomas Lemke rightly points out, clearly disregards the lessons of Foucault’s writings on liberal and neoliberal governmentality, according to which biopower is part of a general governmentality that is diffused throughout the whole social sphere in different mechanisms (Lemke, 2011: 68). Nevertheless, the main point of the argument is that in late capitalism biopower becomes an integral component of production and immanent to social relations. Whereas in earlier stages of capitalism biopower was manifested only in the sphere of reproduction, immaterial production not only creates commodities but forms of life and subjectivities. However, the assumption that biopower only forms an integral part of production in the regime of immaterial production is, again, problematic, for it neglects the fact that the wage relation is itself biopolitical. By time that the worker sells her labour power to the capitalist, her labour is already subject to certain regulations and norms that ensure the productivity of the working subject (Macherey, 2015). Thus, biopower has always been an integral part

of the production process, and in this sense capitalism has always been a biopolitical mode of production.

Despite the dominance of the Empire and the expansion of capital into all areas of social life and into the consciousness and the bodies of individuals, autonomist Marxists claim that the potential for resistance to the global capitalist order is today greater than ever. Although this claim seems paradoxical at first, it makes more sense if we take into consideration the theoretical grounds on which it is based. The conception of resistance developed by the autonomists is completely different from the dialectical notion of negation embraced by traditional Marxists. What underlies their notion of resistance is the Foucauldian understanding of the relation between power and resistance, according to which “resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power” (Foucault, 1998: 95). Thus, in late capitalism the opportunities for opposition emerge directly from the very elements that constitute the Empire. Biopolitical production, the distinctive characteristic of late capitalism and the Empire, is what enables resistance to the dominant order. For example, immaterial forms of labour produce immaterial products, such as ideas, knowledge, forms of communication, and social relations, products that are by their nature common. Therefore, the possibility of communistic forms of property and life emerges within the system of private property and as a result of the biopolitical dimension of immaterial production (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 294).

Hardt and Negri’s hopes for a change in the global biopolitical order rest with the emergence of the multitude, the new revolutionary subject “that is directly opposed to Empire, with no mediation between them” (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 393). The multitude consists of an aggregate of diverse individuals with different socioeconomic, racial, gender, and sexual backgrounds and characteristics. It constitutes an active and creative social subject that acts not on the basis of its unity or common identity, but on the basis of the singularities the individuals have in common (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 100).³⁶ To Hardt and Negri, the multitude is a social class, but not in the narrow sense of an economic class. In their view, class is “a biopolitical concept that is at once economic and political” (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 105). According to this view, a class should not be defined in terms of the position in which individuals stand in relation to the means of production (Hardt and

³⁶ In contrast to the notion of the people, which captures the idea that the population forms a common identity by individuals negating their differences, the individuals of the multitude refuse the task of forming a common identity and instead affirm their differences. The multitude is also different from the mass or the crowd, whose unity is circumstantial and temporally limited since the individuals involved do not share common characteristics (Hardt and Negri, 2004: xiv; see also Virno, 2004).

Negri, 2004: 104). Hardt and Negri criticize the ways the left has traditionally understood notions such as the proletariat and the working class, alleging that these traditional conceptions are exclusive as they discount the unwaged classes and other forms of labour (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 107). Their view is based, again, on the specificities of late capitalism. Because contemporary production is diffused throughout the social sphere and increasingly depends on linguistic, emotional, and social competencies, capitalist production and exploitation includes and affects everyone. Thus, the unemployed are not only productive but also potentially revolutionary (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 132). A special category among the multitude is that of migrants since, through their mobility and nomadism, they express their constant desire for freedom and better conditions of life. Their nomadic experiences, breach of national borders, confrontations with the law, treatment of the globe as their own space, and physical and linguistic mixing with other populations all undermine Empire's attempt to impose borders and identities (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 138, 213). Nomadism and mobility are, of course, not just characteristics of the migrant but of the multitude as a whole. Hardt and Negri note that the Empire is buffeted by constant flows of political refugees, transfers of intellectual labour power, and movements of agricultural, manufacturing, and service workers (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 213). The multitude opposes the domination of the Empire in virtue of its biopolitical nature, its ability to create autonomous forms of life. The multitude transcends material or physical borderlines and escapes from the restrictions and control of the Empire's biopower, creating a new body, a new life, and new economic, social, communicative, and sexual relationships (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 215).

The claimed ability of the multitude to produce autonomous modes of life that affirm its plural, diverse character implies that, within biopolitical production, the multitude can produce authentic relationships and modes of life that escape the biopolitical order of late capitalist society. However, as Lemke points out, this assumption conflicts with one of the basic principles of autonomist Marxist theory, the principle of immanence, according to which there is nothing outside of Empire's rule (Lemke, 2011 74). This deviation from autonomist principle is significant because it leads to a notion of the production of life that has it taking place outside of power relations, which leads to an ontological conception of life and biopolitics. Thus, the Empire and the multitude are presented as two ontological poles, the former regulating life and the latter producing it freely. This results in the valorization of the multitude and a fixation on the possibilities it holds for social change. What is more important, at least for the subject of this thesis, is that this view presents the

multitude as the producer of genuine and authentic modes of life. This does not take into consideration the fact that the diverse characteristics of the multitude are produced within certain power relations. Last but not least, the autonomist Marxist tradition claims to offer a biopolitical understanding of capitalism and contemporary subjectivity, but it comes to emphasize a different social subject, the multitude, and the consequences of capitalism's biopolitical mechanisms for the individual subject and the way the contemporary self is shaped are disregarded.

Conclusion

In the transformation of capitalist structures after 1970, Harvey and Jameson see the roots of the emergence of postmodern culture, which values instability, ephemerality, and cultural differentiation. According to this view, the latter values can only be attained through their commodification, which implies that within late capitalism individuals develop an alienated, reified, fake experience of diversity and authenticity. Although they have a different theoretical background, Boltanski and Chiapello are led to similar conclusions. According to their view, in an effort to neutralize anticapitalist critiques, capitalism develops a new ideological value system that embraces the values of self-differentiation and authenticity, and, again, this is achieved through the commodification of authenticity. Although these two interpretations disagree about what triggers the ideological transformation of late capitalist society, they both claim that the imperative of authenticity dominates in the sphere of culture and ideology. They neglect the biopolitical nature of capitalism and do not examine the relation of late capitalism to the constitution of subjectivity. The autonomist Marxist approach certainly provides an interesting view of the relationship between late capitalism and authenticity. In highlighting the biopolitical dimension of capitalism, it points in the right direction. It also emphasizes the importance of the transition from industrial to immaterial production and the way this shift relates to different means of social control. However, the autonomists' problematic use of the notion of biopower results in a celebratory attitude towards the multitude and the claim that the multitude produces autonomous and authentic modes of being. Moreover, although their approach claims to shed light on the constitution of contemporary capitalist subjectivity, it only examines the constitution of a social subject, the multitude, and fails to offer a concrete understanding of contemporary modes of selfhood.

I claim that any examination of the relationship between contemporary capitalism and authenticity must take into consideration the issue of the subject and the way the modern

self is constituted. To do that, we must acknowledge that capitalism is a biopolitical mode of production. This approach takes more seriously the conceptual framework introduced by Foucault and relates it to the economic processes of capitalism. I suggest that such an approach overcomes the problems that beset Harvey's, Boltanski and Chiapello's, and Hardt and Negri's approaches. In the next chapter I will argue that the capitalist mode of production has been biopolitical from the beginning. I begin by setting out Foucault's ideas about biopower and liberal governmentality and discussing their relationship to the early stages of capitalism. This will provide us with an understanding of the way subjectivity was shaped in the industrial stages of capitalism and how this form of subjectivity related to the imperative of authenticity. In the subsequent chapters I will examine more recent developments in the capitalist mode of production and the changes in the way biopower is manifested. This will help us to understand the differences between the subject of industrial capitalism and the contemporary subject, which will, in turn, afford us insight into the different ways in which contemporary capitalism and the imperative of authenticity are linked.

CHAPTER 2: CAPITALISM AND THE INDUSTRIAL SUBJECT

The human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations. (Marx, 1970)

The fundamental concepts of the Foucauldian theory of power relations in “disciplinary society” will remain permanently blind unless they are articulated with a theory of exploitation and a theory of the capitalist mode of production. (Legrand, 2004: 28)

Undoubtedly, the greatest political event of the last two centuries was the application of the probability theory in the governance of societies. (Ewald, 2000: 137)

In the introduction I suggested that in order properly to understand the relationship between capitalism and authenticity we must move beyond the dualism of authentic vs fake. This means dispensing with an idea of the self as having a stable “inner” or “true” essence opposed to the “external” alienating relationships of capitalism. As I already mentioned, getting rid of this idea of the self presupposes, in turn, that we do not understand power as merely negative and repressive (as orthodox Marxism and psychoanalysis tend to do). Instead, in conceptualizing power we need to take into consideration its productive aspect. We must acknowledge that power is constitutive of subjectivity and truth (see Foucault, 2002a; Foucault, 2002b). As this implies, Foucault’s claims about power, knowledge, and the subject are very important for this thesis. However, just as I distance myself from the orthodox Marxist tradition and psychoanalytic theories, I also distance myself from the predominant interpretation of Foucault’s work. Most Foucauldian scholars and other social theorists have underplayed the importance of biopower to our understanding of capitalism. For example, although Giddens mentions the fundamental role of the institutionalization of surveillance mechanisms, as described by Foucault, for the functioning of the modern nation state and capitalist economy, he does not elaborate on this point (Giddens, 1990: 57, 58). The lack of theoretical understanding of the relationship between the capitalist economy and biopower is also highlighted by the perceptive Foucauldian scholar Paul Rainbow in his editorial introduction to the *Foucault Reader* (1984): “the relationship between the economic changes that resulted in the accumulation of capital and the political changes that resulted in the accumulation of power remains to be specified” (Rainbow, 1984: 18). However, although he acknowledges this lacuna, he concludes:

The growth and spread of disciplinary mechanisms of knowledge and power preceded the growth of capitalism in both the logical and temporal sense. Although these technologies did not cause the rise of capitalism, they were the prerequisites for its success. The growth of capitalism, however, is not Foucault's focus. His concern is the subject and power, as well as the political rationality which has bound them together. (Rainbow, 1984: 18)

In my view it is vital to acknowledge that the biopolitical nature of capitalism is expressed both in the realm of production and in the realm of reproduction.³⁷ This means that biopolitical technologies of power are manifested both within the production process and within the rest of the social sphere. I thus propose that any comprehensive understanding of capitalism must take into consideration the fact that capitalism is by its very nature biopolitical, a fact in which many theories of capitalism and modernity have shown little interest. However, Rainbow is right to point out that Foucault was mostly interested in all those technologies of power, discourses, and institutions that function outside of the sphere of production but support capitalism as “the essential element[s] for the adjustment of the populations into the economic processes” (Foucault, 1996: 141). In this way, Foucault's work can be seen as an analysis of those mechanisms of power that support capitalism through the panoptic surveillance of individuals, populations, and the market and society as a whole, mechanisms that ensure the docility of the individual, the health of the population, and the proper functioning of the market in general. However, there is enough evidence in Foucault's work to support the conclusion that biopower is also expressed within the sphere of production, for the wage relationship is in itself fundamentally biopolitical and results in the construction of the productive subject (Macherey, 2015).

In what follows I provide a more comprehensive interpretation of the complicated relationship between capitalism and biopower in order to examine industrial capitalism's role in the production of the subject of industrial capitalism. To do this, I will make use of Foucault's categories of discipline and biopower and his discussion of the liberal governmentality that prevailed during the early stages of capitalism. I will argue that the early stages of capitalism, dominated by industrial production and liberal governmentality, were characterized by the panoptical surveillance of individuals and the emergence of “the

³⁷ As we saw in the previous chapter, although the autonomist school of Marxist thought is keen to emphasize the biopolitical aspects of capitalism, its position is that during the industrial stage of capitalism biopower was manifested only in the realm of reproduction. As we will see, however, this view is contradicted by both Foucault and Marx.

social” as a field of government. As we will see, disciplinary mechanisms and social government function as technologies of homogenization that co-determine each other. Disciplinary mechanisms individualize and normalize the subject according to specific bodily and moral norms. They impose stable identities and sort subjects into hierarchies according to them. This results in the suppression of deviance and diversity of the individual. As a logic that governs subjects and the population, “the social” normalizes subjects in relation to a shared set of norms, and it therefore functions as a homogenizing force in society. The government of the social reached its zenith with the dominance of Keynesianism and the development of the welfare state and prevailed until the end of the 1960s.

I conclude that industrial capitalism, supported by state welfare policies, results in a homogenization of the whole social body. Although they generated the idea of a unique self, liberal capitalist societies simultaneously suppressed the unique self by subjecting it to homogenizing norms. Therefore, the quest for authenticity comes to oppose the social norms of industrial capitalism. In this sense, the demand of authenticity becomes radical: it stands in contrast with the dominant order of industrial capitalism (Berman, 2009).

Capitalism, power, and the subject

Capitalism is fundamentally constituted by the confrontation and the conjunction between the owners of money and means of production, on the one hand, and free labour on the other hand. Wage labor forms the basis of the capitalist economy and is what distinguishes capitalism from previous modes of production. However, the emergence of the conjunction of money and free labour was by no means smooth or natural. It was a violent process that demanded the political intervention of the state and the police (Marx, 1990: 899). In the final pages of the first volume of *Capital*, Marx discusses the process of “primitive accumulation”, the process through which large amounts of money were gathered in the hands of some people to the point that they were able to invest and buy the labour power of other people who had no other means of life, and he criticizes the interpretation of this process as being the result of a productive and hard-working part of the population progressing in contrast to a part of the population that was lazy and unproductive. In contrast to the bourgeois economists of his time, Marx argues that the process of primitive accumulation was neither natural nor the result of the moral superiority of one group over another. On the contrary, Marx suggests that it was a violent process that exploited the wealth of colonies and violently detached farmers from their

land and workers from the means of production (Marx, 1990: 873–940). Thus, for Marx, primitive accumulation was a dual process that led both to the accumulation of money in the hands of a minority and, by depriving workers of the means of production, to the creation of the free labourer.³⁸

In his magnum opus, *The Great Transformation* (1944), Karl Polanyi sides with Marx in attacking the liberal view of the market as a natural, self-regulated entity. This liberal view effaces the historical context and power relations within which the market economy was born. Polanyi shows with great clarity that, without the political intervention of the state, neither the emergence of the market nor its survival would be possible.³⁹ For Polanyi, the market economy is not the result of the natural tendency of people to exchange. Nor was the shift from isolated markets to a single, self-regulated market the result of the natural growth of markets; rather, it was the result of policies that aimed to change society in accordance with the requirements of industrial capitalist production (Polanyi, 2002).

Polanyi shows that governmental intervention was necessary in order to demolish all the community structures of pre-capitalist modes of production. In traditional societies, land and labour were considered not to be separate but to be two parts of one functional totality. The emergence of a market economy requires that all the elements of industrial production come to be included within the market. Thus, it was necessary that labour, land, and money would themselves become commodities. In the case of England, Polanyi identifies two government policies whose role in the creation of the market was vital: the land enclosures policies (the Inclosure Acts)⁴⁰ and the abolition of the Speenhamland system⁴¹ and its replacement by the Poor Law of 1834 (Polanyi, 2002; Block 1987: 102).⁴²

³⁸ The “freedom” of the labourer under capitalism must be understood in a dual sense. The worker is free in the literal sense since she is neither owned as a slave, nor bandaged in the land of the landlords as serfs as in the feudalistic mode of production. At the same time, the worker is also “free” from property. This form of freedom therefore enables but at the same time obligates the worker to sell his or her labour as a commodity in order to survive (Read, 2003: 23).

³⁹ For Polanyi the market economy is characterized by two contradictory tendencies, which together he calls a “double movement”: on the one hand, the political intervention aimed at establishing the market economy and, on the other hand, the political intervention aimed at the protection of society from the market. Polanyi suggests that in this process the role of the state was decisive. Because of its double role, for Polanyi the state = is a contradictory phenomenon (Polanyi, 2002). See also Block and Somers (2016).

⁴⁰ Polanyi explains that for the market to be created land and labour had to be separated. This was accomplished through the privatization and commercialization of the land, which created a market in land. Thus, the land enclosures policies were central to the establishment of a self-regulating market (Polanyi 2002). The importance of the deprivation of rural population from land in the development of capitalism is also highlighted in Marx’s *Capital*, Chapter 27: The Expropriation of the Agricultural Population from the Land

⁴¹ The Speenhamland system refers to a series of paternalistic policies that provided wage supplements to poor families in order to guarantee them a basic income regardless of their salary. However, the measures ended up functioning as a disincentive to work since they ensured that no one risked starvation by not working (Block and Somers, 2016: ch. 5).

The land enclosure policies, which have been referred to as a “revolution of the rich against the poor”, was a very violent process that aimed to deprive peasants of the common land that they had been using for centuries. Through restrictions imposed on the land and privatization policies, the rural population were driven from their land, which was turned into grazing land for sheep in order to supply the fabric industry (Polanyi 2002). Depriving the rural population of the common lands also led to the creation of a market of free labourers, which in turn satisfied the increasing demand for human labour created by industrialization (Chambers, 1953). However, according to Polanyi, in the face of the increasing tensions created by industrialization, from 1795 to 1834 the labour market was restricted by the social policies of the Speenhamland system, which guaranteed poor populations a basic income. For Polanyi, Speenhamland was a final effort to protect society – specifically, the peasant populations threatened by the marketization of land. The paternalistic measures of Speenhamland were the last obstacle that had to be overcome in order to create the labour market without which capitalism could not function. Thus, in 1834, the Speenhamland system was replaced by the new Poor Law. The brutality of these measures became evident in the course of the next decade, as the poor were left without any means of survival. The abolition of the Speenhamland system signified that, from that point on, the individual was alone in society and could not count on any help from the community. This allowed for the emergence of the labour market, and it was the starting point of the capitalist economy. The result of this was the birth of the working class (Polanyi, 2002).

It soon became evident that the destruction of community structures and the establishment of the market economy threatened the survival of the human species and its environment. According to Polanyi, human society had to invent means for its own protection; otherwise, it would be destroyed. Thus, in parallel with state intervention to support the market, another type of intervention was required, an intervention that would protect society and individuals from the market economy. At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, the need to protect society from the “satanic mills” of the market gave birth to the welfare state, and public policies were introduced for the regulation of the working day, public health, housing, etc. (Polanyi, 2002: 143–146).

⁴² Similar processes took place throughout Europe and North America, but of course they occurred at different times because of a variety of economic, political, and geographical factors. The commodification and privatization of rural land, and therefore the creation of a mobile class of wage labourers, was a constitutive element in the development of capitalism. For the issue of land reformation in Europe and the different forms it took in different regions see Hobsbawm (1988).

I suggest that Foucault's theory of power, which he developed into the notions of biopower and governmentality, complements Marx's and Polanyi's views. Foucault is tackling the same issue: the contribution of modern forms of power to the emergence, development, and maintenance of the market economy and capitalist structures. Foucault points out that the introduction of the population into the capitalist economy was achieved not only through the force of the law but through a productive form of power – biopower – that regulates life in accordance with the requirements of the capitalist process:⁴³

This biopower was without question an indispensable element in the development of capitalism; the latter would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes. (Foucault, 1998: 140, 141)⁴⁴

As we have already noted, despite Foucault's clear statements about the relationship between biopower and capitalism, this relationship has not been adequately acknowledged or theorized, and this has meant that Foucault's contribution to our understanding of capitalism has been overlooked. Nevertheless, recent years have seen a re-examination of the relationship between Foucault and Marxism and more attention being paid to the contribution Foucault's methods might make to our understanding of capitalism. Important Marxist thinkers have employed Foucault's notion of power in order to understand capitalist relations (Balibar, 1992; Read, 2012; Macherey, 2015; Bidet, 2016). In his text *Foucault and Marx: The question of nominalism* (1992), Balibar claims that Foucault's discussions of discipline and the microphysics of power fill a void in Marx's theory that he did not recognize:

“Discipline” and “micro-power”[...] represent *at the same time* the other side of economic exploitation and the other side of juridico-political class domination, which they make it possible to see as a unity; that is to say they come into play exactly at the point of the “short circuit” which Marx sets up between economics and politics, society and the State in his analysis of the process of production. (Balibar, 1992: 51)

⁴³ On this point, Jason Read claims that although Foucault's work on disciplinary power follows a very different method than does Marx's work, it may be understood as a response to the same issue, namely the conversion of a mobile mass into a docile class of producers (Read, 2003).

⁴⁴ Foucault introduced the concept of biopolitics in a series of lectures on medicine which took place in October 1974 at The Institute of Social Medicine, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (Foucault, 2000c). However, he only thoroughly elaborated the concept after 1976 in the series of lectures he gave at the College de France during the academic year of 1975–1976 under the title *Society Must Be Defended* (2003) and later in his book *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge* (1998).

Bidet argues that Foucault's contribution extends beyond the microphysics of power. The analytic category of biopower, as discussed in the first volume of the *History of Sexuality* (1976), and the notions of liberal and neoliberal governmentality, developed in the lectures of 1978 and 1979 at the College de France – published as *Security, Territory, Population* (2007) and *The Birth of Biopolitics* (2008) – signify a broadening of Foucault's theory towards a macro-level understanding of power and its connection with the capitalist economy (Bidet, 2016). The value of the concept of governmentality lies in the fact that it is an analytical tool that connects the microphysics of power with liberal forms of government and the emergence of the modern state. The notion of governmentality includes and mediates between technologies for governing others and technologies of the self (Lemke, 2013). Foucault's work demonstrates that, despite the claims of Enlightenment thinkers and their followers that the modern self is something wholly distinct from the external social and natural world, the modern subject in fact emerged at the same time as the social sphere and the modern state. Thus, Foucault not only provides us with an account of the power relations that supported the development of capitalism but also illuminates the subjectivity that resulted from these power relations.

In a similar way, in his essay *The Productive Subject* (2015),⁴⁵ the French Marxist Pierre Macherey explains that the production of surplus value and the valorization of capital would be impossible without the “positive-mechanisms” of power that Foucault refers to as biopower and that the rise of capitalism “depended on an original harnessing of the forces of life itself which provide to the economy its primary object” (Macherey, 2015: 14). Further, Macherey claims, this “harnessing” of life forces takes place not only in the realm of reproduction but also directly in the sphere of production, where wage labour and disciplinary mechanisms complement each other in the construction of a specific type of subjectivity. Macherey claims that the historical achievement of capitalism is the construction of the worker as a productive subject. According to Macherey, wage labour imposes a separation within the worker. When the worker exchanges her labour power for a certain wage, she does not sell her labour power in its totality. The worker who enters into the wage-labour relationship is still attached to her physical and mental powers and is identified with her physical existence, which she owns unconditionally. Otherwise, she would be reduced to a slave. What the worker exchanges for a wage is the use of her labor power by the capitalist under certain spatiotemporal conditions chosen by the latter. The worker's labour power is subject to regulation and to norms that transcend the worker,

⁴⁵ The essay is based on a lecture given at a philosophy seminar in Lille, France on 10 May 2012.

who loses control over her labour power and is separated from it. Consequently, by the time that the worker accepts the terms imposed by the wage contract and cedes use of her labour power to the capitalist, her labour is exploitable, and she is immediately transformed into a productive subject. But this is not all. When the worker enters into the wage-labour relationship, she becomes subject to spatiotemporal conditions that are structured by certain norms. At this point Macherey highlights certain similarities between Marx and Foucault. Both show that capitalist production is based on the regulation and rationalization of labour power. The labour power of the worker is disciplined, moulded, regulated, rationalized, and optimized through fixed and measured movements. As Marx shows in the fourth part of *Capital* – “The production of relative surplus value”, the very passage that Foucault uses in connection with his discussion of disciplinary power – the docility of the worker and the optimization of labour power are fundamental to the production of relative surplus value (Marx, 1990).

In what follows, I will examine Foucault’s account of the biopolitics of industrial capitalism in more detail. This will allow me to relate industrial capitalism to the rise of a certain type of subjective form, and then to examine the relationship of this subjective form to the notion of the authentic self.

Liberalism as “the general framework of biopower”

According to Foucault, modernity is characterized by a life-administering power, which he contrasts with the sovereign power that reigned in the classical age. Sovereign power had the privilege of deciding in matters of life and death. However, sovereign power over life was expressed and exercised on the subject only through the threat of death, or, as Foucault puts it, “the right which was formulated as ‘the power of life and death’ was in reality the right to *take* life or *let* live” (Foucault, 1998: 136, emphasis in the original). This form of power, Foucault suggests, corresponds to a form of society in which power was expressed mainly as a form of deduction: the deprivation of wealth, things, time, bodies, and, in extreme cases, of the life of the subject (Foucault, 1998: 136; Lemke, 2011: 35). However, after the seventeenth century the ancient right of the sovereign power “over life and death” was restricted by the development of biopower, a new form of power that aimed to administer, optimize, regulate, and foster life rather than to suppress it:

“Deduction” has tended to be no longer the major form of power but merely one element among others, working to incite, reinforce, control, monitor, optimize, and organize the forces under it: a power bent on generating forces, making them

grow, and ordering them, rather than one dedicated to impeding them, making them submit, or destroying them. (Foucault 1976, 136)

According to Foucault, there are two basic forms of this “life-administering power”, and these are interconnected and co-determine each other: discipline or the “anatomo-politics of the human body” and regulatory controls or the “biopolitics of the population” (Foucault, 1998, 139).⁴⁶ In the lectures at the College de France in 1978 and 1979, Foucault refers to the latter as a “technology of security” (Foucault, 2003: 249; Lemke, 2012: 42). The first pole of biopower corresponds to the disciplinary mechanisms that are centered on the human body as a machine. Discipline or “anatomopolitics” aims to rule a multiplicity of people by dissolving that multiplicity into individual bodies that are then disciplined, optimizing their capabilities and powers and increasing their docility, utility, and productivity (Foucault, 1998: 139). The second pole of biopower focuses not on the bodies of individuals but on humans as a biological species. This aspect of biopower – the “biopolitics of the population” – takes as its object the population as a whole and aims at the overall regulation of the processes of life. Thus, biopolitics focuses on biological processes like propagation, birth, mortality and life expectancy, the level of health, and the level of production (Foucault, 2003: 242, 243; Foucault, 1998: 139).⁴⁷

The shift from sovereign power to the disciplinary technologies that target the individual body is the main theme of Foucault’s arguments in *Discipline and Punish* (1995).⁴⁸ In the transformation of the penal system in the seventeenth century, Foucault sees the rise of a new paradigm of power and a new type of society. During that time, punishment stopped

⁴⁶ In the lectures given at the College de France during the academic year 1975–1976 – before the publication of the first volume of the *History of Sexuality* in 1976 – Foucault distinguished disciplinary power from biopower as two different technologies of power. However, as we will see, as he developed the concept in the following years, Foucault inclined towards understanding them as two complementary axes of a single, unified form of power. One of the reasons he initially distinguished them from one another is that disciplinary power developed at the end of seventeenth century and in the course of the eighteenth, whereas biopolitics emerged in the second half of the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, Foucault noted that these forms of power can exist at the same time, since they function at different levels and scales and make use of different instruments (Foucault, 2003: 242). In his later *The Will to Knowledge*, Foucault emphasized that disciplinary power and biopolitics are so much “linked together by a whole intermediary cluster of relations” that they in fact constitute two distinct but not at all antithetical poles or axes of biopower (Foucault, 1998: 139; for more on this issue see Lemke 2011: 36, 37, 38).

⁴⁷ Foucault is particularly interested in sexuality because sex involves both poles of biopower. Sexuality is connected with the individual body, its docility, and the administering of its forces and energies, and it is connected with the regulation of the population, its hygiene, and birth rates: “Sex was a means of access both to the life of the body and the life of the species. It was employed as a standard for the disciplines and as the basis for regulations” (Foucault, 1998: 146).

⁴⁸ Disciplinary power is the theme of Foucault’s book *Discipline and Punish*. Some consider the publication of the book as a turning point in Foucault’s theory, since it marks a shift from the archaeological investigation of knowledge to the genealogical examination of power and the subject. For this issue see Gutting and Oksala (2018: sec. 3.3).

being a public and violent process; it began to take place in the prison, which came to function as a technology of discipline to normalize the individuals' bodies and souls (Foucault, 1995). The individual's body was "directly involved in a political field" and became "both a productive body and a subjected body" (Foucault, 1995: 25, 26). This would not have been possible had the confinement of subjects not been supported by intensive mechanisms of surveillance. The need for the constant surveillance of subjects is what led Jeremy Bentham to propose the idea of the panopticon, an architectural design for a prison.⁴⁹ The panopticon is a structure that allows a watchman to observe all of the prisoners without them being able to tell whether they are being watched. This effect is achieved through a circular structure with guards at its center, from where they are able to observe the inmates, who are stationed around the perimeter in isolated, private cells. The panopticon is not only a mechanism for maximizing the visibility of the inmates. It combines surveillance with explicitly articulated behavioural norms that transform the prisoners' relation to themselves. The possibility of constant visibility and prescriptive behavioural norms function together to create a mechanism that imposes permanent physical and behavioural competences and practices of self-constraint and self-scrutiny (Foucault, 1995; see also Haggerty and Ericson, 2000).

The transformation of the penal system is just the starting point of Foucault's arguments in *Discipline and Punish*. For Foucault, the panopticon symbolizes a new model of power that extends beyond the prison. He suggests that, through other disciplinary institutions that function in the same way as the prison, such as the factory, the school, the barracks, the hospital, and the madhouse, the same techniques and strategies of power have come to be employed across society as a whole.⁵⁰ Foucault is employing a broad interpretation of disciplinary technologies. He suggests that disciplinary power is fundamental for the organization of modern societies and for the constitution of modern subjectivity. Through disciplinary mechanisms, "a whole type of society emerges" (Foucault, 1995: 216).⁵¹

However, although Foucault recognizes the tight relationship between biopower and capitalism, he fails to explain the connection between the two sufficiently, offering, instead, some underdeveloped suggestions on the matter. Although it might be argued that examining this connection was not the main aim of Foucault's theoretical project, I suggest

⁴⁹ No panopticon was ever actually constructed. However, it is illustrative of the ways that disciplinary power works.

⁵⁰ A great part of Foucault's work is dedicated to the emergence and the function of such institutions and related discourses. For this see Foucault, (1973) and Foucault, (2006)

⁵¹ As we will see, discipline takes on a much broader meaning in the context of liberal governmentality.

that this shortcoming has its roots in Foucault's epistemological assumptions about the nature of power. According to Foucault, power is diffused within the social sphere and exists as a "multiplicity of force relations" that are "coming from everywhere" and from "innumerable points" (Foucault, 1976: 94). The problem with this "diagrammatic" understanding of the issue is that it slips into an idealistic, almost metaphysical conception of power: power seems to exist by itself, detached from the material causes that generate it and independent of the class division of society that capitalism involves (for this critique see Poulantzas, 2000: 67- 69). As a result, Foucault neglects the fact that biopolitical technologies of power are materialized within a class-divided society. Thus, although discipline and biopolitics have clearly mainly been targeted at the working class and have facilitated the subjection of the poor population to the power of the bourgeoisie, in Foucault's account biopower appears to affect the working class and the bourgeoisie in the same way.⁵²

I argue, by contrast, that biopower does not express itself independently of the class structure of capitalism. As we will see in what follows, biopower has primarily been targeted at those populations that were deprived of the means of production (land, tools, etc.) as a result of the transformation of feudal societies into market economies (see Polanyi) and had to be disciplined to fit the needs and rhythms of the capitalist economy. Additionally, it must be noted that the wage relationship itself is essentially biopolitical. As Macherey explains, the wage relationship involves the subjection of the worker to the conditions and norms that the owner of the means of production sets for her (Macherey, 2015).

Although I do not question Foucault's claim that biopower is diffused throughout society and exercised in such a way that affects all social strata, I suggest that the intensity and quality of the biopolitical technologies of power to which the population is subjected differ according to class. Thus, Foucault's notion of biopower must be combined with an understanding of the division of labour and capitalist relations of production. This allows us to appreciate the economic conditions and developments that underlie the transformations in power and the subject that Foucault describes and to acknowledge the way that biopolitical technologies of power have disciplined the working class in the

⁵² It is true that Foucault does occasionally note the class character of disciplinary mechanisms. In *Discipline and Punish*, he explores the disciplinary mechanisms to which industrial workers are subjected during the production process, an analysis that he grounds in Marx's (Foucault, 1995; see also Macherey, 2015)

interests of the needs of the capitalist economy and have secured the dominance of the bourgeoisie.

In their fascinating study of the history of the penal system in Europe, *Punishment and Social Structure* (2017),⁵³ Rusche and Kirchheimer point out that because of the impoverishment of large parts of the population during the mediaeval period – especially towards the end of the period – there was little point imposing fines on people as punishment: torture and death penalties were the preferred methods, particularly given that the quantity and the quality of the workforce was such that individuals were considered expendable (Rusche and Kirchheimer, 2017). Moreover, punishment as a public spectacle served to underline the power of the sovereign and reaffirm its ownership of the bodies of its subjects (Alexiou, 2008: 125). The emergence of the capitalist economy and industrialization increased demand for capable workers. An economy whose fundamental principle is freedom of labour would have been undermined by expressions of power that subjugated and destroyed the human body. The emerging capitalist economy thus implied the abandonment of the mediaeval punishments of death and torture and led to a reconstitution of the penal system such that the system disciplined offenders in accordance with the needs of the capitalist economy. Rather than being pointlessly destroyed, the human body was now subsumed under disciplinary technologies – initially through the workhouses and later through the prisons – which aimed at increasing its docility, utility, and capabilities. Thus, disciplinary power favoured the rehabilitation of subjects who deviated from the standards of the rising bourgeoisie, rather than their permanent expulsion or destruction, and it helped to create the workforce of docile and productive subjects that industrial capitalist demanded (Rusche and Kirchheimer, 2017; see also Alexiou, 2008: 125).

In a similar way, Doerner has examined the relationship between changes in capitalist economic and political structures and the emergence of modern psychiatric discourses and practices. His comparisons of England, France, and Germany lead him to the conclusion that although Germany developed a more liberal psychiatric culture earlier, its transition to modern psychiatric structures took place after England's and France's. According to Doerner, this inconsistency was caused by delays in the onset of the structural and political changes associated with industrialization. Doerner's work shows us that the emergence of the modern psychiatric paradigm was directly connected with the class structure of

⁵³ For a systematic overview of different approaches to the modern penal system from across the entire spectrum of social theory see Garland (1990).

industrial capitalism and that the development of modern psychiatric techniques and discourses supported the hegemony of the bourgeoisie and helped to discipline the working population in the interests of the capitalist economy (Doerner, 1981).

Spaces of enclosure, such as workhouses in England, *hospiteaux généraux* in France, and *Zucht- und Arbeitshäuser* in Germany, simultaneously functioned as poorhouses, hospitals, prisons, and madhouses. This enclosure of the poor, the sick, the mad, and the criminal demonstrates that, as José Guilherme Merquior suggests, “the Great Confinement” Foucault examines throughout his work had as its primary target not deviants but the poor, who had to be introduced to the ethics, and also the discipline, habits, and rhythms, the industrial economy demanded (Merquior, 1995: 28). After all, the appearance of disciplinary mechanisms coincided with the period of urbanization and the concentration of capital and the workforce in the cities.⁵⁴ This connection is not overlooked by Foucault, who points out that the concentration of capital in the cities coincided with

the birth of a particular normalizing society which was linked to practices of confinement, which in their turn were connected with a precise economic and social situation corresponding to the phase of urbanization and the growth of capitalism and with the existence of a fluctuating, dispersed population which entered into friction with the needs of the economy and the state, etc. (Foucault, 1991: 66)

The growth and concentration of large populations in towns created a need for the control and regulation of the life processes of those populations, such as birth and death rates, health conditions and the production of wealth and its circulation (Lemke, 2011: 37). Thus, in the middle of the eighteenth century, disciplinary technologies were complemented by the biopolitical regulation of the population (or “technologies of security” Foucault, 2003: 249) with a view to ensuring that it was healthy, large enough and adjusted to the demands of market economy. The biopolitical regulation of the population focuses on the population’s conditions of life, which become an object of scientific observation, statistical measurement and analysis, and government policy. In contrast to disciplinary technology, biopolitics does not target the individual but the population as a whole and applies power through regulation and control rather than discipline and restriction (Lemke, 2011: 37). Security technology differs from disciplinary mechanisms in terms of when they appear in history, their objectives, and their instruments. But these two technologies can be also

⁵⁴ The phenomenon of urbanization is inseparably linked with the concentration of capital in urban centres. As Tilly writes: “The timetable of urbanization reflected the history of European capital” (Tilly, 1990: 50).

distinguished in terms of the way they are situated institutionally. Disciplinary technologies appear in institutions of enclosure, like the prison, the school, and the hospital, whereas technologies of security are expressed by the state (Lemke, 2011: 37). In the case of biopolitics or security, power is manifested through different surveillance technologies. Surveillance is not expressed through confinement but through the management of the population through counting and statistics, demography, and censuses (Hacking, 1990). Biopolitical surveillance also involves the regulation of territory: the scientific cartography of space, the establishment of land and survey departments, etc. (Joyce, 2003). The security apparatus and the logic of regulating the circulation of bodies and objects (rather than their restriction) that underpins it are materialized in the urban planning of modern cities. The walled cities of the mediaeval period were replaced by towns that allowed for the free circulation of people and commodities. Roads were widened and illuminated. City planning was accompanied by new public health measures (e.g. drainage systems, prohibitions on slaughtering animals in the town and the creation slaughterhouses outside the city, etc.) (Joyce, 2003). The introduction of these policies contributed to the processes of individualization that had already been encouraged by capitalist production and disciplinary technologies. The biopolitical regulation of the population and territory promoted by liberal forms of government complemented disciplinary technologies of subjection. Joyce provides a very good example that explains how these worked:

The hygienisation of the city was accompanied by processes making for the individuation of the self, ones which, if distinct from governance, none the less were often linked to it. Hygiene involved creating spaces around and between bodies, protecting them from other's contact and smells, and it thereby brought people into a new encounter with themselves. This individuation was, however, pioneered long before the nineteenth-century civic toilette. Its laboratories were to be found in the eighteenth century, for example in soldiers' tents, in hospitals, prisons and asylums. (Joyce, 2003: 73)

The fact that discipline and security mechanisms function together as a whole and constitute complementary technologies of power which function under the same governmental rationality is made clearer in the series of lectures *The Birth of Biopolitics*, in which Foucault investigates biopower in relation to a more general framework of liberal forms of governmentality.⁵⁵ According to Foucault, in the Middle Ages sovereign power referred to a natural order which was taken to emerge from the divine will. In contrast, the

⁵⁵ Despite the title, the series of lectures focuses more on the general logic of liberal government and the relationship between the liberal state and the market than it does on the historical emergence of biopower.

raison d'état of early modernity signals a break with the notion of the natural order, emphasizing instead the artificiality of political institutions and the state. Under *raison d'état*, in its attempt to achieve its primary aim of maximizing its own power, the state subjects the market to strict regulation (Foucault, 2010; see also Lemke, 2011: 45, 46; Lemke, 2012: 42, 43; Gane 2012). Liberal government functions differently from both. The physiocrats reintroduced the idea of nature in a way that differed decisively from the divinely ordained natural order of sovereign power. For liberals the natural order is the result of historical processes, of the living and productive relations of human beings. This understanding plays an important role in the emergence of the idea of the market and society as spheres with their own natural and self-regulating rules. Foucault refers to this new quasi-natural reality as “civil society”, and he shows that it comes to prevail over the artificial *raison d'état* famously represented by Hobbes in his *Leviathan*. In contrast to the artificial reason of the *Leviathan*, which harnesses human nature to support order and the power of the state, the emergence of the market as a natural, self-regulating entity changes the logic and the goals of government. The basic objective of liberal governmentality shifts from the maximization of the power of the state to the creation of the conditions that allow the natural laws of the market to function, and utility becomes the only criterion of good government and only justification of intervention. Under these conditions, political economy, which aims to understand the “natural laws” of the market, emerges as the principal form of knowledge of liberal governmentality. This new field of knowledge comes to determine the way that government is exercised. Thus, from the middle of the eighteenth century onwards, liberal governmentality begins to determine itself in light of the new knowledge produced by political economy. Government’s only way of legitimizing itself is by showing itself to be useful to society; it no longer aims simply at the maximization of the power of the sovereign or the state (see Foucault, 2010: 267–316; Lemke: 211: 46, 47).⁵⁶ The emergence of civil society leads to a demand that government refer to and respect the natural rules of

⁵⁶ A similar point is made by Hannah Arendt in *The Human Condition* (1958). Although Arendt does not use the term biopower, she describes the biological life of humans and its relationship with politics in great detail. According to Arendt, until modernity the private sphere of biological life and the economic survival of humans were untouched by political power. However, this changed with the dawn of modernity, at which point the biological and economic lives of subjects became targets for political calculation and action. This gave rise to the social sphere, which closed the gap between the private realm and the political realm. As a result, society came to be understood as one great household, and the modern state became the manager of the national economy (Arendt, 1998: 22-78). Thus, with the advent of modernity a notion of political economy hitherto inconceivable became possible, since until that point every activity that had to do with the economy and the survival of the species was considered a non-political, private affair (Arendt, 1958: 29). It is worth mentioning the paradox here. Economy emerges as a separate sphere at the historical point at which politics invades the productive sphere and regulates it. At the very same time that the economy becomes the subject of rational and calculative regulation, it starts to be conceived as the outcome of natural laws, and thus politically neutral.

society, which, as Lemke notes, now become “the basis and the border of governmental practice” (Lemke, 2011: 45). The limits set by this new reality do not result in the liberal state declining in importance or strength. The goal of the state changes from that of developing its own power to that of protecting society and promoting the welfare of the population. The modern state is transformed from a fundamentally legislative to an administrative authority whose object is the population. Paradoxically, this does not mean that political interventions come to be forbidden. Lemke explains that although there is a “natural” limit to political intervention, which has to take into account the nature of social facts, this is not a negative limit. The essence of social facts demands that, in many cases, political power is used to restore the natural order (Lemke, 2011: 45). Thus, despite all the liberal dogma about the naturalness of society, liberal government ends up intervening in order to protect society.

The series of lectures also reintroduces the concept of discipline and discusses the extension of panoptic surveillance and its importance for liberal government. In the third lecture, Foucault proposes:

Disciplinary techniques, for taking charge of the behavior of the individual day by day in its fine detail, is exactly contemporaneous with the age of freedom. Economic freedom, liberalism [...] and disciplinary techniques are completely bound up with each other. (Foucault, 2010: 67)

Foucault suggests that the liberal state becomes the guarantor, producer, and supervisor of the freedom for things to take their course according to the logic of *laissez-faire*.

What basically must a government do? It must give way to everything due to natural mechanisms in both behavior and production. It must give way to these mechanisms and make no other intervention, to start with at least, than that of supervision. Government, initially limited to the function of supervision, *is only to intervene when it sees that something is not happening according to the general mechanics of behavior, exchange, and economic life*. Panopticism is not a regional mechanics limited to certain institutions; for Bentham, panopticism really is a general political formula that characterizes a type of government. (Foucault, 2010: 67, emphasis mine)

Lemke highlights the fact that security and discipline do not contradict one another; rather, they co-determine each other as different manifestations of biopower. As a process of individualization, discipline presupposes the existence of a multiplicity. In the same way,

population presupposes the existence of individuals and consists in their combination and aggregation: “individual” and “mass” are not extremes but rather two sides of a new political technology that simultaneously aims at the control of the human as an individual body and at the control of humans as a species (Lemke, 2011: 38). These two technologies of power complete each other by ensuring that the restrictions that discipline imposes do not stop the subject participating in the market or in state projects and that the freedom afforded by the market does not end up undermining its regular functioning. According to Mukarami, this explains why, although it was initially derived from spaces of enclosure, panoptic surveillance comes to be extended to the whole of society and to characterize the governmental rationality of nation states generally. The era of the Great Confinement was also the era of national liberal capitalism (Mukarami, 2013).

The birth of the social: A new field for political intervention

Liberalism and industrial capitalism destroyed the social bonds that characterized premodern society and created new dangers that society had to confront. Because of the increased proletarianization of the population in industrial societies, the problem of poverty became particularly pressing.⁵⁷ Entire populations were pauperized, and their impoverishment became entrenched and was perpetuated over long periods of time. The most worrying fact was a qualitative change in the causes of pauperism. Paradoxically, pauperism was now caused by work and not by a lack of work. In addition, industrial production increased accident rates to unprecedented levels (Ewald, 2000). Pauperism, the wretchedness of working-class existence, and also the phenomenon of unemployment, which emerged for the first time in history, condemned a large part of the population to misery (Gough, 1979: 33).⁵⁸ It soon became apparent that pauperism, accidents, and other dangers were inherent to liberal industrial society and not results of its malfunctioning. This gave rise to “the social question” (Castells, 2003) and brought into existence the historical reality that Jacques Donzelot calls “the social” (Donzelot, 1979). “The social” can be understood as the field in which political intervention is accepted in the name of the welfare of the whole of society, a field materialized in and through certain institutions and policies that aim to regulate and ensure the quality of the population (Donzelot, 1979).

⁵⁷ For pauperism to emerge as a problem, it is not enough that there exists a poor part of the population. Pauperism becomes a problem when certain policies are introduced to govern poverty. Thus, the pauperism issue is connected with certain types of government. For this see Procacci (1991: 151–168).

⁵⁸ Gough notes that although underemployment, seasonal idleness, and casual employment were known before the industrial revolution, unemployment did not exist until the emergence of capitalism: “the lack of any productive activity is a phenomenon peculiar to capitalism” (Gough, 1979: 33).

Following Deleuze (1979: ix), Rose explains that “the social” does not refer to all the phenomena of the social lives of individuals but to a particular sector in which specific problems are grouped together and dealt by means of certain policies and institutions. Rose says that “the social” signifies the way in which political, intellectual, and moral authorities have understood and acted upon our collective existence in a certain geographical territory (Rose, 2004: 101). Although the “social” designates a field in which governmental intervention is considered desirable, its arrival does not indicate a deviation from liberal governmentality. On the contrary, as Gordon rightly suggests, “the social” constitutes a transformation of earlier liberal forms of government, an extension of liberal governmentality rather than its dissolution. Gordon explains that this type of state intervention does not aim at the restoration of *raison d'état*; its only target and reference point is society. Just as in earlier forms of liberal government, “the focal question of politics is now not so much the justification of the state rather than the governability of the social” (Gordon, 1991: 34).

Edward Ewald's book *L'état de providence* (1986) explains the issue of liberal government's protection of society with great clarity.⁵⁹ Ewald attempts to provide a genealogy of the contemporary welfare state and the origins of what he calls the “insurance society”. For Ewald, the welfare state realized the dream of biopower, and insurance was its fundamental political technology.

According to Ewald, by the end of the nineteenth century, industrial societies had undergone a fundamental change in the way they approached the issue of personal responsibility. Until that point, the notions of “responsibility” and “fault” had been at home in the legal framework that regulated industrial production. The introduction of statistical measures of various social processes made dangers and accidents calculable, and this gave rise to the notion of risk. Statistics revealed the increased probability of an accident and the predictability of certain dangers. The regularity and predictability of accidents in liberal societies indicated that risk is an unavoidable fact of social life and therefore that the individual should be absolved from the burden of responsibility. Because of its calculable nature, risk became collective, and responsibility was imputed to society as a whole. Once it became evident that industrial production was inherently risky and

⁵⁹ Following Foucault's interpretation of liberalism, Ewald takes liberalism to be a diagram, an aggregate of strategies and practices that are unified by a common rationality. According to Ewald, the basic principle that regulates the liberal diagram is the principle of responsibility (Ewald, 2000).

accidents unavoidable and socially produced, there was no point in searching for individuals to hold legally responsible (Ewald, 2000).

Ewald explains that inherent to liberalism is a distinction between juridical justice and ethics. Liberalism is founded on individual freedom and the assumption that “each is, must be, and it’s presumed to be responsible for his fate or destiny” (Ewald, 2000: 53). Thus, as liberal dogma has it, the protection of the poor – regardless of whether it is considered fair, ethical, or even desirable – could not be institutionalized as this would contradict the fundamental principle of liberal justice. Liberal justice leaves no space for social provision, since it is assumed that one cannot transfer one’s fortune or misfortune to another. Risks and dangers are part of the natural order. Safety and security should not, therefore, be taken for granted: it must be achieved. It is the responsibility of the free individual to achieve safety and security; these things are not hers by right. However, as I mentioned above, the idea that risks and dangers are unavoidable aspects of industrialization and liberalism led to the idea that risks had to be socially confronted rather than treated as solely a matter of individual responsibility (Ewald, 2000). Indeed, it was necessary that such risks came to be faced as a society because, as it soon became obvious, individuals acting alone, without social protection, cannot realize the potentialities of their freedom. In this sense, far from undermining individual freedom, social protection in fact supports it, since it guards free individuals against those factors beyond their control which threaten their freedom (Ewald, 2000).

The logic of “the social” did not have a stable form over time but instead changed and developed. According to Rose, during the nineteenth century, government of the social was sporadic and unsystematic, and only a minority of these policies was actually linked to the formal political apparatus (Rose, 2004). Initially, a set of measures was introduced that held industrialists responsible not only for paying their workers’ wages but also for ensuring their safety and welfare – during and after work – and their moral cultivation. By the beginning of the twentieth century, it had become apparent that such sporadic intervention policies were failing to address the issue of weakening social cohesion, which had been illustrated by various phenomena of anti-social behaviour, such as suicides, crime, and anomie, but even more pressingly by the unrest of a working class angry at its poor living and working conditions. A more organized form of intervention was required, one that would promote social progress for all without, of course, threatening the dominant order and the fundamental pillars of the capitalist economy – private ownership and wage labour

(Rose, 2004: 120). Thus, modern forms of social security were developed in the Western world. Of course, this development occurred at different times in different countries, depending on their particular economic and political situations. In Germany, for example, organized forms of social security date back to 1880, whereas in the UK similar structures were developed during the first decade of twentieth century, and in the United States only after 1930 (Gough, 1979: 33).⁶⁰ In France, social provision was institutionalized through a comprehensive insurance system in 1898, giving birth to what Ewald calls the “insurance society” (Ewald, 2000).⁶¹

Insurance not only shares the burdens of risk among a collectivity but also introduces an element of justice that was absent from previous forms of social protection, like charity and philanthropy. However, the type of justice thus introduced is decisively different from juridical justice. Whereas the latter refers to abstract, universal rights, insurance justice refers to social events, to the fact that, because risks are socially produced and threaten the whole of society, it is just that their burdens are collectively shared. Social justice is no longer defined by the “natural right” of the natural liberal order. “Rights” are no longer “natural” or “eternal”: they become “social”.

At this point, it is interesting to note that social provision policies, although targeted at the poor and the working population, were mainly a way of promoting the accumulation of capital and supporting the capitalist economy. Social provision aimed to secure the survival of the liberal order, which was threatened by the immiseration of the working classes. *Laissez-faire* had to be protected, and the way to do it was to protect the whole of society (Ewald, 2000). Besides the obvious contribution the welfare state makes to the maintenance of the liberal order by protecting those harmed by the liberal economy, there is another aspect of this support. Legislation relating to working conditions ensured that the workforce remained healthy and able to work (Gough, 1979) Gough’s study *The Political Economy of the Welfare State* (1979) argues against the widespread perception of the welfare state as an effort to humanize and set limits to the capitalist economy; rather, he suggests that the welfare state was extremely important for the development of capitalism (Gough,

⁶⁰ For an overview of the emergence of the welfare state in different Western countries see Kuhnle and Sunder (2012).

⁶¹ According to Ewald, this law of 1898 represents a turning point in the political rationality of industrial society. The shift from personal responsibility to the regulation of social risk that was institutionalized in the law of 1898 is so important for Ewald that in his opinion it marks the true starting point of modernity (Ewald, 2000).

1979: 3).⁶² This is not to say that it does not also protect those classes at the lowest end of the social stratification. For Gough, the welfare state is an essentially contradictory phenomenon: it simultaneously functions as a repressive mechanism of social control that supports and promotes capitalist accumulation and as a mechanism of protection that shields society from market forces and expresses the political victories of the working class (Gough, 1979: 11–15).⁶³ Gough argues that through regulations concerning working conditions, health policies, and education, the state provides a docile, healthy, and competent workforce that can serve the ends of capital accumulation. Through mechanisms of social provision such as unemployment, health, and pension benefits, and through the regulation of the workplace, the state socializes the risks created by industrial society. The welfare state also assumed responsibility for the education of the population. Gough explains that industrialization and the division of labour led to a demand for a more educated workforce, one that was also docile enough to accept the routinized nature of industrial production. Thus, the modern education system was established in order to cater to the needs of the capitalist economy by developing the skills and cognitive abilities of the population and adapting it to the new methods and rhythms of the industrial economy. In addition, the rapid growth of the population and its concentration in city centers created a need for urban legislation and housing policies (Gough, 1979).

The development of the welfare state was accompanied by Keynesian economic policies. Keynesian macroeconomic management promoted mass employment, which meant that the majority of the population had sufficient purchasing power to participate in the mass consumption project of the Fordist economy. At the same time, the modern welfare state expanded its field of action and developed new forms of social provision, such as work training programmes and the provision of housing, and new ways of regulating private activity through taxation policies and consumer protection. The era of national liberal capitalism thus expressed a more mature form of “the social”.

The social functioned as a homogenizing force by establishing a common national identity. According to Castells, it was only towards the end of the nineteenth century that a

⁶² Although Gough’s analysis is from a Marxist perspective, he also acknowledges the biopolitical nature of the welfare state. Gough argues that, directly or indirectly, the welfare state “alter[s] the immediate conditions of life of individuals and groups within the population” (Gough, 1979: 4) in order “to adapt them to the requirements of the capitalist economy” (Gough, 1979: 12).

⁶³ According to Gough, the welfare state “simultaneously embodies tendencies to enhance social welfare, to develop the powers of individuals, to exert social control over the blind play of market forces; and tendencies to repress and control people, to adapt them to the requirements of the capitalist economy. Each tendency will generate counter-tendencies in the opposite direction; indeed, this is precisely why we refer to it as a contradictory process through time” (Gough, 1979: 12).

common social identity was established in France, and this was achieved through policies that aimed to increase social cohesion. These policies were implemented through schools and in the form of social provision that aimed to provide the majority of the population with the necessary conditions for decent living. The social functioned to embed the feeling of social citizenship and belonging in a society by guaranteeing citizens sufficient resources and social rights for them to identify themselves as members of a certain nation. According to Castells, the notion of social identity reached its apogee after the Second World War, when, as I mentioned above, the social reached a more mature form with the implementation of Keynesian policies and the development of the welfare state. Under these conditions, Castells suggests, national identity comes to dominate other aspects of identity. “The keynote of a person’s identity was built into the framework of the Nation and guaranteed under the republican State. His social identity was first and foremost a national identity” (Castells, 2013: 18).

Disciplinary and social subjection

The constitution of subjectivity is immanent to capitalism and liberal government. As we have seen, disciplinary mechanisms focus on the individual body, while security technologies target the population. Disciplinary mechanisms are expressed through coercion and the panoptic surveillance of the individual. On the other hand, security mechanisms are expressed through counting, statistics, mapping, and the regulation of circulation and space.

As a result of their different targets and strategies, disciplinary and security mechanisms establish normativity in different ways. Discipline establishes a norm which sets a standard model and desirable end. Along with this prescriptive norm come hierarchies and distinctions between normal and abnormal, permitted and allowed, healthy and sick. Discipline thus includes and excludes. It sets out an optimal model and applies strategies to adjust individuals and their actions to this standard. Security mechanisms, by contrast, function in a completely different way. In the case of discipline, the norm pre-exists its implementation and functions as an optimal standard according to which individuals should adjust, security mechanisms allow empirical reality to set the norm. What is considered to be normal emerges as the average of different events and does not preexist. Thus, security apparatuses do not draw a clear line between what is forbidden and what is

not and they allow variations around a specified optimal middle (Foucault, 2009: 56, 57, 63)⁶⁴

Despite their different targets and the different ways in which they manifest themselves, discipline and security are both technologies of subjection. However, not only they do not contravene with each other but, but in fact, they work together and complement each other (Ewald, 2000: 157). Through disciplinary power, the normal is imposed on individuals as an external, normalizing force. Panopticism aims to normalize individuals and to reform pathological subjects according to pre-given norms (Rose, 2004: 234). According to Harcourt, the elimination of differences is a fundamental aim of disciplinary power. Panoptic surveillance, he argues, “focuses on every instance of minor disorder and seeks to eradicate even the smallest occurrence” (Harcourt: 2015, 93). Security mechanisms use statistics and probabilities in order to establish an average from a multiplicity of data and to produce, out of numerous heterogeneous individuals, the norm. According to the logic of the security apparatus, the subject must be approached not in its individuality but through the mass, through the collectivity to which it belongs. The subject is confronted not with the pre-given norm imposed by discipline but by the norm set by the average.

The technology of insurance – which, according to Ewald, is a biopolitical technology and a mechanism of subjection – provides a ready example that illustrates how this type of normalization affects the industrial subject. As Ewald explains, as juridical justice gives way to insurance justice, the morality of the law gives way to a morality of social responsibility. At the same time, insurance shapes and transforms the lives of individuals and populations. The subject is not just normalized in accordance with the abstract norm of the law. Rather, the individuality produced always makes reference to the other members of the population: it is “an average sociological individuality” (Ewald, 2000: 203).

The development of insurance is accompanied by a transformation of social morals, a transformation of an individual's relation to himself or herself, to his or her future, and to society. [...] the society to which I am joined in solidarity by history, carrying the weight of my inheritance and my share of responsibility for

⁶⁴ In his lectures of 1978 and 1979, Foucault elaborates on the different ways that juridical power, disciplinary mechanisms, and the security apparatus establish normativity. He uses a variety of historical examples in order to show the diversity of ends and instruments that legal, disciplinary, and security mechanisms adopt and employ in dealing with certain social problems. The cases of leprosy, the plague, and smallpox are examples of phenomena dealt with by legal, disciplinary, and security apparatuses respectively (Foucault, 2009: 9, 10). Foucault also notes the different ways of dealing with scarcity in each case (Foucault, 2009: 32, 33, 34, 35).

the future, and by contemporaneity, since I participate in society's ills and owe a debt to my fellows for the advantages society procures me. (Ewald, 2000: 209)

Society becomes its own principle and end, cause and consequence, and man no longer finds salvation or identity except by recognizing himself as a social being, a being who is made and unmade, alienated, constrained, repressed or saved by "society". (Ewald, 2000: 210)

According to Ewald, the figure of the "average man", introduced by the Belgian sociologist Adolph Quételet, is the clearest representation of the kind of normalization to which the modern individual is subjected. As Ewald explains, the "average man" is not a universal being, a person of constant and universal principles of human nature; this was how he was theorized by the philosophers of Enlightenment. The figure of the average man represents society as it is interpreted by the social sciences through the power of statistics. The average man does not have a stable essence that guides how subjects are to be normalized. The average man is an ideal type that is drawn from statistical measurement. The subject is thus normalized not through an external ideal but through a norm that is internal to society itself. Thus, the normalization imposed by the statistical supervision of the social differs from panoptical surveillance. It derives from the mass, and it normalizes individuals according to this internal normativity. What is important is not that individuals achieve this average – which is anyway a chimera – but that they approach it. Thus, the notion of the average man expresses how normativity is imposed in the era of "the social". Although it allows for an inevitable element of difference and heterogeneity, it reproduces and imposes the norm of a collective and social identity. The ideal of the average man is nothing more and nothing less than a representation of the social, which is a homogenizing disciplinary power.

The theory of the average man proclaims an era where perfection will concur with normality, where the grand demand of social ethics will be one of adjusting to the norm. (Ewald, 2000: 158).

The ideal will no longer be to deviate from the norm, distinguish and differentiate oneself from the others, but to "socialize" better. [...] This notion that there is no other norm for each person than his always relevant relation with the others and this manner of equating one's existence with his social existence constitute characteristics of the era that was emerging at that time, which was accurately described by an English historian, M. Bidiss, as the age of the masses. (Ewald, 2000: 158)

Conclusion

Capitalism is essentially biopolitical. It is based on the discipline and regulation of individuals and populations, which ensures their docility, increases the quality and the quantity of the available workforce, and adjusts them to economic processes. Disciplinary mechanisms are in play during the process of production, when the worker is obligated to follow certain norms, but also in the sphere of reproduction, when the individual is subject to other disciplinary institutions. Disciplinary mechanisms are complemented by the biopolitical regulation of the population (security) and the protection of the social. These result in the constitution of a certain type of subjectivity.

Although they function and impose normativity in different ways, disciplinary and security technologies of power conspire to reduce deviance and diversity. In addition, the needs of national economies also led to the promotion of national narratives and identities. All these forces combined to create a homogenous social space in which the industrial subject was expected to conform. Homogeneity and the reproduction of the social norm became the fundamental demands of liberal industrial capitalism. Thus, at the same time that capitalism cultivated the notion of the individual, it suppressed deviance and diversity. Although the individual was presented as something distinct from the outside world, it had to adjust itself to the rest of the society and obey social norms.

Thus, the demand of authenticity introduced in modernity came to be suppressed by the very same capitalist structures that gave birth to it. In this sense, the demand of authenticity, as expressed by eighteenth-century philosophers like Rousseau, becomes something quite radical, since it comes to oppose the bourgeois culture of industrial capitalism (Berman, 2009). However, as we will see in the following chapters, the shift from industrial to immaterial production, the rise of neoliberal governmentality, and the development of post-panoptic surveillance mechanisms create a completely different environment. In this new era, the demand of authenticity not only does not oppose but becomes a buttress of the capitalist order.

CHAPTER 3: NEOLIBERAL GOVERNMENT AND THE SURVEILLANCE OF AUTHENTICITY

In the previous chapter I examined the type of subjectivity that emerges under the conditions of industrial production and liberal governmentality. As I explained, the subject is coerced by technologies of power that aim at the eradication of difference and the homogenization of the social sphere. However, changes in the capitalist economy after the 1970s, the rise of neoliberal governmentality, and the development of new modes of surveillance that underpin it resulted in a transformation in the ways normativity is formed.

It what follows, I discuss the passage from liberal forms of government to the dominance of neoliberalism and the emergence of the post-panoptic modes of surveillance that underpin it. Drawing on Foucault's accounts of liberalism and neoliberalism and on scholars who have built on his views (e.g. Andrew, Osborne, and Rose (eds.), 1996; Rose, 2004, Dean 2010; Dean; 2013, Lemke; 2013; Dardot and Laval, 2013; Brown; 2014), I will argue that neoliberal governmentality constitutes a break with liberal government (see Foucault, 2010). I will also suggest that the shift from liberal to neoliberal government involves a change from panoptic to post-panoptic modes of surveillance, an alteration that has received little attention from experts in neoliberal governmentality and surveillance studies. Although governmentality scholars have done a remarkable job at building on Foucault's understanding of neoliberalism as a governmental rationality, they have shown little interest in examining the surveillance mechanisms through which neoliberal government manifests itself. At the same time, most of the sociological interest in contemporary modes of surveillance has focused on the ubiquity of surveillance brought about by new technologies and on the expansion of surveillance mechanisms into the sphere of everyday life. Consequently, these studies have limited themselves to examinations of the ambiguous relationship between security and privacy, and most of them are interested in raising ethical concerns about threats to privacy in contemporary society. These are all extremely important issues. However, the way they are discussed is problematic because it is detached from any account of the underlying shifts in political economy and of the liberal and neoliberal governmental rationalities to which surveillance

models are tied (Gane, 2012).⁶⁵ Nevertheless, there are important exceptions to this general trend in the literature on surveillance. Some have emphasized and extensively theorized contemporary modes of surveillance in relation to the capitalist economy and neoliberal governmentality. These approaches to new modes of contemporary surveillance emphasize the significant role of new technologies and the internet in the development of innovative surveillance methods, relating these methods at the same time to developments and transformations in the economy and the changing role of the state in the neoliberal era (Andrejevic, 2007; Allmer, 2012; Ball and Snider, 2013; Fuchs et al., 2012; Harcourt; 2015).

In the first part of this chapter, I will discuss the transition from liberal to neoliberal governmentality, as analysed by Foucault and scholars who have followed him (e.g. Rose, 2004; Brown, 2014; Dardot and Laval, 2013; also Zamora and Behrent eds., 2015). As we will see, Foucault offers important insights into neoliberal governmentality as a post-disciplinary mode of government, but he fails to investigate the new modes of surveillance that underpin it. I argue that the notion of control introduced by Gilles Deleuze (1992) is important for understanding the post-disciplinary surveillance of the neoliberal era, and thus it can be a useful analytical tool and starting point for expanding on Foucault's insights. The power of the notion of control lies also in the fact that it connects new modes of surveillance, based on third-generation machines and data gathering, with the capitalist economy and the shift to post-industrial production.

I go on to discuss the new modes of surveillance that underpin late capitalism, drawing on the work of contemporary surveillance scholars. As we will see, a key characteristic of contemporary surveillance is that it is based on a combination of government and private actors. Another important characteristic is that contemporary surveillance involves a shift in the purposes of surveillance. Although it is still implicated in the security and juridical orders, contemporary surveillance is increasingly carried out by profit-oriented actors such as telephone, internet, and marketing companies. Obviously, the aim of these companies is the collection of data in order to directly or indirectly increase profits. Consequently, most contemporary surveillance mechanisms are indifferent towards the morality of the targeted individuals (Harcourt, 2015; Zuboff, 2015). A third characteristic of contemporary modes of surveillance is their reliance on new technologies. Lianos and Douglas describe how everyday practices are mediated through Automated Social-Technical Environments

⁶⁵ These concerns have been raised by Nicholas Gane. His article "The Governmentalities of Neoliberalism: Panopticism, Post-panopticism and Beyond" (2012) is a valuable contribution to the theorization of contemporary surveillance in relation to the governmentalities of capitalism.

(ASTEs), in which subjects are expected to conform to pre-arranged situations (Lianos and Douglas, 2010: 264). These environments focus on the fragments of each subject's existence and regulate its actions in accordance with the network it is participating in at a given moment in time. This has the result that contemporary modes of surveillance do not aim to subsume the subject under a hegemonic value system and are, again, indifferent towards individual morality.

I conclude that contemporary neoliberal government and new modes of surveillance aim to set a framework of predetermined choices to which autonomous, freely choosing subjects must conform by being competitive and efficient users of the capitalist system. In contrast to liberal government and panoptic surveillance, neoliberal government and the new forms of surveillance do not aim to impose a hegemonic value system or morality on the individual. Thus, contemporary modes of surveillance allow for a diversity of values and lifestyles, as long as these do not hinder the functioning of the capitalist system. Unlike liberal government and panoptic surveillance, which aim to eradicate difference, the profit- and data-oriented network of surveillance mechanisms not only allows for but favours the expression of diversity and particularity. Thus, neoliberal governmentality and the new modes of surveillance that underpin it encourage rather than suppress the ideal of authenticity.

Neoliberal government and control

Neoliberal ideas and policies have dominated most of the advanced economies of the Western world in recent decades. The theoretical roots of neoliberalism go back many years, long before the actual implementation of neoliberal policies. The Lippmann Colloquium, held in Paris in August 1938, was the first organized attempt by intellectuals to theorize and express their rejection of classical liberalism and the logic of *laissez-faire*. Some years later, the creation of the Mont Pelerin Society – at a conference held in April 1947 – put neoliberalism on more solid theoretical foundations (Mirowski and Plehwe, 2009).⁶⁶ Neoliberalism was initially implemented as a political experiment by the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet in Chile in the 1970s, but in the following decades neoliberalism came to dominate most of the governments of Western states. The 1980s was the decade in which neoliberalism really began to take over. In the USA, neoliberal government was imposed by Ronald Reagan, and in the United Kingdom by Margaret Thatcher (for this see Harvey,

⁶⁶ For an overview of the origins of the neoliberal school of thought and its influence on contemporary thought and politics, see Philip Mirowski and Dieter Plehwe eds. (2009). for the history of the Mont Pelerin Society, see Ronald Max Hartwell, (1995)

2005). The ascendancy of neoliberal ideas and policies in Western states became evident when political parties traditionally of the left began to adopt neoliberal strategies. By the end of the 1990s, most political parties in Europe and the USA were committed to programmes of reform aimed at renegotiating the relationship between the state and the market in favour of market policies.⁶⁷ In a sense, these programmes, known as the “Third Way” (Giddens, 1998),⁶⁸ confirmed Wendy Brown’s claim that “neoliberalism can become dominant as governmentality without being dominant as ideology” (Brown, 2005: 49). Paradoxically, although the financial crisis of 2008–2009 might have been expected to do something to weaken this neoliberal supremacy, it resulted in exactly the opposite outcome. As Colin Crouch has written, neoliberalism not only did not die but also grew much stronger (Crouch, 2011).⁶⁹

Foucault saw clearly the impact of neoliberalism on contemporary societies. Part of his 1979 lecture series at the Collège de France, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, is devoted to examining neoliberalism not just as a political ideology or set of economic policies but as a new form of governmentality. In these lectures, Foucault turns his attention to two main schools of neoliberal thought, the German Ordoliberalism of the Freiburg School and the American ideas of the Chicago School of economics. The Ordoliberals proposed that the social should be governed in the name of the economic. Thus, they focused their attention on the role of the state in extending the rationality of the market and facilitating competition throughout the social sphere. On the other hand, the neoliberals of the Chicago School radically redefined the territory of the social, which they understood as the economic. According to this view, all human actions – and not only those with obviously economic motivations – are characterized by a calculative logic and are based on the rational measurement of costs and benefits. Consequently, the American neoliberals proposed that the whole social sphere should be understood and governed as an economic field and that the subject herself should be conceived as a *homo economicus* in all aspects of her life (Gordon, 1991: 43). These views were supported by a conceptualization of labour as human capital, an idea introduced by the Chicago School. For the American neoliberals, a worker’s labour power constitutes her human capital, and it must be managed accordingly

⁶⁷ In the USA, Bill Clinton ran his successful 1992 presidential election campaign as a “New Democrat”, signifying the reformation of the political agenda of the Democratic Party. In the United Kingdom, Tony Blair similarly rebranded the Labour Party as “New Labour”. In September 1998, Clinton and Blair held a conference in New York at which they officially launched their Third Way.

⁶⁸ The chief theoretician of the Third Way was Anthony Giddens, who also served as a consultant to Tony Blair’s government (see Giddens, 1998).

⁶⁹ For the issue of the survival and growth of neoliberalism after the financial crisis of 2008–2009 see Crouch (2011) and Mirowski (2013).

in order to secure a profit for its owner. As I explain in more detail in the next chapter, conceiving of one's labour power as human capital implies the subjection of all aspects of one's life to the logic of the market. Every aspect of ourselves and our lives, our education, our health, and the way we spend our free time affects the quality, the value, of our human capital. Therefore, every action, every choice we make or do not make, becomes an economic decision. The understanding of the self as human capital is a vehicle for the extension of the logic of the market to all other spheres of social life (an extension of which the Ordoliberals approved) and for the deepening of the neoliberal rationale within the subject, who is forced to conceive of and govern herself as the entrepreneur of herself (Foucault, 2010: 226). In the notion of human capital introduced by the American neoliberals, Foucault identifies the most important characteristic of neoliberal governmentality: the fact that it manifests itself through the construction of a certain type of subjectivity, the entrepreneurial subject. Accordingly, this thesis emphasizes the importance of the notion of human capital and the constitution of the entrepreneurial self (see next chapter), and it aims to show how neoliberal policies constitute this subject while at the same being manifested through it.⁷⁰

Foucault makes clear that neoliberalism is a distinctive art of government from liberalism. Its increasing power does not amount to the restoration or the extension of the liberal project but to a rupture with liberal governmentality (Foucault, 2010; see also Brown, 2015: 61, 62). In contrast to liberalism, neoliberalism abandons the logic of *laissez-faire* in favour of active state intervention on behalf of the market. Therefore, neoliberalism restructures the logic of government. Whereas the liberal governmentality that reached its zenith after the Second World War with the implementation of Keynesian economic policies and the expansion of the welfare state aimed to protect the social from the economic, neoliberalism injects the logic of the market economy into all areas of the social. In Foucault words: neoliberalism "generalizes the "enterprise" form within the social body" resulting at "the economization of the entire social field. (Foucault, 2010: 241–243, see also Brown, 2015: 61). Under neoliberal governmentality, the economic is not a distinctive area of human existence but an all-embracing rationale that governs all aspects of human action (Foucault, 2010; Gordon, 1991; Rose: 2004; Miller and Rose: 2008). Therefore, following Foucault,

⁷⁰ Despite the theoretical differences between the Ordoliberals and the Chicago School, Foucault emphasizes that their views do not contradict one another but are different expressions of the emergence of a new type of governmental rationale, neoliberal governmentality: "in actual fact, something much more important is at stake in modern neo-liberalism, whether this takes the German form ... or the anarcho-liberal American form. What is at issue is whether a market economy can in fact serve as the principle, form, and model for a state" (Foucault, 2010: 241–243).

Dardot and Laval note that neoliberalism, as a form of government that intervenes in all aspects of human existence, must be analysed first and foremost as a mode of government that produces specific social relations and certain modes of subjection (Dardot & Laval, 2013: 3–4)

The distinction between liberal and neoliberal governmentality comes down to different perceptions of the nature of the market economy. Neoliberalism disputes the liberal contention that the market is a natural, self-regulating entity, and it instead adopts a conception of the market as an artificial entity (Foucault, 2010: 131,132). As we saw in the previous chapter, the idea that the market is natural determined the way government power was exercised and set limits to and defined the types of acceptable government intervention. The perception of the market as a natural entity implied that government should only intervene when the effects of the market proved to be harmful for the whole of society or to undermine social cohesion. Thus, liberal government gave rise to the field of the social, the sphere in which intervention was considered acceptable and necessary for the protection of the population and society. In contrast, neoliberal governmentality is founded on an anti-naturalistic conception of the market. The premise that the market is something artificial implies that the existence of the market should not be taken for granted and that governmental intervention is needed in order for the market to exist, survive, and expand (Lemke, 2012). Neoliberal governmentality abandons the principle of *laissez-faire* and favours state intervention. However, state intervention does not aim to challenge the destructive effects of the market on society or to counterbalance its effects, as it was the case in liberalism. It aims at the creation of a framework within which the forces of the market can be unleashed (Donzelot, 2008: 123, 124). Neoliberalism, Foucault notes, governs not *because* of the market, but *in favour* of the market (Foucault, 2010: 121).

Obviously the role of the state and its relationship with the market changes significantly under neoliberalism. Whereas in liberalism the state was tasked with supervising the market and intervening when its consequences threatened society or the market itself, Neoliberalism reverses the relationship between the state and the market and introduces the logic of the market into the functioning of the state. The economization of the state has two aspects. First, the role of the state shifts from that of supervising the market to that of actively expanding it and cultivating its principles. Second, the state is supervised *by* the market in the sense that the state adopts the logic of the market and its functioning is assessed in relation to how well it accords with this economic logic (Brown, 2014).

Another significant difference between liberal and neoliberal governmentality is that, whereas liberalism assumes exchange to be the fundamental principle of the market, neoliberalism's notion of the market is founded on the principle of competition. At this point the neoliberal assumption about the artificial nature of the market is crucial. Neoliberals maintain that, just like the market, competition is neither natural nor given, but the principle of exchange advanced by liberals is assumed to be natural and to derive from an innate human tendency to trade. Therefore, neoliberal government must take the initiative in order to produce, maintain, and increase competition. This obviously changes the goals of government. Neoliberal government no longer aims at the government and protection of the social from the market, as liberal government did, but at creating a framework that mobilizes the principle of competition to the whole of the social sphere. This has important political implications. The proper function of the exchange principle relies on the norm of equivalence. Therefore, liberal intervention aims to reduce inequalities between people so that the market remains credible in the eyes of members of society. By contrast, competition derives from and results in inequality. The expansion of neoliberal rationality and the generalization of the norm of competition legitimizes inequality in every sphere of social life. This obviously undermines the foundations of liberal democracy because the latter is based on the idea of equality in the application of the law (Brown, 2014). At the same time it transforms the logic of welfare policies in a significant way. In neoliberalism the goal of social policy becomes the promotion of competition and economic growth rather than the protection of those most damaged by market forces. By supporting competition instead of promoting equality and reducing the anti-social consequences of the market, social policy becomes less a redistribution mechanism and more a mechanism for creating the necessary conditions for the functioning of the market (Brown, 2014; Lemke, 2012).

The changing role of the welfare state under neoliberalism is revealing of the class character of neoliberal government, a character that Foucault fails to see. Unfortunately, the way that Foucault understands government – as diffused, as unmoored from economic structures – leads him to the false conclusion that neoliberal government affects social classes, or individuals in different class positions, in similar ways. However, in my view, neoliberal government has important class implications that must not be neglected. At first glance, it might seem as though pointing out the class character of neoliberalism is unnecessary: if capitalism is by definition a class-based economic system, any type of capitalist governmentality will have class implications. As obvious as this may seem,

however, most governmentality scholars, following Foucault, neglect the class character of liberal and neoliberal governmentality. I suggest that, because of their fundamental differences, liberalism and neoliberalism introduce completely different logics into the class structure of the capitalist economy. As I explained above, the social logic of government associated with liberalism also had a significant class character; liberal interventions aimed to protect those who suffered under the excesses of the market economy. At the same time, however, the liberal protection of the social served capital accumulation by guaranteeing a healthy, skilled workforce and by increasing the purchasing power of the population. Most importantly, social protection served capital by mitigating the class inequalities created by capitalism and by facilitating the necessary social consent to the system. In contrast to liberal governmentality, neoliberal government introduces an aggressive classism. David Harvey, one of the key representatives of this interpretation of neoliberalism, suggests that the economic crisis of 1970s created the need for the reestablishment of the conditions for capital accumulation, which included the withdrawal of governments from areas of social provision (Harvey, 2005). According to Harvey, this marked the end of the “class compromise” between capital and labour that was materialized in the welfare state policies that characterized the period from the end of the Second World War up until the 1970s. Thus, for Harvey, neoliberalism is in essence a “class project” that aims at the restoration and consolidation of the power of the bourgeoisie over the working class. It is not a coincidence, Harvey argues, that neoliberal policies were mobilized at the very same time that the labour movement, in alliance with other social movements (feminist, anti-racist, and youth movements) were themselves beginning to question the “class compromise” that had been achieved and to propose radical socialist alternatives that were threatening to the bourgeoisie (Harvey, 2005: 15).

As competition replaces exchange and inequality replaces equality, labour is transformed into human capital and the worker into an entrepreneur competing against other entrepreneurs (Foucault, 2010: 223–225). Neoliberalism transforms the traditional liberal *homo economicus*: “the homo economicus sought after is not the man of exchange and consumption; he is the man of enterprise and production” (Foucault, 2010: 147). In neoliberalism the subject of production is replaced by the entrepreneurial self, which has to manage its human capital prudently in order to succeed in competition. This again requires a class analysis that Foucault fails to provide. According to Brown, the constitution of the worker as an entrepreneur of her human capital undermines class solidarity among workers. There are two reasons for this. First, competition between workers weakens the

bonds of solidarity that would otherwise arise from their common class position. Second, the notion of human capital obscures the visibility of class opposition and exploitative and alienated essence of work under capitalism (Brown, 2014: 64). In order to truly appreciate Brown's claims, we must consider the fact that the transformation of the worker into an entrepreneur of herself does not refer to a change in the mentality of the employees. Rather than just suggesting a change in the culture of the contemporary workplace, the transformation of the worker into an entrepreneur of herself involves the worker coming to embody the norms of entrepreneurship and competition. This is the outcome of the reality of the neoliberal labour market, as materialized in contracts of employment and in new methods of disciplining and controlling workers. The productive subject comes to embody the norm of entrepreneurship, which alters the relationship of workers towards themselves and towards their colleagues. The clearest example of the imposition of the norm of entrepreneurship and the transformation of contemporary workers into entrepreneurs of their human capital is the growth of self-employment contracts. These types of contracts transform the relationship between the employer and the employee to the advantage of the former; they make it that the worker has to offer her services to the employer, who becomes a client. Under these conditions, employers are shorn of their responsibilities towards their employees, such as requirements to provide social and health insurance, paid holidays, and so on. In the world of self-employment contracts, the workers not only lose the protections offered by collective labour agreements but also have to compete with each other to provide the best value for money for their clients/bosses.

Neoliberal government also inaugurates a shift in the logic and the target of surveillance mechanisms. As we saw in the previous chapter, Foucault argues that surveillance mechanisms are inseparable from a certain type of governmentality. His remarks on the relationship between liberal government and panoptic surveillance demonstrate that liberalism is supported by panoptic and security mechanisms. However, Foucault acknowledged that the notions of panopticism and disciplinary power fail to capture the new forms of surveillance that underpin late capitalist societies and neoliberal governmentality.

In the last few years society has changed and individuals have changed too; they are more and more diverse, different, and independent. There are ever more categories of people who are not compelled by discipline (*qui ne sont pas astreints à la discipline*), so that we are obliged to imagine the development of society without discipline. The ruling class is still impregnated with the old technique. But it is

clear that in the future we must separate ourselves from the society of discipline of today. (Foucault as cited in Hardt, 1995: 41)

At the end of the tenth lecture of *The Birth of Biopolitics*, where Foucault elaborates on the notion of neoliberal governmentality, he concludes:

[...] you can see that what appears on the horizon of this kind of analysis is not at all the ideal or project of an exhaustively disciplinary society in which the legal network hemming in individuals is taken over and extended internally by, let's say, normative mechanisms. Nor is it a society in which a mechanism of general normalization and the exclusion of those who cannot be normalized is needed. On the horizon of this analysis we see instead the image, idea, or theme-program of a society in which there is an optimization of systems of difference, in which the field is left open to fluctuating processes, in which minority individuals and practices are tolerated, in which *action is brought to bear on the rules of the game rather than the players*, and finally in which *there is an environmental type of intervention instead of the subjugation of individuals*. (Foucault: 2010: 259, 260 emphases mine)

Although Foucault said that he would develop this point further in the following lectures, he did not keep his promise (Foucault, 2010: 260, 265). Unfortunately, most of the scholars who have, following Foucault, been preoccupied with governmentality studies have shown little interest in investigating further the relationship between neoliberal governmentality and the new modes of surveillance (Rose, 2004; Dean, 2010; Dean, 2013; Dean, and Villadsen, 2016; Lemke, 2013; Bröckling and Krasmann; 2012). Nevertheless, the italicized passages in the above quotation provide some suggestions for how we might understand the post-disciplinary normativity that Foucault connects with neoliberal government. Unlike disciplinary mechanisms, which focus on the individual, Foucault suggests that neoliberal government involves an “environmental type of intervention” which aims to shape the framework in which subjects act rather than mould the subject directly.

As we have seen, liberal governmentality and panopticism are bound tightly together. This relationship is based on the liberal presupposition that the market is a self-regulating entity that follows natural laws that have to be respected by the state. The state's role is to watch over the market, to supervise its self-regulating laws, and to intervene only when the natural order of the market is threatened. In contrast, the anti-naturalistic conception of the market adopted by neoliberalism implies the abandonment of the idea that the market should be left alone to self-regulate. The state should not limit itself to the panoptic supervision of the market or to intervention aimed at disciplining abnormalities. Instead, it should actively

intervene in order to create the framework in which competition can take place and the market logic can play out. Thus, neoliberal governmentality acts upon the field of action in which subjects choose rather than upon the subject itself. This is the reason why Foucault suggests that neoliberalism is an environmental form of power that results in different modes of subjection (for the “environmental” aspects of neoliberalism see also Massumi, 2009).

Nicholas Gane explains that Foucault understands neoliberalism as the reversal of Bentham’s project of panopticism, in which the state watched over the market. Neoliberalism constitutes a new governmentality according to which the state is to work actively to promote competition in the market and within its own institutions and agencies: “The state no longer watches the market, as in the Panopticon model, instead, guided by the market, it increasingly watches itself” (Gane, 2012). As we have seen, neoliberal government does not oppose state intervention. On the contrary, it actively intervenes in order to create new markets and implement the principle of competition where these things did not previously exist. Privatization policies in fields such as education and healthcare are cases in point.

In his book *The Power at the End of the Economy* (2015), Brian Massumi examines neoliberal governmentality and its relationship to surveillance mechanisms. He argues that neoliberal government functions through a power mechanism that he calls “priming”, an inductive power that eschews the disciplinary mechanisms of normalization and the homogenization that they impose. Massumi suggests that priming

modulates behavior by implementing presuppositions and activating tendencies in an open situation of encounter [...]. It induces participation, rather than imposing a form. It brings something to life in the situation, rather than carving away at life to make it conform to a mold. Priming is an inductive power. It induces. It allows things to come out, rather than battering them down. It brings to be rather than making conform. [...]. Precisely because priming is orienting and activating, modulating rather than molding, it cannot guarantee the same level of uniformity of results. (Massumi, 2015: 29)

Similarly, Byung-Chul Han (2017) suggests that neoliberalism is a permissive form of power that induces confiding, sharing, participation, and communication. It does not suppress freedom; it allows it to be expressed and exploits it. Unlike sovereignty and disciplinary power, which both in different ways restrict the individual, neoliberalism

introduces us to the “violence of positivity”, which is realized through practices of self-optimization, self-improvement, self-exposure, self-examination, and self-control. According to Han neoliberalism signals the end of biopower – at least as Foucault conceptualized it – and is manifested in what he calls “psychopower” (Han, 2017).⁷¹ Whereas traditional forms of biopower aimed to control the individual body (discipline) or the social body (the biopolitics of populations), neoliberal psychopolitics exploits mental processes. Where industrial capitalism needed docile bodies, late capitalism needs creative and aesthetic souls. Han suggests that neoliberal psychopower is expressed most strongly on the internet, social media, and in digital surveillance mechanisms, which directly exploit the self-exposure of the neoliberal subject.

Understanding neoliberalism as an environmental type of governmentality – expressed through priming or psychopower – leads Massumi and Han to connect neoliberal governmentality to Deleuze’s notion of control: both aim not to mould “the resistant body into normative shape” but to modulate human action. In his “Postscript on Control Societies” (1992), one of the most influential texts in surveillance studies, Deleuze discusses the decline of disciplinary society, which Foucault had situated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Following Foucault, Deleuze suggests that the modern subject was shaped by panoptic surveillance and its use in disciplinary spaces: the family, the school, the barracks, the factory, and possibly the hospital or the prison. According to Deleuze, this has changed. Although disciplinary spaces of enclosure have not yet disappeared, in contemporary societies they are being reformed and becoming less important (Deleuze, 1992).⁷² This signals the decline of the panoptic paradigm and the transition to the society of control. Control societies “no longer operate by confining people”, as disciplinary societies did (Deleuze, 1995: 175), and surveillance is no longer centralized, but dispersed. The outsourcing of industrial production to developing countries left advanced capitalist countries with service economies and immaterial production. The factory, the space of enclosure where production took place, gives way to the corporation. Immaterial

⁷¹ Han suggests that, unlike psychopower, disciplinary power and biopower do not reach into people’s souls: they are concerned mainly with the individual body and the biological processes of the population. This is not quite correct as it neglects the fact that disciplinary and biopolitical power are internalized by subjects as both bodily and moral norms. However, Han rightly points out that neoliberalism “has discovered the psyche as a productive force” in the sense that psychopower manipulates the human soul directly in order to produce profit from the expression of emotions, thoughts, etc.

⁷² Massumi notes: “It is not at all that the institutions of the disciplinary regime have disappeared. If anything they have multiplied, and some, like the prison, have ballooned to unheard-of portions, particularly in the United States. It is less that they have disappeared than that the disciplinary regime they deploy within their enclosures no longer defines the overall field of power” (Massumi, 2015: 38–39). For a discussion of the increased rates of incarceration in the USA and Europe since 1973 and the relation between these increases and neoliberal government, see Harcourt (2010).

production elevates the importance of human factors such as communication, knowledge, creativity, and affect (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 285, 289). According to Hardt and Negri, the effect of this is that the creation of wealth no longer takes place during working time, narrowly defined, nor does it only occur within the factory walls. On the contrary, value is now produced throughout whole lives and in every part of society, a phenomenon they refer to as the “social factory” (Hardt and Negri, 1994: 9). Accordingly, Deleuze suggests, as the sphere of production expands throughout society the sphere of education inflates: “as the corporation replaces the factory, perpetual training tends to replace the school” (Deleuze, 1992).⁷³

Changes in the field of healthcare perhaps illustrate most clearly the decline of disciplinary spaces and the transition to open spaces of control. Nowadays, even though responsibility for caring for the infirm still lies with hospitals and doctors, other forms of healthcare are emerging. Nowadays we are taught that relying upon traditional health institutions is not enough for one’s healthy being. The struggle to live a healthy life is a daily struggle: there is not a particular space in which one takes care of one’s health. Healthcare does not refer only to visits to the doctor or the hospital. In fact, these should be the last resorts. To be healthy, one should learn to take care of one’s health on a daily basis. For a healthy life, one should master the art of choosing and consuming healthy products and pursuing an active lifestyle. As we know from TV shows and lifestyle magazines, even sex can be beneficial for one’s health, and thus we are advised to adopt methods that combine pleasure with a physical workout.

The open spaces of control societies are underpinned by third-generation machines and IT technology. The mediation of everyday actions by digital technologies has as a consequence a shift in the subject of surveillance: instead of the individual, it is now its digital representation that is surveilled. The latter may be the data that someone generates through mediating his or her actions via digital technologies or a password that someone has to gain access to a certain environment. This results in significant changes to the way contemporary individuals are normalized and means that control societies produce new

⁷³ In a discussion of the relationship between control and contemporary educational practices, Rose explains that contemporary education is no longer limited to the school, which aimed not only to impart skills and knowledge but, crucially, to construct the disciplined subject. Nowadays, he suggests, new educational obligations arise constantly because of the increased pace with which technologies are developing in advanced capitalist societies, and this creates the need for workers who are able to change their working skills continually. Therefore, the new citizen needs to engage in a constant struggle to retrain, to ensure that he or she acquires the skills and knowledge required to sustain or increase his or her employability (Rose, 2004: 160, 161, 162).

forms of subjectivity. As we have seen, disciplinary power functions by individualizing and moulding the individuality that it produces into the mass that it also produces. Thus, disciplinary power homogenizes and normalizes subjects.

In contrast, societies of control no longer operate within the individual–mass dualism. Control aims to regulate flows, and it operates on “dividuals” instead of individuals and data instead of the mass. Rose’s interpretation of the notion of dividuality is enlightening. He suggests that, unlike individuals, dividuals are not subjects with unique personalities that are the expressions of certain inner qualities. Instead, they should be understood as fragmented subjects that are constituted from different elements, capacities, and potentialities. In control surveillance, individual moulding and transformation are irrelevant. Instead of trying to shape the subject, control tries to shape the field in which it acts. Thus, conduct is monitored and shaped according to logics immanent to the networks that the dividuals participate in at a given time in their everyday lives.

Colwell has investigated the issue of individuality and dividuality and provides more support for this interpretation. Colwell notes that in control societies “power is concerned less with how we construe ourselves but with how we act” (Colwell, 1996: 12). According to Colwell, this means that identity is key to understanding the differences between individuality and dividuality. The different ways in which each form of power directs itself at subjects results in significant differences in the ways the identities of the subjects are formed. As Colwell explains, disciplinary power operates by constructing the individual out of its personal components. Discipline directs itself at the formation of a coherent and steady identity and establishes hierarchies between the individuals in relation to the mass. For example, discipline exhorts people to recognize themselves as sexual subjects. Individuals who deviate from the established norm are excluded. What is important at this point is that the reason for their exclusion is precisely the fact that they are constituted as individuals. Their sexuality is not just a part of their identity but an integrated and integral part of their individuality. Their deviation from the sexual normality of the rest of society implies that they will most likely deviate from all other social norms, and thus they are seen as a danger to society as a whole. By contrast, control operates through the pre-personal and does not focus on the enduring individual. The individual is not obliged to possess a coherent identity that is expressed in all areas of his or her life. Control focuses on the fragments of a dividual’s life and on short-term activities, something that prevents the subject from forming an enduring identity. As a result, the dividual is socialized so as to perform actions that guarantee normal participation in the social activity in which he or she

is participating at a given moment, without the need to consistently discharge the obligations bound up with a certain identity. Thus, as a dividual, one can be aggressive and assertive in one's working environment, types of behaviour that are typically seen as masculine, and at the same time sensitive and playful in one's private life, types of behaviour that are typically connected with femininity (Colwell, 1996: 12).

In sum, the environmental logic of neoliberalism and surveillance mechanisms of control work by shaping the framework in which interaction takes place rather than by directly focusing on the subjects themselves (Massumi, 2015). This is the fundamental difference between neoliberalism's disciplinary modes of surveillance and those that characterize liberal governmentality. However, if we are to understand the complicated nature of contemporary surveillance mechanisms, it is not enough for us simply to describe the shift from liberal to neoliberal governmentality and note their environmental, post-disciplinary logic. Noting that neoliberal governmentality involves post-disciplinary modes of surveillance merely tells us something about the general rationality of neoliberal government and does not advance our understanding of post-panoptic modes of surveillance themselves (Lianos, 2010: 71). Thus, we need to explore contemporary modes of surveillance further. The connection between neoliberalism and Deleuze's notion of control made by Massumi and Han points us in the right direction, for it links surveillance with political economy, with the transformation of capitalism and the shift to post-industrial production. At the same time, the notion of control suggests that in understanding contemporary modes of surveillance and the way they shape contemporary subjectivity, it will be important to acknowledge the shift from second-generation to third-generation machines.

Late capitalism and the surveillance-industrial complex

Many have pointed out that we can no longer base our understanding of contemporary modes of surveillance on Foucault's theory of disciplinary society, which is based on the technologies and institutions of the eighteenth century and nineteenth century. Of course, this does not mean that Foucault's conclusions were wrong, nor does it mean that we should deny the value of Foucault's theoretical legacy or of his contribution to the understanding of modern technologies of power and subjectivity. On the contrary, it is precisely because we accept Foucault's methods and conclusions, if we do, that we must reconsider contemporary technologies of power and the way they construct contemporary subjectivity. As Michalis Lianos rightly points out, the more one projects Foucault's

historically specific conclusions onto contemporary conditions, the more one turns a historical outcome into an unhistorical reality, and this itself suggests a failure to appreciate Foucault's most valuable contributions to the understanding of modern societies and subjects (Lianos, 2010: 70).

Indeed, although the notion of panopticism still remains of great importance in contemporary surveillance studies, significant efforts have been made to move the study of contemporary modes of surveillance on from the panoptic paradigm (Haggerty, 2006; Murakami, 2007). One of the most influential works concerning new surveillance methods is Haggerty and Ericson's "The Surveillant Assemblage" (1998). Armed with Deleuze's and Guattari's analytical tools, they propose a post-panoptic understanding of surveillance according to which surveillance mechanisms resemble an assemblage, a "multiplicity of heterogeneous objects, whose unity comes solely from the fact that these items function together, that they 'work' together as a functional entity" (Patton 1994: 158 as cited in Haggerty and Ericson, 1998). They point out that contemporary surveillance is carried out by both government and private actors, and they discuss the centrality of digital technologies to contemporary surveillance and the different approach to and outcomes for individual bodies and subjectivity. As the concept of assemblage implies, Haggerty and Ericson suggest that new surveillance has a rhizomatic structure, which they contrast with the hierarchical structure of the modes of surveillance that prevailed during the preceding decades. However, the metaphor of the assemblage is somewhat misleading. Although it captures the heterogeneity of the actors involved in contemporary surveillance, it underplays the role of the state in contemporary surveillance practices. And, more importantly, it disregards the stark asymmetries of power between those who "watch" – public or private actors – and those who are "watched" in contemporary surveillance methods. Unfortunately, as we will see, contemporary modes of surveillance do not realize David Brin's (1999) hopes for an open society in which asymmetries between those who surveil and those who are surveilled are eliminated in favour of a democratic form of surveillance. A closer look at contemporary surveillance structures makes it clear that not everyone has the same means or the same legal authority to surveil. For example, big tech companies, such as Facebook and Google, have unparalleled access to personal data and massive storage capabilities, but their clients/users do not have such data or storage capabilities. These asymmetries of power are supported by the juridical framework set by the state, which clearly favours the ability of big companies and the state to surveil and

collect information on their citizens or users.⁷⁴ Overlooking or disregarding such asymmetries leads one to the false conclusion that contemporary surveillance is non-hierarchical and thus more democratic than ever before.

In his book *Exposed: Desire and Disobedience in the Digital Age* (2015), Bernard E. Harcourt puts forward an interpretation of the assemblage of contemporary surveillance. He identifies digital technologies and neoliberal policies as the driving forces behind this new form of surveillance. Harcourt suggests that the contemporary surveillance architecture consists of an amalgam of public institutions, such as state intelligence services, and private actors, such as private security and surveillance companies, telecommunication companies, insurance companies, and digital companies like Google, Facebook, Microsoft, Amazon, and Netflix (Harcourt, 2015).⁷⁵ According to Harcourt, despite the fact that the role of private actors in contemporary surveillance has expanded dramatically – especially those companies involved in the online economy – the role of the state in contemporary surveillance has not shrunk, even if it has changed markedly. It would be more accurate to describe our contemporary surveillance society as the conjunction of the neoliberal state with the forces of capital to create what Ball and Snider call the Surveillance-Industrial Complex (Ball and Snider, 2013). Especially since 9/11, the combined power of private actors and government has been deployed in the name of security and the war against terrorism (Haggerty and Lyon, 2012; Lyon, 2003) and, more recently, particularly in Europe, in the name of controlling immigration and refugee flows (Bigo et al. 2010; Broeders, 2007).

This coalition of powers is manifested in different ways. It is expressed in the emergence of a global surveillance technologies market and the intense competition between different surveillance technologies firms to supply ever more efficient surveillance equipment and services to their potential clients, whether states or other private actors. A striking example of the growth of the Surveillance-Industrial Complex is the rapid expansion of the market for ID systems. Lyon and Topak argue that the global growth of advanced registration and identification technology systems, such as eIDs, epassports, RFIDs tags, and biometrics, stems from what they call “card cartels”. The term refers not only to coalitions of private companies but also to a more general conjunction between large global corporations (e.g.

⁷⁴ A clear example of this is the case of the criminalization of the editor of WikiLeaks, Julian Assange, for leaking classified documents through the site. It is clear that the new transparency does not serve everyone equally (for this issue see Andrejevic, 2014).

⁷⁵ Harcourt notes that “the public-private collaboration in the surveillance industries reflects all the classic features of neoliberalism” (Harcourt, 2015: 98).

Unisys, Gemalto, Sagem, Thales, etc.), international governmental organizations (the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme, Smart Card Alliance), and national states and technology protocols (Lyon and Topak, 2013; Lyon, 2009). It also refers to the strong partnership between state security agencies and the private sector, especially telecommunications and internet companies, and the outsourcing of data gathering from the state to private actors (Harcourt, 2015: 73–74). Edward Snowden’s 2013 revelations about the intersections between the National Security Agency (NSA) in the USA and private internet and communications companies removed any doubts about the critical role of the state in contemporary surveillance practices and revealed the triangle that characterizes contemporary surveillance mechanisms: (1) governmental actors – in this case the NSA – outsource the gathering of data about (2) ordinary internet and social media users to (3) private actors like telecommunications companies, internet companies, and universities (Lyon, 2014). In other cases, such as in the travel industry and financial services, private companies have been required to surveil and monitor their clients themselves in the interests of national security. As part of this effort, these companies have been forced to carry out organizational reforms in order to attain the safety standards required by governments, reforms that have often not been in their own financial interests or in line with what their customers want (Ball et al., 2015).

Notwithstanding the above, the main driving force behind contemporary surveillance is not security but capital accumulation. Although, as we have seen, these factors are interconnected in various ways, in informational capitalism the relationship between political economy and surveillance has become direct in virtue of the fact that surveillance is now immanent in production and consumption. As mentioned above in the discussion of Taylorism as a mode of surveillance, the surveillance of workplaces is a central aspect of the capitalist economy. According to Zuboff, the mediation of labour by computer technology and the internet has increased the abilities of employers to surveil their employees, as their employees’ activities unavoidably leave traces that are documentable and controllable (Zuboff, 1988). However, the most striking form of surveillance for profit is consumer surveillance and the rise of the personal information economy. The personal information economy depends exclusively on the gathering and analysis of data collected through electronic surveillance systems, and it involves a re-evaluation of production practices and new ways of understanding, influencing, and shaping consumption practices (Pridmore, 2012). According to Lyon, consumer surveillance is “the most rapidly growing sphere of surveillance [...] outstripping the surveillance capacities of most national states”

(Lyon in Harcourt, 2015: 207). The importance of consumer surveillance for the needs of capitalism and the advancement of new marketing strategies has also been pointed out by Oscar H. Gandy in *The Panoptic Sort: A political Economy of Personal Information* (1993), in which he shows how electronic systems collect personal information for consumer profiling purposes in order to achieve more efficient advertising and marketing strategies (Gandy, 1993). However, the notion of the panopticon is not the most suitable paradigm for understanding consumer surveillance in the digital era (Lyon, 1994: 26, 67). While Gandy correctly points out that the new transparency introduced by the personal information economy means a massive increase in the visibility of the subject, its goal is not that the subject should internalize the power's gaze or adopt certain moral norms, as is the case in the panopticon; rather, the aim is simply the collection of as much data as possible.

The personal information economy that emerged in the digital era has developed to such an extent that database marketing has become a competitive commercial enterprise in itself. Private companies such as Acxiom or Datalogix, to mention but two, compete to collect information, profile individuals, and provide the most comprehensive databases to other companies.⁷⁶ Thus, consumer surveillance, collecting and analysing information about consumer habits, has become an industry in itself, a service that database-marketing companies provide to their customers. What's even more alarming is the fact that online tracking increasingly aims at the collection of personal information beyond our online habits and behaviours. It involves information about our health, family status, and lifestyle attitudes and aims at the connection of the digital information drawn from a person's online behaviour with her offline life, a practice known as onboarding (Harcourt, 2015: 159).

By introducing the perpetual surveillance of our everyday lives, the internet and digital technologies have obviously transformed contemporary surveillance (Fuchs et al., 2012). Our societies have freed themselves from the disciplinary panopticon only to introduce a more intense and totalizing form of post-panoptic surveillance, in which we willingly expose ourselves to the eyes of power. The role of the big internet companies, as well as their profits, has become increasingly significant, as everyday experiences and actions, such as economic transactions, shopping, and communicating with friends, gradually move into

⁷⁶ Nowadays, big-data companies have developed gigantic databases. The scale of their databases and the power that they provide is evident if we consider the example of Acxiom, one of the largest big-data companies in USA, which owns the data profiles of at least 300 million US citizens – more information than the FBI has on US residents (Han, 2017).

the online sphere, shaping what Andrejevic calls the “digital enclosure”, wherein “every action and transaction generates information about itself” (Andrejevic, 2007: 2). Internet surveillance results in the collection of a massive amount of information produced by internet users, and it goes without saying that the more data collected the bigger the profit for the firm collecting the data.

The new reality of the digital era introduces us to a new logic of accumulation, which Zuboff calls “surveillance capitalism”. The term refers to a global architecture of computer mediation that commodifies everyday practices and actions through the massive generation of data. Surveillance capitalism seeks to capitalize on the information produced by users of the internet. This of course presupposes the asymmetrical access to and holding of the means of surveillance between the users and the companies that exploit their data. It is worth mentioning that, despite the widespread perception that the data economy is a completely immaterial or placeless phenomenon, the mining, storage, and analysis of big data require advanced technological infrastructure and massive data centers (see Tung-Hui, 2016). The storage of massive amounts of data, known as big data, represents “both a condition and an expression of this logic of accumulation” (Zuboff, 2015). One of the characteristics of data mining is that, while it is extremely specific at targeting individual behaviours, it also brings to light collective patterns that make people predictable and calculable. Big data reveals the tendencies and desires of collectivities. Unlike traditional statistics, it renders “the collective unconscious accessible”, producing a psychogram of the population rather than merely counting things (Han, 2017).⁷⁷

Under these conditions, a new form of surplus value emerges. Internet users produce a new kind of commodity, for which they are not paid, and at the same time they are treated as potential consumers and are constantly exposed to advertisements. This dual nature of everyday internet practices and activities transforms the internet user into a prosumer, since they simultaneously use/consume internet services and produce value for web companies.⁷⁸ According to Fuchs, prosumption results in the total commodification of our internet

⁷⁷ According to Han (2017), digital psychopolitics has implications for free will because it makes everything predictable and calculable. In order for us to be free, the future must be open, and this “openness” is undermined by big data.

⁷⁸ The notion of prosumption was introduced by the American futurologist Alvin Toffler in his book *The Third Wave* (1980). Toffler used the term to describe the blurring of boundaries between the sphere of production and consumption in a world in which technology supports autonomous production and consumption practices. Recently, the notion of prosumption has taken on a different meaning in relation to the Web 2.0 economy. In this context, prosumption refers to the fact that users of Web 2.0 create value despite not receiving any financial benefit (see Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010; Fuchs 2011, 2014; Andrejevic, 2004, 2007). The term has also been used to emphasize the appropriation by big brand companies of the meaning and networks produced by the consumers of certain branded products (see Arvidsson, 2006).

activity for two reasons. First, prosumers become commodities themselves, in the form of their personal data, and are sold to advertising clients. Second, they are exposed to the commodity logic through constant advertising (Fuchs, 2011: 302; also Andrejevic, 2004, 2007).

Apart from exploiting the user, increasing use of the internet compromises the privacy that the modern subject once enjoyed. The internet creates what Han calls a transparent society, which blurs the boundaries between the private and public spheres. The transparent society denies people's interiority and any sense of private space. Paradoxically, this does not happen by means of violence or coercion but through voluntary self-exposure (Han, 2015). In today's society, transparency becomes an imperative, and those who do not abide by it raise suspicions. Nowadays, everyone – from politicians and public figures to normal citizens – must be visible and transparent. Failure to be transparent implies at the very least secretiveness and perhaps even corruption or immorality. The transparent society not only allows but demands you to be an open book; it demands authenticity.

The moral neutrality of the new transparency

In contrast to the Orwellian dystopia in which Big Brother restricts freedom and expression – to the point that it creates a language of limited grammar and vocabulary (Newspeak), so that even thoughts and feelings are controlled – the digital Big Brother of our era is friendly and tolerant. Contemporary forms of surveillance encourage freedom – communication and emotion are encouraged and stimulated rather than repressed – in order to document it, store it, trade it, and exploit it. Freedom, and not constraint, is what has made the Big Brother of our era so powerful. Contemporary forms of surveillance do not mean to limit language or thought or to restrict persons but, on the contrary, to multiply these things in order to exploit them through data mining.

In surveillance capitalism, where all data and information is of potential value, what is important is collecting as much data as possible. The importance of quantity over quality is what gives rise to a critical characteristic of contemporary surveillance that Zuboff calls “formal indifference”. Google and other data aggregators are indifferent to what you say or do in your online life as long as it is captured as data. Nor are individuality and the meaning people give to their actions of any importance for surveillance capitalism: the only thing that matters is the data that the action produced, regardless of the action and the meaning that lies behind it (Zuboff, 2015).

In order to understand the moral neutrality of the new surveillance we must understand the logic that underpins it. According to Harcourt, digital surveillance is characterized by a new rationality that he calls the “doppelgänger logic”. This logic explains all the targeted ads we come across in our online lives and all the “you may also like” suggestions of Google, Amazon, and Netflix. Contemporary surveillance mechanisms constantly follow our digital traces, aiming not only to identify our behavioural and consumption patterns but also to match our patterns those of our supposed digital twins. By profiling what one consumer wants, it is easier to predict what the other consumer will want in the future. During this process, Harcourt argues, we shape each other’s desires and consumption patterns (Harcourt, 2015: 145).

Of course, attempts to profile and predict human behaviour are nothing new. As Harcourt explains, however, in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, what prevailed was the actuarial logic, which was based on group categorization and identification. Individual behavioural patterns could only be understood and predicted in relation to the group to which an individual belonged. By the mid twentieth century there had been a turn from the actuarial logic of groups to a more individualized method of analysing the relationships between individuals using multiple statistical analyses and large amounts of data (Harcourt, 2015: 147–153). The statistical logic of the second half of the twentieth century and the aim of individualized statistical prediction gave way, in turn, to the “doppelgänger logic” of today’s digital era, which aims to find our perfect match: “Expository power represents a particular form of power that deals less with populations, groups, or individuals than with the twins, the matches, the doubles [...]. It is about identifying our digital self by matching us to our digital double” (Harcourt, 2015: 157). Complicated algorithm patterns analyze the behaviour of active users in real time in order to match them with users with similar tastes and interests. Surveillance based on the “doppelgänger logic” is more accurate and objective than previous types of control, but it also has two important futures. Since the only aims are the matching and the prediction of our consuming behaviour, digital surveillance lacks any moral premises. A process that began with the statistical control of the mid twentieth century is completed in digital surveillance: “we have entered the age of amoral machine logics” (Harcourt, 2015: 162). At the same time, while the movement away from moral judgement has been completed, there has also been a movement away from causality and interpretation. As long there is a match, it is not important to comprehend the reasons behind this match (Harcourt, 2015: 162). According to Han, the digital era thus inaugurates a second Enlightenment, founded on

transparency and big data. Whereas the Enlightenment project was founded on reason, knowledge, and the statistical measurement of events, this new “digital Enlightenment” converts everything into data and information from which we draw supposedly objective conclusions about the present or the future, freed from subjective and emotional judgements or ideologies. In this sense, dataism becomes the new positivism of our era. The conclusions drawn from big data are considered undeniable truths but involve a nihilistic approach to reality: big data does not result to a causative comprehension of reality or human behaviour and it does not seek to do so (Han, 2011).⁷⁹

What is clear is that in the digital era the ambition to achieve transparency, which also lies at the heart of panopticism, has been carried to its logical conclusion. Digital surveillance technologies penetrate through walls and transcend physical barriers, thus eliminating all of the blind spots that afflicted panoptic surveillance and leaving nothing outside of power’s field of vision (Harcourt, 2015; Han, 2017). However the new transparency introduced by surveillance capitalism differs significantly from the transparency of panoptic mechanisms. Panoptic power is based on the subject’s awareness that he or she is being observed or, to be more accurate, on the subject’s awareness that there is always a possibility that they are being observed (Harcourt, 2015: 38). This results to the internalization of the power’s gaze and the subjection and moralization of the individual.

In contrast to disciplinary mechanisms, in the digital era, surveillance functions best not when it is visible but when it is ignored and forgotten. In contrast to disciplinary mechanisms, which had a moral imperative, digital surveillance lacks any moral aim and targets to economic profit⁸⁰. It seeks to collect and profile our data in order to match us with our data twins for marketing purposes, not in order to discipline us or subject us to moral norms. Thus, Digital era surveillance “functions best when those who are seen are not entirely conscious of it, or do not always remember. The marketing works best when the targets do not know they are being watched. Information is more accessible when the

⁷⁹ Han highlights the distinction between knowledge and information. Knowledge, Han argues, is based on *comprehension*, an understanding of the correlation between two factors and not just the recording of this relationship, whereas information lacks this qualitative characteristic. According to Han, big data reduces knowledge to information and results in absolute ignorance (Han, 2017). This claim is not far from the idea of “the end of theory”, which the editor-in-chief of *Wired*, Chris Anderson, proclaimed in 2008 (Anderson, 2008).

⁸⁰ Of course, panoptic surveillance and disciplinary technologies also sought economic profit and the production of value. However, in the case of the panopticon, this is achieved indirectly, through the imposition of moral and physical norms that ultimately make the individual docile, useful, and productive. By contrast, post-panoptic data surveillance is not mediated by moral imperatives or norms but aims directly at the exploitation of human action and interaction (Han, 2017: 48, 49).

subject forgets that she is stalked” (Harcourt, 2015: 124). Digital surveillance mechanisms are not supposed to be internalized by the observed subject, since this would discourage people from using them (Harcourt, 2015: 124, 126). The more that we ignore the mechanisms through which digital surveillance functions, the more we will use and express ourselves through the internet, producing the information that companies such as Google and Facebook will sell in order to make a profit. In *The Googlization of Everything* (2011), Silva Vaidhyanathan contrasts panoptic power, which subjects individuals to the gaze of a centralized authority, with contemporary surveillance mechanisms, of which there are many and of which most people are ignorant. He thus proposes the term “cryptopticon” in order to describe these mechanisms. Not fully aware of how we are being surveilled, we tend to ignore these mechanisms rather than to regulate our behaviour according to their gaze. Nevertheless, again, digital surveillance aims at profit and not at moralization: it is thus more interested in tracking our peculiarities rather than suppressing them, and this is best achieved when surveillance mechanisms remain unknown or are at least ignored. “ChoicePoint, Facebook, Google, and Amazon want us to relax and be ourselves” (Vaidhyanathan, 2011: 112) because information about each person’s distinctive tastes and desires can be extremely valuable for contemporary marketing and advertising strategies. Being yourself is much more useful for contemporary surveillance mechanisms than the imposition of homogeneous norms and values would be. Similarly, as Harcourt argues, expository power achieves total awareness not by restricting our lust and pleasure but by promoting them and making us voluntarily expose ourselves to the web (Harcourt, 2015: 122). Desire, passion, and creativity are not restricted but promoted and cultivated because this helps digital surveillance mechanisms to collect data (Harcourt, 2015: 48–50). What results are personalized advertisements and recommendations about what we should purchase in the future. Personalized marketing is so accurate that it cultivates a sense uniqueness and of an authentic self (Harcourt, 2015: 128).

What is more, companies such as Google break with the Fordist paradigm of production and consumption. In the Fordist mode of production, the worker had also to be recognized as a future consumer and therefore be paid an amount that would allow him or her to support the mass-production economy. But in surveillance capitalism the population that generates the data for companies like Google are neither its customers nor its employees. This marks a crucial difference between the way that surveillance capitalism achieves conformity and the way this was achieved under previous modes of surveillance

(Zuboff, 2015). For Zuboff, computer-mediated surveillance capitalism produces a new type of conformity that

is no longer a 20th century-style act of submission to the mass or group, no loss of self to the collective produced by fear or compulsion, no psychological craving for acceptance and belonging. Conformity now disappears into the mechanical order of things and bodies, not as action but as result, not cause but effect. Each one of us may follow a distinct path, but that path is already shaped by the financial and, or, ideological interests that imbue Big Other and invade every aspect of “one’s own” life. (Zuboff, 2015: 82)

The periopticity of the institutional web

The moral neutrality that characterizes digital surveillance mechanisms also characterizes the new social control. The mediation of human affairs by technology is the main reason for this.

Lianos has described the new forms of social control in post-industrial capitalist societies with great clarity. Lianos claims that social coexistence in premodern communities consisted in the mutual surveillance of all the members of the community. The premodern subject was restricted by the values of the community to which he or she belonged, and the community determined the subject’s entire life trajectory. This meant a high degree of uniformity in terms of appearance, behaviour, and the constitution of the premodern self. Thus, premodern societies were characterized by what Lianos calls “polysemic normativity”: overall values determined human interaction in all aspects of life and in specific settings (Lianos, 2010: 74). Modernity limited “polysemic normativity”. Sets of laws and institutions were established, the most important of which being the modern state, and this created the separation between the public and private spheres and the mediation of human interaction by institutions. Still, although modernity loosened the restrictions placed on individuals by their communities and increased individuals’ independence, social interaction was not completely freed from polysemic sociality. The rise of personal initiative as an element of social status led to the ascendancy of the bourgeois as a hegemonic figure and the supremacy of bourgeois values (Lianos, 2010: 133). At the same time, as we have already seen, the disciplinary technologies of power that characterized modernity shaped the modern subject according to certain moral norms. Thus, modern social control can be understood as a process that made human behaviour converge and achieved conformity through cultural coherence (Lianos, 2010: 132; 2012).

Lianos argues that in post-industrial societies this is no longer the case. Nowadays, social interaction is mediated by an institutional web of private and public institutions and organizations outside of which one cannot exist. In the indirect sociality of post-industrial societies, the role of new technologies becomes paramount since they mediate most aspects of human interaction. Technological systems have created what Lianos calls Automated Social-Technical Environments (ASTE), namely, “technology based contexts of interaction that regulate, organize or monitor social behaviour by integrating it into a pre-arranged environment, built upon a conception of ‘normality’ and ‘regularity’ that all subjects are expected to reproduce” (Lianos and Douglas, 2010: 264). ASTEs are visual or physical environments which introduce contexts of interaction in which the rules and limits of interaction are set in advance and are not negotiable. The only elements that are actually up for negotiation are the access to the ASTE or the authorization of the user to take the actions the ASTE offers and allows. Electronic gates, valid tickets, member cards, credit cards, and passwords are the only ways of gaining access to an automated environment. The visual spaces of electronic banking systems provide one example of an ASTE. In such an environment, the only things that matter are the passwords, which allow access to a predetermined field of choices and services. Amazon has recently introduced “Amazon Go”, automated grocery stores that rely on smartphones, geofencing, computer vision, deep-learning algorithms, and sensor-fusion technologies. Amazon Go allows consumers to purchase products without being checked out by a cashier and even without using a self-checkout station. Thus, the interaction between Amazon Go stores and their customers is filtered and validated by automated technologies, which leaves the customer with no other choice but to make efficient use of the automated environment (for this see Wingfield, 2018, January 21). Thus, through ASTEs, contemporary surveillance mechanisms reduce, indeed almost eliminate, the need for trusting relationships between people.

The impersonality of the new social control means that it does not depend on moral or cultural compatibility. In ASTEs interactions are free of any moral judgement and are defined only by whether the individual has the valid tokens to use in order to interact within the predetermined rules (Lianos and Douglas, 2010: 265). Consequently, the mediation of human interaction by the institutional web and ASTEs implies that conformity is achieved and subjects are normalized in new ways. In contrast to polysemic normativity, which aimed to control the consciousness of the subjects and impose a common value system, post-industrial social control is characterized by monosemic normativity and seeks to set the framework for actions. One’s actions are checked for their

compatibility with a given institutional environment and do need to conform to a hegemonic value system. But it becomes inevitable that one's actions will be compatible with the given framework. In a strictly predetermined environment, deviance becomes impossible, and the only norm becomes the efficient use of the predetermined framework of actions provided by the ASTE (Lianos and Douglas, 2000: 266, Lianos, 2010: 74). Thus, conformity is not achieved by implanting beliefs in subjects or otherwise getting them to abide by general behavioural rules. The post-industrial subject rather fulfils a performance obligation that is imposed by the institutions in and through which interaction takes place at a given moment (Lianos, 2012: 3). Therefore, the basis of post-industrial conformity is not convergence of consciousness but the coordination of the actions of subjects and their efficient competition within the institutional web. Under these circumstances, compliance is efficiency and vice versa (Lianos, 2010: 74).

As sociality comes to be increasingly mediated by the institutional web, social control changes from the task of shaping the soul of the subject, as it was in disciplinary societies, to focus instead on the fragments of our being. In a manner that recalls Deleuze's discussion of the notions of control and dividuality, Lianos argues that the specialized environments of advanced capitalist society are interested only in particular slices of our existence at particular times of the day. Depending on the framework, you are a "client", a "worker", or a "user", without any of those qualities colliding with any of the others (Lianos, 2010: 134).

An integrated, coherent self is not necessary for dealing with an automated system because the system has its own unshakeable coherence into which it incorporates the acts of its users on a strictly delineated domain: the rest of the user's identity is simply meaningless each time. The fact that ASTEs are one faceted monosemic environments turns their users from coherent actors into mere fragmentary "activators". (Lianos and Douglas, 2000: 265)

The way technology is used in contemporary surveillance methods has made contemporary control an extremely atomizing process that, again, does not seek to impose a hegemonic value system or lifestyle. Structured around the minutiae of each individual and supervising each individual's distinctive private experience, contemporary surveillance mechanisms like CCTV, magnetic gates, and RFID tags filter threatening exceptions without imposing common rules or morals (Lianos, 2010: 75). Thus, the limitless combinations made possible by such minutiae create the illusion of personal uniqueness and of a distinctive trajectory for each individual.

Lianos argues that the panoptic surveillance technologies of modernity have given way to the perioptical control of late capitalism. Nowadays, private and public institutions increase their power by attracting the gaze of individuals rather than projecting their gaze upon them. The new social control is therefore essentially competitive. Since it is not a given that a particular institution will mediate and influence social relationships, that institution must acquire and maintain their influence by competing with other institutions in order to generate more interaction and so more profits. This does not mean, of course, that the institutional environments negotiate with their prospective users but that they offer them specific frameworks that they can either engage with or not. Adherence to given institutional frameworks is what lies behind the de-cultured and non-value-based control of post-industrial society. Thus, the boundaries of normativity become very clear, for one can choose whether to adhere to or to refuse to participate in the predetermined framework of a certain institutional environment. Lianos claims that this optionality in the new social control expresses a capitalistic logic; it is made possible by the limitless options offered by the post-industrial institutional web. In addition, the fact that post-industrial control lacks an overarching social and cultural content leads Lianos to conclude that contemporary control is less and less “social”. Like capitalism, contemporary social control is not attached to a particular kind of social behaviour; all are admissible as long as they maintain the conditions of efficiency and competition within the institutional web.

Contemporary normativity therefore does not enforce abstract value systems but one unified principle: do not disturb the efficiency of the institutional web. This is the underlying explanation for the redundancy of grand narratives: society works for you without asking you to hold any specific beliefs or even opinions, just to not hinder how it works. Contemporary control simply delivers the essence of capitalism as the lowest common social denominator. (Lianos, 2010: 76)

Conclusion

Late capitalist societies are characterized by a shift from liberal to neoliberal governmentality and from the panoptic regulation of society to post-disciplinary modes of surveillance. Where liberal government concentrated on the panoptic supervision of the market and the discipline and protection of the population through social policy, neoliberalism uses active intervention to foster the market and competition and to construct the entrepreneurial subject. More recently, we have witnessed a collaboration between the neoliberal state and private companies in the form of the state outsourcing its

surveillance to the private sector. Contemporary surveillance is based on third-generation machines and data gathering. It is carried out by actors like telecommunications and web companies, which of course are profit-oriented firms. Herein lies the main reason for the moral neutrality of contemporary modes of surveillance. As we have seen, when surveillance is oriented towards data collection, the aim is not the eradication of difference but the documentation and designation of every type of particularity. While disciplinary surveillance aimed at the moral discipline of the subject, data-oriented surveillance encourages the expression of individual peculiarities and tastes. The mediation of all human interaction by technology-regulated environments is another reason why contemporary surveillance does not require the moral discipline of the subject. Such environments offer predetermined options to their users/activators and have extremely specific rules of efficient use. The participation in or use of such an environment already presupposes conformity, so no further moral discipline is required from the individual. Moreover, such environments focus on particular fragments of our existence; therefore, they do not aim to impose holistic value systems. As a result, contemporary surveillance cultivates a sense of uniqueness in the individual, who now no longer finds his or her particularities and individuality suppressed.

In sum, contemporary modes of surveillance are characterized by a moral and value neutrality. However, at the same time they are extremely individualizing, for they trace and focus on subjects' peculiarities. Moreover, the new surveillance mechanisms impose the norms of competitiveness and efficiency within regulated frameworks of regulated choices. In this sense, the new surveillance mechanisms are essentially neoliberal.

CHAPTER 4: THE ENTREPRENEURIAL SELF

One's self is the outcome of the relationship between one's biological substance and the field of social forces that one is exposed to. In Chapter 2 we saw that the subject of the industrial stages of capitalism was shaped by disciplinary mechanisms and the biopolitical regulation of the population, which are manifestations of liberal governmentality. The ideal subject of industrial capitalism was both a docile producer and a calculating market participant. At the same time, the "social" logic of liberal governmentality, which reached its apogee with the development of the welfare state and the adoption of Keynesian economic policies, involved the imposition of the social norms of the majority on society as a whole; the liberal individual, subjected to "social" government finds herself party to a contract of mutual claims and obligations with society. However, as we saw in the previous chapter, the rise of neoliberal governmentality and the development of post-disciplinary modes of surveillance have changed the way conformity and normalization are achieved in late capitalist societies. Where liberal governmentality treats the social as a field in which state intervention is allowed in order to protect society, neoliberal government transfers responsibility to the neoliberal subject. Neoliberal state intervention aims not to protect society but to set the framework within which the individual can supposedly be free to choose according to her needs and aims. In this way, neoliberal governmentality introduces the economic logic into every sphere of life.

Further, however, neoliberal governmentality also shapes of a new type of subjectivity. Foucault was the first to acknowledge that the dominance of neoliberalism has resulted in a new type of subject. He suggests that the new economic subject of neoliberalism is not the liberal figure of exchange but a competitive subject who is an "entrepreneur of himself, being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of [his] earnings" (Foucault 2010: 226; see also Bröckling, 2011). This change is important for two reasons. First, when the subject conceives of itself as human capital, every aspect of its life acquires economic value. In this way, the utilitarian logic of liberalism that pervades the economic sphere is extended to all aspects of life. Every part of one's existence and everyday experience becomes a way of enhancing one's human capital. Thus, the entrepreneurial self is admonished to make the best possible choices and calculative decisions, measuring the cost and benefit of each action not only in the market but in every part of life. This comprehensive expansion of the entrepreneurial logic into every sphere of life reconfigures the relationship that the entrepreneurial self has to his or her self. In order to survive amid the furious pace of life in late capitalism, one has no

choice other than to constantly work on oneself in order to improve oneself and enhance one's future value. The neoliberal subject seeks constantly to improve herself, become more efficient, more competitive, and more valuable to herself (see Dardot and Laval, 2013: 265; Brown, 2014: 34; Gordon, 1991: 44). Neoliberalism imposes and cultivates an ethos of self-valorization (Dardot and Laval, 2013: 264–268). In order to remain competitive, one has to protect, maintain, and increase one's human capital and accept the imposition of the norm of competition in all areas of one's life (see Brown, 2014; Feher, 2009; Foucault, 2010).

In what follows I will examine in detail the constitution of entrepreneurial subjectivity in late capitalist societies. I will investigate how this new form of subjectivity affects all aspects of life and how it alters the way one relates to oneself. I argue that the contemporary subject is constituted as an active, autonomous, self-responsible, and self-managed individual who is obliged to make calculative choices in every aspect of her life, including work, consumption, education, healthcare, and financial investment. Under these conditions, "life" becomes an aggregate of personal choices; it thus becomes a personal project (Bröcking, 2014: 189, 190, 191). However, personal choices are determined by the social, political, and economic contexts in which they are made. This fact is often overlooked, and emphasis is often placed on personal responsibility and blame. Thus, the introduction of the figure of the enterprising subject involves the privatization of social risk. Because the entrepreneurial self encourages the belief that the only plausible way to improve one's life is to become a good entrepreneur of oneself, it also undermines prospects for political action and acts of resistance.

The self as human capital

Foucault was preoccupied with the fact that neoliberal economists had such a keen interest in the notion of human capital. In the human capital theories of Theodore W. Schultz (1971) and Gary S. Becker (1974), Foucault sees a shift from the liberal rationality of government, which favours exchange, to neoliberal governmentality, which favours the economization of all aspects of life and the imposition of competition as a general norm (Foucault, 2010: 215–237). According to Foucault, neoliberal economists introduced the notion of human capital because they believed that classical economics had not sufficiently analysed the notion of labour. Classical economists, they thought, had neutralized labour

and reduced it to merely the factor of time.⁸¹ But Foucault claims that the notion of human capital that neoliberals employ in their economic analyses is much more than a theory of labour. He suggests that the notion of human capital introduces a completely different understanding of the working subject (Foucault, 2010: 223). In the human capital theory, labour is not seen as a commodity, as just labour power and time; instead, human capital is understood with reference to a worker who is seen as the possessor of human capital, as an “ability machine” (Foucault, 2010: 229). Michel Feher stresses the significance of this point. Human capital, he suggests, is a new form of subjectivity and a characteristic feature of neoliberalism. This type of subjectivity is simultaneously presupposed by neoliberal theories of human capital and fabricated by neoliberal policies.⁸² Thus, following Foucault, Feher rightly claims that human capital must be seen in relation to the figure of the free worker and not the notion of labour power. For Feher, human capital is to neoliberalism what the free laborer is to liberal capitalism, and this is of crucial importance (Feher, 2009).

As we have seen, liberal government is based on the distinction between the sphere of production and the sphere of reproduction, the market and the social. Accordingly, the productive subject of liberal capitalism is split between the sphere of production and that of reproduction. In the sphere of production, because she is deprived of the means of production, the worker experiences exploitation and the alienation of her labour, and she is subject to disciplinary norms that aim at increasing productivity. In the sphere of reproduction, the liberal law establishes equality of civic rights between workers and capitalists: both are acknowledged as free subjects able to exchange their property (labour or capital) on the market. Thus, the free worker is a split subject, divided between her alienated life as a worker and her unalienated life as a citizen. This split, Marx has shown is fundamental to the functioning of the liberal economy (Marx, 2012). As Feher explains, for the free labourer to sell her labour power as a commodity she must understand herself not as a commodity but as a free individual. This establishes a clear distinction between the sphere of production and the sphere of reproduction. While individuals, whether workers or capitalists, are expected to act as “profit-seeking rational calculators” in the sphere of production, the sphere of reproduction does not adopt this market logic. The social sphere subjects individuals to norms and values that are independent of exchange and production

⁸¹ Although the neoliberal economists did not mention Marx’s work, Foucault assumes that their argument would have been that Marx’s analysis of labour focuses on the notion of abstract labour, according to which labour is measured by the amount of time worked. Thus, according to the neoliberal view, Marx’s analysis ignores the qualitative aspects of labour (Foucault, 2010: 220, 221).

⁸² As Lemke suggests, neoliberalism “is a political project that endeavors to create a social reality that it suggests already exists” (Lemke, 2012: 6)

but are necessary for them to be constituted as free agents; these norms and values are thus indispensable conditions of their entry into the market (Feher, 2009).

The notion of human capital erodes the distinction between the economic and the social spheres, between production and reproduction. Once the subject understands herself as human capital, the market logic is able to intrude into areas that had previously been untouched by it. This self-understanding is the vehicle through which domains hitherto external to the field of economy – such as healthcare, education, culture, and personal life – become economized. All aspects of life come to be internal to production; they come to be domains in which one might enhance one's own human capital. Since every aspect of one's life may, in some way, contribute to the appreciation or depreciation of one's human capital, the separation between production and reproduction disappears (Feher, 2009). Feher clarifies that he is not making the familiar argument that neoliberalism commodifies everything and subjects all of human existence to the logic of the market. This critique suggests that neoliberalism reduces the subject to a mere consumer and thus deprives individuals of their capacities as citizens or social subjects. But what Feher, following Foucault, is arguing is that neoliberalism actually prioritizes production over consumption: the subject is treated as a producer, an entrepreneur of himself (Feher, 2009).

Feher goes one step further, suggesting that this subject is not only an entrepreneur of his human capital but an investor in it. In this way, he emphasizes the struggle of the neoliberal subject not just to be calculative and to seek profit in all aspects of her life but also to invest in herself in order to increase the value of her human capital. According to Feher, this relation to oneself resembles the way that contemporary firms function in the world of unregulated financial markets; just as contemporary firms concentrate more on maximizing their capital growth and increasing their share value than on targeting direct commercial profit, the neoliberal subject acts more as an investor growing her human capital than as a profit-seeking entrepreneur. Building on Feher's argument, Wendy Brown claims that the entrepreneurial self has recently been transformed into a financialized self. According to Brown, the neoliberal subject, the owner of her "financialized human capital", invests in herself by constantly pursuing the valorization of her human capital through education, training, or even image building (something that includes all areas of her life) in order to enhance her value and attract investors such as potential employers, business cooperators, or even social media "followers" (Brown, 2014: 33). However, although Feher advances the argument that the self as human capital becomes the subject who invests in herself rather than the subject who is an entrepreneur of herself, Brown thinks these two models can

coexist in one and the same person and that the latter model has not been simply superseded (Brown 2014: 231, note.36). In my view, the notions of the entrepreneurial subject and the financialized subject not only do not contradict one another, as Brown suggests; in fact, they complement and reinforce one another.

In order to understand this better, it is essential to consider the way that the financialization of the capitalist economy affects the subject's relation to herself and cultivates in her the norm of entrepreneurship. As we will see in more detail below, the financialization of the economy has created an environment in which individuals are increasingly subjected to the power of finance. The so-called "democratization of finance" has introduced the majority of the citizens of Western capitalist countries to financial-related decisions in their everyday lives (Martin, 2002). The increasing dependence of regular people on the financial economy, whether this is manifested in investments in the stock market or in saving or credit mechanisms, has led people to internalize strategies of financial entrepreneurship for use in relation to issues such as their education, health, insurance, and pensions (Mulcahy 2016, 2017). In this way, the subject has been compelled to take personal responsibility – a characteristic of entrepreneurial subjectivity – for securing goods that had, prior to the dominance of neoliberalism, been provided through the welfare state. Thus, through financial mechanisms, finance holds the contemporary subject accountable for all the decisions she makes. Consequently, the financialization of the economy affects the decisions one has to make in all areas of one's life, not only those that relate directly to the financialization of the economy. Especially for those who relate to the financial economy through debt – that is, the working and the middle classes, for the most part – finance subjects individuals' entire lives to its power, forcing them to manage their human capital, to become entrepreneurs of themselves, in order to be able to fulfil their responsibilities in relation to their debt (Lazzarato, 2012).

In conclusion, financial subjectivity not only includes what Feher and Brown take to be its main attribute, namely the necessity of investing in one's own human capital. It also involves the adoption of the entrepreneurial logic in the management of one's savings and debt and in one's economic decision making more generally. Additionally, it involves the reinforcement of the norm of personal responsibility and accountability, the cultivation of the entrepreneurial logic in all aspects of the neoliberal subject's life, and the inculcation of a requirement that the subject treat herself as the entrepreneur of her human capital.

The construction of the entrepreneurial worker

Developments in the sphere of production have played a significant role in the constitution of the entrepreneurial self. As I have already discussed, recent decades have seen late capitalist economies enter a process of deindustrialization, with developed capitalist economies outsourcing industrial production to developing countries, where labour is cheaper. The dominance of immaterial production in Western countries has led to the need for a new type of labour regulation and increased demand for a new type of employee. The ideal worker of industrial capitalism was docile and prepared to carry out uniform and repetitive actions. By contrast, immaterial production introduces mechanisms of labour control that regulate the workplace by encouraging taking the initiative, self-control, and self-responsibility (Lazzarato, 2006). The reorganization of the production process was also catalysed by the discontent, on the part of much of the population, with the capitalist system, a discontent expressed vividly by the social movements of the late 1960s in Europe and the USA. As the work of Boltanski and Chiapello indicates, the social movements of the 1960s mainly criticized the alienating structures of Fordist production, and these criticisms played an important role in the reorganization of capitalism and the development of a new spirit of capitalism more sensitive to the values of autonomy, diversity, authenticity, creativity, and self-realization (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2003). The critique of Fordist structures that these social movements articulated does not apply to the new economy. Fordism not only had become unattractive to the workers, who found themselves oppressed by the uniform, dehumanizing processes of unskilled and repetitive labour, but also had become incompatible with the needs of the immaterial economy. As Boltanski and Chiapello document, the transformation in the value system of capitalism was reflected in the new management discourse of the following decades (see Boltanski and Chiapello, 2006). However, what their interpretation lacks is a recognition that the new management discourses reproduced the general rationality of neoliberal government and functioned as a means by which the self-understanding of the worker as an enterprising subject and possessor of human capital was moulded (Du Gay, 1996; see also Dardot and Laval, 2013: 262).⁸³ I suggest that the new company ethics codes that Boltanski and Chiapello examine must be seen in relation to a particular conceptualization of ethics that takes into account the new way subjectivity is constituted. This approach, which is familiar

⁸³ Dardot and Laval rightly point out that the work of Boltanski and Chiapello (2006) overplays the ideological aspects of the new management discourse. Boltanski and Chiapello assume that the participation of workers in capitalist production can be secured only by persuading them to engage with capitalism. This underestimates the importance of the biopolitical aspect of the managerial discourse and the manner in which specific strategies and techniques help to constitute a particular kind of subjectivity (Dardot and Laval, 262).

from Foucault, allows us to connect ethics with a broader governmental rationality – in this case, neoliberalism – and also with what Foucault calls “technologies of the self”; it allows us to understand how a certain relationship with oneself is cultivated and to determine how individuals constitute their selves as moral subjects and act upon themselves (Foucault, 1984). Therefore, the ethical transformation of capitalism should be seen as part of the way government is actualized through processes of subjection. This transformation provides the means for individuals to develop technologies of the self and act upon themselves according to true or false statements, permitted or prohibited norms, desirable or undesirable ends (Rose, 1989).

Neoliberal governmentality expands the economic logic into all aspects of life. This expansion also implies a reconceptualization of labour and the construction of the working subject as an entrepreneur. As discussed above, neoliberal government transforms the labour power of the worker into human capital, which must be managed in the most profitable way. The worker perceives herself as a kind of enterprise, and she must manage and invest her human capital accordingly. The new ways that contemporary organizations regulate labour involve mechanisms that shape workers such that they acquire all the characteristics traditionally associated with the class of the entrepreneurs: self-management and self-control, self-responsibility, the ability and willingness to take risks, the capacity to take the initiative, flexibility, adaptability, and creativity. At the same time, the worker needs to enter into a continuous process of self-improvement in order to maintain her value for her current employer and her employability in the context of the labour market in general. Further, we must not overlook the sense in which the body is of great interest to the modern corporation.

According to Alexiou, the turn towards immaterial labour transforms the values associated with labour. Alexiou explains that material labour is associated with materialistic values, values that are connected with one’s livelihood (income, social insurance, etc.). The reason for this is that material production is limited to the space and time of the workplace and the working day, and this maintains the distinction between work and everyday life. This distinction between different spheres means that non-materialistic values, such as self-realization, flourish in the sphere of leisure and private life. However, the distinction between the working environment and the private sphere does not apply in immaterial production. The kind of labour required by the immaterial economy draws on workers’ cognitive and affective abilities and demands the full integration of their personalities into the production process. Therefore, the post-materialistic values that were once restricted to

the private sphere are now expressed in work. This result of this is that a large part of the working population now finds meaning through their work, not because it is a means to decent living conditions but because it is connected with post-materialistic values such as individuality, autonomy, and self-realization (Alexiou, 2003: 122; Inglehardt, 1977: 150). It should be noted, however, that this does not apply to all workers. Less-skilled workers such as cleaners, construction workers, waiters, etc. do not necessarily find the same feeling of self-realization in their work.

The dominance of immaterial over industrial production in Western capitalist societies thus leads to the reconceptualization of work and the development of a new work ethics that highlights the values of self-realization and self-expression. But these are not its only effects. It also creates the new forms of labour regulation that the immaterial economy requires. The nature of immaterial labour is such that the most private aspects of our lives – thoughts, ideas, feelings, personal characteristics – become very important for capital accumulation⁸⁴. This explains the interest that modern management and organizational theories have shown in the private aspects of employees' lives. Contemporary management discourse reveals the extent to which modern companies attempt to control the behaviour of employees and make use of all aspects of selfhood in the quest for profit (Whittle, 2005). Thus, the elevation of labour to a self-realizing activity should be seen less as an improvement to labour conditions and more as a new form of labour control that seeks to elicit the commitment of workers to the production process: it is the way in which the owners of the means of production exert control over labour in order to avoid the danger of declining productivity that results from organized or spontaneous acts of labour disobedience (Alexiou, 2003: 120).⁸⁵

But the committed, docile workforce is no longer created through the logic of discipline. Contemporary organizations and companies have developed non-hierarchical structures and adopted labour regulation mechanisms that appear to provide working environments that embrace, support, and cultivate people's aspirations for self-realization. These transformations are ways of embedding worker discipline through practices of self-control and self-monitoring; they are not simply attempts to create a happier working environment. As Hans Pongratz and Gunter Voss argue, the replacement of hierarchical work

⁸⁴ However we must not overlook the attention that contemporary organizations show in regulating the body of the employee (Hassard et al., 2000).

⁸⁵ In this sense, the restructuring of the working environment and the abandonment of the rigid and hierarchical structures of Fordism in favour of a working environment that fosters self-initiative, creativity, etc. and promotes self-fulfilment and self-recognition should not be celebrated as victories of the working class or of the social movements of the 1960s (Alexiou, 2003).

supervision and the Taylorist surveillance of labour activity by strategies of labour control that promote the self-responsibility and self-organization of the employee – e.g. group and team work, management by objectives, flexible working hours – does not mean firms relinquish central control, nor do they create conditions that allow the contemporary worker to be more free or independent. In fact, these measures introduce new forms of constraint. Pongratz and Voss explain that the new technologies of labour control are ways of transmitting responsibility for control to those who are to be controlled – the workers themselves. The upshot of this is a form of self-entrepreneurial labour power and the transformation of employees into entrepreneurs of themselves or “entreployees”. One of the characteristics of the new self-entrepreneurial employer is self-control, which basically means transforming her own potential into a concrete performance and achieving the goals set by the firm without the need for external control. A second and a very crucial characteristic of the entreployee is a change in the employee’s point of view not only on the nature of their work but, even more significantly, on the nature of their labour as a commodity. The new working subject cannot treat herself as the passive owner of labour power. Rather, she must understand her capacity to work as her own human capital, which she must actively develop and increase in order to acquire more profit through investment on the labour market. This leads to a self-commercialization of labour power in two ways. On the one hand, employees must voluntarily and consistently improve and develop their skills. At the same time, they must also develop the ability to market themselves in order to convince their current or future employer that they should be hired and well paid. In sum, as Pongratz and Voss put it, “the formerly passive employer is becoming, in the strict economic sense, the entrepreneur of his or her own potential” (Pongratz and Voss, 2003: 7). In a similar way, the management discourse of “excellence”, which aims at a “cultural revolution” in contemporary firms, should be understood, as Du Gay rightly points out, as a mode of government that has shaped the contemporary working subject into an entrepreneurial subject. He suggests that the enterprising culture encouraged by companies should not be understood as merely an attempt to bring about a change in values. The norm of enterprise is in fact operationalized through specific practices and technologies of regulation, such as techniques that reduce dependency (delaying), an insistence on personal responsibility through peer review and personal evaluation schemes, and the encouragement of internal competition through small working groups and team projects. Such mechanisms, Du Gay argues, aim to shape and normalize personal conduct within the

context of the modern company in the interests of the success and profitability of the business (Du Gay, 1996: 61, 63, 64).

The self-controlled and self-commodified rationality imposed by the new labour control is not limited to the workplace. The requirement that individuals constantly control and improve themselves, increase their potential and human capital, has profound implications for everyday life. According to Pongratz and Voss, employees tend to organize their daily lives around the premises of self-control, self-improvement, and self-commodification (Pongratz and Voss, 2003). It is not just a coincidence, therefore, that contemporary management discourses and techniques associated with work regulation have colonized everyday activities outside of the structured domain of the workplace. As Philip Hancock and Melissa Tyler's work shows, just a glance at a lifestyle magazine reveals how the imperatives of managing your own life project or making the best out of yourself have transformed non-work activities, such as hobbies or holidays, and even social relations into objects of rational calculation underpinned by the profit imperative of the capitalist economy (Hancock and Tyler, 2004). Thus, the new worker is subjected to the logic of enterprise in all areas of her life and develops a lifestyle that serves to maximize the value of her existence (Du Gay, 1996: 69). Thus, the worker becomes an entrepreneur of herself.

One of the ways that contemporary firms bring about the commitment of the employee's whole personality to the entrepreneurial logic of constant development and self-valorization is through what Fleming calls neo-normative control (Fleming, 2009). Fleming points out that new forms of labour regulation, especially in those firms driven by knowledge or cultural production, involve inviting employees "to just be themselves". This encourages employees to bring personal aspects of their selves into the working environment – something that is very important in an economy that counts on creativity, communication, affect, and social and entrepreneurial skill. The imperative of authenticity incorporates all aspects of the employee's personality into the production process and enables their exploitation (Fleming, 2009: 2). In addition, the right "to be one's true self" in the workplace increases the likelihood that one will identify with one's work, and this bolsters one's commitment to the firm. This also blurs the boundary between work and leisure time, often resulting in extra, unpaid working hours (Spicer, 2011). What is important, however, is that neo-normative control extends the imperative of self-valorization into everyday life – beyond working life. The qualities of authenticity and self-expression promoted by neo-normative control imply that, outside of work, the employee is something more than what she is at work, that she "has a life" outside of work. The

imperative of authenticity at work thus supports the employee's continual personal development outside of work. Having a life outside of work means that one may bring the skills one develops there back into the workplace. All the fulfilling life experiences one has had – travelling, going to the cinema, pursuing a new hobby – can also be ways of developing one's human capital and thus potential sources of profit for the organization.

The demand of authenticity inculcates a desire in the individual to express and pursue the values and aims of the organization and, at the same time, to find ways to develop them, to overcome them. According to Petersen, this double responsibility results in a split within the subject, since it lays down two contradictory demands, to be a worker-monad and to be a worker-nomad: that is, to be a coherent personality who subjects her personality to the interests of the organization (a worker-monad) and to submit to a constant process of development and change and to become something other than what the organization wants one to be (a worker-nomad) (Petersen, 2011).⁸⁶

Thus, through the demand of authenticity, neo-normative control imposes the demands of self-valorization and flexibility (Fleming, 2009: 37). This constant struggle for self-improvement could not be more vividly illustrated than in the fetishization, in neoliberal societies, of the value of lifelong learning and the concomitant reconfiguration of educational systems such that they aim at cultivating the capacities to be self-educated rather than at cognitive and moral development (Tsoukalas, 2010, 117–118). Nowadays, Rose notes, we are confronted with new educational obligations that transcend the traditional educational institutions. The increased pace with which technology develops in late capitalist society has created a demand for workers who are capable of continually updating their skills. This means constant retraining to maintain or increase employability. Under these circumstances, as Rose aptly puts it, “[l]ife is to become a continuous economic capitalization of the self” (Rose, 2004: 161).

The mobilization of the active consumer

As we have seen, the enterprise discourse is not a mere discourse but a way of regulating the subject of production. Further, it extends into the private sphere. In a world in which the logic of the market reigns in domains and spaces that were, until relatively recently, untouched by capitalistic relations, the entrepreneurial subject is understood as, above all else, a consumer. Feher suggests that neoliberal consumers should be seen as producers.

⁸⁶ Peterson bases his analysis on the work of Lazzarato, from whom he borrows the concepts of the worker-monad and worker-nomad (see Lazzarato, 2004).

The subject of consumption must be perceived as the producer of her own satisfaction (Feher, 2009). Presented with a variety of choices of material or immaterial products and services offered in abundance by the market economy, the enterprising consumer is expected to make the best informed and most efficient choice, so as to acquire the most at the least cost. Smart consumerism means buying products at the lowest possible prices, but this is only one aspect of the entrepreneurial subject's consumer behaviour. Consumption becomes the means by which one valorizes one's own human capital. This is also another aspect of the productive nature of contemporary consuming practices. Now that the distinction between production and consumption, between work and non-work activities, is blurred, the activity of consumption takes on a whole different meaning, and the contemporary consumer becomes much more than the passive consumer of mass society (Du Gay, 1996). Because the individual is encouraged to be an autonomous, active subject in search of self-fulfilment, the activity of consumption becomes a productive process by which the individual can add value to herself through her choice of this or that material or cultural product.

However, the subject of consumption is not a natural kind – it does not exist in advance of its being constructed in a particular way through certain power relations – and the willingness of someone to consume is not necessarily secured just by the availability of goods on the market. As Miller and Rose point out, “in order for a relation to be formed between the individual and the product, a complex and hybrid assemblage had to be inaugurated” (Miller and Rose, 2008: 139). The creation of the subject of consumption is the result of a variety of strategies and governmental mechanisms. One of these mechanisms is the power of credit. In his book *The Consumer, Credit, Neoliberalism: Governing the Modern Economy* (2012), Christopher Payne shows that the figure of the enterprising consumer in the UK and in America was the result of neoliberal policies and credit mechanisms that guaranteed the purchasing power of the majority of the population.

However, finance has helped to determine contemporary subjectivity not only by supporting the construction of an active subject of consumption. As we will see in what follows, the growth of the financial economy has been a decisive factor in embedding the entrepreneurial logic in our daily lives; it has thus contributed, in this way, to the emergence of the entrepreneurial self. It is to this subjectifying power of the financial economy that I now turn.

Financial economy and the indebted entrepreneur

At the heart of the neoliberal project, whose deregulation and monetary policies triggered the financial bomb, is the massive expansion of the financial economy, which since the 1980s has resulted in a decisive change not only to the lives of those who work in finance but also to the daily lives of the majority of citizens living in the Western capitalist world (Martin, 2002). Lapavistas explains that the growth of the financial economy resulted from a general reorganization of the basic pillars of the capitalist system: the reorganization of financial and non-financial enterprises, which increased their own financial capacities and expanded their trading activities, and the simultaneous reorganization of banks, which developed a wider range of financial services, targeting the open markets and turning towards individual and household income for profit through credit mechanisms (Lapavistas, 2011; 2013).

The intrusion of the financial economy into our everyday lives has led to what has been called the “democratization of finance”. Although we are still some way from the neoliberal utopia in which every citizen is also an investor, the percentage of the population in developed countries, and especially in the Anglo-American world, that has investments in one way or another in the stock market has risen significantly. In addition, the practices of saving and borrowing have changed in recent decades. Making deposits in commercial banks and investing in government bonds have gradually been replaced by personal investments in mutual funds, mortgages, etc. as means of generating income. Suddenly, the savings of each household, as small as they may be, have become available as capital to be invested. The decline of Keynesian policies and the break-up of the welfare state has increased people’s dependence on borrowing and financial mechanisms. Important decisions in one’s life, such as those relating to education, housing, insurance, and pensions, have become interlinked with finance capital; these decisions have come to be regarded as personal financial investments rather than matters of social provision. If one thing is certain, it is that the “democratization of finance” has not made life easier (Lapavistas, 2009a).

What it has done, however, is introduced the majority of the population of Western countries to the logic of entrepreneurship.⁸⁷ Thus, along with the growth of the financial

⁸⁷ According to Ilias Katsoulis, this contributes to the contradictory nature of contemporary capitalism. The contemporary citizen is already a citizen producer who desires to be well paid and a citizen consumer who desires cheap products. The citizens of late capitalist countries now also desire good returns from their

economy comes financial subjectivity. The term refers not only to the growing number of people who are directly involved in financial services but to all those who are forced to internalize strategies of financial entrepreneurship in their daily lives. The financial subject is urged to recognize financial investment as the most efficient way of managing and increasing her household income. Consequently, the financial entrepreneur must be responsible, risk-taking, and calculating in order to become self-sufficient and self-reliant rather than dependent on the welfare state. Thus, the constitution of the financial subject transfers risk to the individual and transforms into personal responsibilities things that used to be considered social rights, such as social security and pensions (Mulcahy, 2017; Mulcahy 2016).

As this implies, although the imperative to become a financial subject is addressed to every individual in late capitalist society, its burden does not affect everyone equally. The privatization of social responsibilities through financial and credit mechanisms obviously affects more significantly those who had been counting on the welfare state to protect them. In addition, financialization affects different social classes in different ways. Whereas the owners of financial capital invest in the financial markets and increase their profits, the working and petite-bourgeois classes relate to the financial economy mostly as debtors. Because of wage constraints, precarious employment, and a lack of understanding of the complexity inherent in the financial economy, the working and petite-bourgeois classes find it increasingly difficult to keep up with the responsibilities demanded of the financial subject. Thus, in many cases, lower-class citizens find themselves as debtors rather than as beneficiaries of the financial economy (Mulcahy, 2016, 2017).⁸⁸

The increased importance of debt to late capitalist societies leads Lazzarato to suggest that we are now governed by debt (Lazzarato, 2015). According to Lazzarato, the asymmetry of the debtor–creditor relation constitutes the fundamental structure of late capitalist society. Lazzarato considers the distinction between the “real” and financial economy misleading. As he points out, the production process is directly or indirectly supported by credit mechanisms, since credit ensures that there is capital to be invested. Credit also fuels the purchasing power of consumers (Lazzarato, 2012; 2015; see also Marazzi, 2011). Alongside the decline of the welfare state, the explosion of credit card payment systems gave credit

financial investments. According to Katsoulis, these three desires contradict each other and are very hard, if not impossible, to satisfy within the global capitalist economy (Katsoulis, 2012: 31–33).

⁸⁸ As the sub-prime mortgage crisis in the US shows, this was also the result of banks targeting people with limited means to fulfil the obligations that resulted from their debt.

consumption a new dynamic and spread the debtor–creditor relationship throughout society (Lazzarato, 2012: 19, 20).

Lazzarato emphasizes the biopolitical nature of the financial economy and suggests that debt is an economic-political relation that functions, first and foremost, as a mechanism that regulates collective and individual subjectivities (Lazzarato 2015; also 2012).⁸⁹ Similarly, Etienne Balibar suggests that debt is not only an economic relation but also a political one, a generalized mechanism of control, a political and subjective power (Balibar, 2013).⁹⁰ Balibar points out that the rise of the debt economy transforms the moral and political obligations individuals have towards the state, since the latter no longer appears as the highest authority. Through debt, the sovereignty of the state is transferred to the authority of the market. According to Balibar, this creates a great paradox: at the same time that the indebted subject is constrained by the authority of the market, the subject is also offered the possibility of developing their life project to pay for the debt. In this way, Balibar suggests, the debt economy is simultaneously coercive and, crucially, “aggressively individualistic” (Balibar, 2013).

The indebted individual is the subject of Lazzarato’s book *The Making of the Indebted Man* (2012). Lazzarato argues that just as biopolitical mechanisms shape human conduct without depriving actors of their freedom, so the power of debt pressures free agents to fulfil their obligations to their creditors. Depriving someone of her freedom would, after all, also deprive her of her ability to pay her debt (Lazzarato, 2012: 32).⁹¹

The originality of Lazzarato’s interpretation of the debt economy lies in his claim that the debtor–creditor relationship produces of a certain type of subjectivity: “Debt as an economic relation, for it to take effect, has thus the peculiarity of demanding ethicopolitical labour constitutive of the subject” (Lazzarato, 2012: 42). According to this view, when debt becomes a permanent condition of existence, as in late capitalism, the obligation to repay one’s debts is internalized and creates a moral commitment on the part of the debtor. This

⁸⁹ Instead of the usual term “finance economy”, Lazzarato uses the term “debt economy”, which emphasizes the political aspect of the financial economy and the relationships of dependence, exploitation, and subjection that the debtor–creditor relationship implies.

⁹⁰ Balibar notes that it is not only capitalist society that is characterized by debt. However, capitalism could not have existed without credit mechanisms. Balibar notes two essential characteristics of contemporary capitalism that constitute quantitative and qualitative differences from previous forms of debt economy and previous stages of capitalism. The first is that credit institutions subsidize both the production and consumption of the same products, something that constitutes a mechanism of profit self-supply through the intermediary of indebted producers and consumers. The second is that debts are transformed into derivatives and constitute the object of new investment (the casino economy) (Balibar, 2013).

⁹¹ In this sense, the prohibition of imprisonment for personal debt in most countries can be seen as evidence of the sovereignty of debt rather of a limitation to its power.

commitment demands a certain relationship to oneself – that relationship which would eventually lead to the realization of the goal, which is the payment of the debt. Therefore, the new form of subjectivity goes hand in hand with the morality imposed by the debt economy. Drawing upon the second essay of Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morality*, Lazzarato argues that the debtor's promise to her creditor produces the obligation that she honour her promise and a feeling of guilt for requiring the credit in the first place. The debtor–creditor relation is internalized: the debtor is involved in a work on the self whose ultimate goal is that she pay her debts and fulfil her promises made. According to Lazzarato, the obligations deriving from debt amount to the injunction to treat oneself as human capital or, in Foucault's terms, to become an “entrepreneur of the self”, always responsible towards and guilty before her creditor, the capital owner (Lazzarato, 2012: 51).⁹² Through debt, capital becomes the God of our era, in front of whom we stand indebted and guilty.

Thus, the debt economy is constituted by specific relations of power that create a specific type of *homo economicus*: the “indebted man”. What is crucial is that the debtor–creditor relation is generalized, and the subjective form of “the indebted man” comes to pervade all aspects of life, encompassing and blurring the boundaries between workers, the unemployed, consumers, and welfare recipients, since everyone is included within it (Lazzarato, 2012: 30, 50, 51). The indebted entrepreneur must be calculative and responsible in decisions regarding her financial responsibilities. However, since indebtedness affects life as a whole, the indebted subject must constantly develop entrepreneurial strategies, throughout her life, in order to fulfil her debt obligations. What is also important is that the debtor–creditor relationship expands in a temporal sense: it is a mechanism for controlling not only the present but, even more significantly, the future. Through the promise given by the debtor to her creditor, all the choices she makes in the future are to serve the goal of keeping her past promise to repay the debt (Lazzarato, 2012: 45).

Healthcare and self-care

An important aspect of life for which the entrepreneurial subject is supposed to be fully responsible is her health. Because of its intimate relationship with subjectivity, the individual body, and its mental capacities, the field of healthcare can be very revealing of

⁹² Balibar adds: “neoliberal discourse and the language of financial advertising describe the individual not only as an entrepreneur of himself (valorizing his capacities as a human capital and calculating his own profitability) but also as a micro-business whose rational behavior is to maximize the ratio of his revenues compared with his debts” (Balibar 2013).

the type of subjectivity that emerges in advanced capitalist society. An important literature drawing upon Foucault's insights into biopower and governmentality has attempted to situate healthcare in a socio-political context, showing how technologies and discourses of healthcare transform the body into an object of power and constitute means of regulating the population, thus functioning as powers of subjection (for example Lupton, 1995). Rose has shown that healthcare technologies and discourses that focus on the individual psyche are equally important for the constitution of subjectivity. He suggests that psychiatric and psychotherapeutic discourses and methods have played a crucial role in how we understand and act upon ourselves, such that we internalize the values of autonomy, personal responsibility, and choice (Rose, 1996; see also Rose, 1999).

Moreover, research in the field of organizational studies has discussed the non-neutral nature of healthcare and its relation to labour regulation policies that aim to enhance productivity. For example, Kelly and others have shown how health-promoting programmes adopted by large companies are means of acting upon their employees' relationships to themselves in order to produce workers who imagine themselves as "corporate athletes". In these sorts of cases, the imperative to live a healthy lifestyle functions as a means of promoting the organization's objectivities while at the same time securing a desirable outcome for the employees (Kelly et al., 2007). What is important in health-promoting management is that the requirement to live a healthy life must be internalized by the working subject and become a self-imposed target rather than an obligation enforced by an external agency or a responsibility that lies with the employer rather than the employee (McGillivray, 2005). Following a similar line of investigation, Zoller claims that these programmes function as mechanisms that embody managerial values and aim at producing a more productive worker. According to Zoller, the responsibility for one's health is a burden that compels individuals to improve themselves. This also raises a moral issue, since the inability of someone to live a healthy life comes to appear as a moral failure resulting from a lack of self-control (Zoller, 2003). However, as we will see, the health-promotion discourse has not been restricted to the workplace. It is present in the private sphere, affecting consumption and personal lifestyle choices, and this has not gone unnoticed in recent literature on healthcare. The important thing to note here is that all these studies are connected by their common approach to the relationship between health promotion, self-empowerment, and control: all approach healthcare as a mechanism of subjection.

In their book *The Wellness Syndrome* (2015), Carl Cederström and Andre Spicer provide a critical account of the hegemonic discourse of wellness. They suggest that contemporary capitalist societies are characterized by the moralizing demand to be as healthy and as happy as we can possibly be. This dominant discourse leads not only to the opposite results in terms of wellness but, just as importantly, to political apathy and an unconditional assent to the demands of the capitalist economy. According to Cederström and Spicer, the contemporary individual is encouraged to pursue an obsessive and introverted kind of self-care, in which everything should be calculated to serve the imperative of well-being. Thus, we are all engaged, to varying degrees, in a peculiar care of the self that involves the struggle to manage our diets, perfect our sleeping habits, and attain healthy lifestyles that involve working out and making appropriate consumer choices.

Indeed, as Ziguras points out, in contemporary societies the belief that individuals are responsible for their own health is more widespread and deeper than ever. According to Ziguras, the way health is conceived in Western societies is neither unimportant nor politically neutral. In fact, Ziguras suggests that the definition of health in the World Health Organization's constitution – “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” – tells us a great deal about the role of the subject in relation to her healthcare. Such an understanding of health leads to the promotion of what Ziguras calls “proactive self-care”, all those everyday practices that people engage in in order to maintain or improve their own health, rather than reactive self-care, which can be understood as our response to symptoms of illness (Ziguras, 2004: 3, 4). Thus, health becomes a goal to be achieved rather than a state characterized by the absence of illness, and self-care becomes the process of constant improvement toward that goal. The conception of health as an everyday task that the individual has to perform transfers responsibility for keeping healthy to the subject and away from the traditional institutions that were, until relatively recently, responsible for the health of the population.

For Ziguras, an important factor in the cultivation of a sense of personal responsibility for health is the proliferation of knowledge, information, and advice about health in Western societies. Capitalism's shift towards immaterial production, along with the rise of the internet, has meant we are able to access almost limitless amounts of information, and this “information bomb” (Virilio, 2005) inevitably also exploded in the field of healthcare. Ziguras argues that the general public's access to scientific knowledge, through mass media, books, the internet, or other sources, which was until recently available only to experts, has radically transformed the relationship between the contemporary subject and institutional

health authorities and health professionals. The growth of self-care advice has resulted in the demedicalization of healthcare in the sense that someone's health is no longer taken to be just the domain of medical professionals and institutions (Ziguras, 2005: 18). The recent launch of Google's new service "Dr Google" is perhaps the most striking example of the rise of self-diagnosis and the availability of self-care options. All you need to do in order to be your own doctor is to type your symptoms into a search engine, and this will yield a list of the matching conditions and possible treatments. However, as empowering as it may seem to have all of this health information available to us, it produces new types of constraint. The contemporary subject is now required to make well-informed decisions about her health and face the consequences of her choices. The excuse of not knowing is no longer acceptable. This is another way in which responsibility for health is transferred to the individual, who is then the only one to be blamed for her poor lifestyle choices and the illnesses resulting from them.

Moreover, Ziguras claims that the emergence of the discourse of individual autonomy in managing health is fuelled by the market's absorption of practices and products related to health. The contemporary market is full not only of medical advice but of all kinds of products and services that might be beneficial for one's health: athletic equipment, orthopaedic shoes, beds, pillows, health foods, vitamins, proteins, gym memberships, massage services, yoga workshops, etc. The process of the commodification of self-care, as Ziguras calls it, has played a key role in forming the responsible, autonomous subject, since, according to the prevailing discourse, the market provides all the products and services necessary for individuals to take care of their health. The commodification of healthcare means that the contemporary subject internalizes entrepreneurial practices in order to take care of her health. The entrepreneurial self is encouraged to make well-informed, calculative decisions in relation to her healthcare. As we have seen, even when consuming, the contemporary subject is not the passive consumer of mass society but an entrepreneur who invests in the products she consumes and expects a certain kind of profit from this investment (Donzelot, 2008: 130), which, in the case of consuming health products, can be understood as achieving a better quality of life or even saving money that might otherwise have been spent on healthcare in the future.

The logic of the "empowered consumer" has also been adopted in public health policy, something that is of course not unrelated to the dominance of neoliberalism and the wave of privatization in healthcare. Thanem notes that contemporary Western public health policy – known as the New Public Health (NPH) – focuses on lifestyle-related diseases

such as cancer and heart disease. The aim is to change unhealthy everyday habits, such as bad diet, smoking, etc. Adopting Foucault's understanding of neoliberalism as a type of governmentality, Thanem notes that neoliberal managerialism extends beyond the boundaries of organizations and, by turning individuals into "health consumers", affects people's everyday lives. As he explains, the NPH discourse emphasizes the freedom of choice that everyone enjoys in the market economy to make the best decisions for their health by consuming the products that are best for them. This forces each individual to take responsibility for making the right choice about their health and to take the blame for any failures (Thanem, 2009).

The supremacy of a health discourse of individual lifestyle choices makes health out to be a field of self-expression and identity seeking. According to Cederström, health-promotion policies in the workplace merge with the discourse of authenticity that has dominated contemporary workplace control (Cederström, 2011; Fleming, 2009). Cederström notes that the idea of healthcare and the imperative of authenticity seem at first glance to conflict, in the sense that health can be understood as the embodiment a certain social norm whereas authenticity is the struggle of someone to distinguish herself from what is socially prescribed. However, Cederström claims that the new healthcare discourse, with its figure of the responsible, well-informed, empowered consumer of health products, connects health with lifestyle choices and thereby lends to health a moral weight. Crucially, it connects health with obvious aspects of everyday lifestyle, such as smoking and obesity, working out, healthy eating, etc. (Cederström, 2011; see also Zoller, 2003). This connects health with the discourse of self-expression since health becomes a field in which to develop one's own healthy identity. Thus, health becomes a route to self-differentiation and self-expression, and it goes hand in hand "with injunctions to nurture our own, authentic selves" (Cederström, 2011). Because the new health discourse focuses on the visibility of the individual body and lifestyle choices, it takes attention away from the social factors that determine someone's health (Cederström, 2011). Therefore, despite the fact that social and economic factors, such as unhealthy working conditions and work accidents, polluted urban environments, unhealthy diets or living conditions caused by low incomes, and inequality of access to healthcare, determine the health of individuals and populations in more significant ways than do individual choices, these factors are overlooked. Indeed, as I will show in what follows, the personal handling of social risk becomes another significant aspect of entrepreneurial subjectivity.

Risk management as a mode of life: the resilient subject

As we have seen, the entrepreneurial subject is the manager of her human capital, which must be valorized through calculative decisions regarding every aspect of life – her employment, education, training, financial assets or debts, health, etc. Under these conditions, the entrepreneurial subject finds herself held accountable for every choice she makes. Thus, responsabilization becomes the moral injunction of the neoliberal order, addressed to the neoliberal subject whether she is a worker, a student, a consumer, or a patient (Brown, 2015: 132). The entrepreneurial self confronts, in all areas of life, risks that she is expected to manage strictly privately (Dardot and Laval, 2013: 275–278, see also Chandler and Reid 2016).

In his book *The Risk Society*, Ulrich Beck describes the way modernity erodes the previously solid grounds of collective existence. The destruction of traditional structures, such as family and community, which had previously discharged a collective responsibility in confronting dangers, was counterbalanced by the development of the welfare state and social provision. Late modernity, however, has not only increased the risks to which individuals are exposed (ecological threats, terrorism) but also eroded the safety net that the welfare state once provided. Thus, responsibility for dealing with the increased danger and risk of late modernity is transferred to the individual (Beck, 1992). Beck's provocative statement that "most (if not all!) deaths are to some extent 'suicides' in the sense that they could have been postponed if more resources had been invested in prolonging life" (Becker 1976: 10; in Bröckling, 2011, emphasis in the original), even though an exaggeration, nevertheless illustrates the burden that the neoliberal subject has to bear. Even the unavoidable destiny of death is transformed by neoliberal rationality into a personal failure, the result of a mismanaged life.

In *Resilient Life: The Art of Living Dangerously* (2014), Brad Evans and Julian Reid mount a radical critique of the neoliberal discourse of vulnerability, danger, and risk as inherent, existential conditions of human life (see also Chandler, 2014). Evans and Reid suggest that liberalism is an incomplete project aimed at governing and securing the life of populations. The incompleteness of the liberal project stems from the fact that liberalism is characterized by a profound contradiction, since when life is biologically understood it cannot be secured for everyone: "life is not securable. It is a multiplicity of antagonisms and for some life to be made to live, some other life has to be made to die" (Evans and Reid, 2013: 86, see also Dillon and Reid, 2009). This fundamental contradiction led to the

abandonment of security as the chief political task of government. According to Evans and Reid, we now live in a distinctly different political era, one in which resilience, instead of security, is the main target of government. Neoliberal governmentality assumes the need to engage with dangers and risks rather than targeting at protecting human kind from the dangers of life. Thus, resilience becomes the “fundamental property which people and individuals worldwide must possess in order to demonstrate their capacities to live in danger” (Evans and Reid, 2014: 2).

For Evans and Reid, neoliberal rationality shares with discourses in the field of ecology a common assumption about the naturalness of risk. Despite all the promises of modernity, neoliberals assume that, just like nature, economic systems are beyond our control, and thus we need modes of governance that are premised upon our ability to adapt to and manage everyday risks and dangers (Evans and Reid, 2014; see also Cooper and Walker, 2010). The fundamental reality of vulnerability and the assumption that social and economic life are supposed to be insecure lead to a discourse of resilience: the adaptability and flexibility of the contemporary subject in the face of everyday risk.

Neoliberal governmental intervention is based upon the premise that the resilient subject must take full responsibility for the risks she faces. Instead of counting on their governments to secure their existence and protect them from dangers (disease, unemployment, economic or natural disasters), resilient subjects must take ownership of their dangers and face up to their realities. Under these conditions, social risk becomes a question of individual responsibility; thus, in order to deal with it, the subject must make a reasoned and calculated choice. The consequence of this is that the resilient subject constitutes a type of entrepreneur who, among everything else, must manage the unavoidable dangers and risks of everyday life, accepting their responsibilities and their vulnerability and not depending on the social state:

When neoliberals preach the necessity of people becoming “resilient” they are arguing in effect for the entrepreneurial practices of the self and subjectivity [...]. Resilient people do not look to states or other entities to secure and improve their well-being because they have been disciplined into believing in the necessity to secure and improve it for themselves. (Evans and Reid, 2014: 77)

Under these conditions, the resilient entrepreneurial subject must work its way through managing social risks and dangers as if it their responsibility and the way to do that is by being good entrepreneurs of their life in general. Unemployment can be seen as the

outcome of poor management of their human capital, disease can be seen as the outcome of poor consumption and lifestyle choices. As Bauman notes:

Left increasingly to their own resources and acumen, individuals are expected to devise individual solutions to socially generated problems, and to do it individually, using their individual skills and individually possessed assets.
(Bauman as cited in Evans and Reid, 2013: 94)

However, the discourse of resilience has significant political implications. According to the discourse of resilience, the subject “must disavow any belief in the possibility to secure itself and accept, instead, an understanding of life as a permanent process of continual adaptation to threats and dangers which are said to be outside its control” ” (Evans and Reid, 2013: 85). The resilient subject becomes politically apathetic: adapting to the conditions of the world seems to be the only rational option, and confronting the conditions that produce risk, or attempting to change the world, seems impossible, even inconceivable (Reid, 2012).

Conclusion

The weakening of the liberal logic of “social” government signals a new governmental rationality in which the subject is to be governed by and through its own autonomous and calculated choices within the framework of the market. As part of this, a new type of subjectivity emerges in advanced capitalist societies: the entrepreneurial self. As discussed above, the enterprising subject has to take responsibility in all areas of her life, including work, education, health, financial assets and debts, and consumption and lifestyle choices. Under these conditions, everyone has to motivate themselves to pursue their own life-project, which means maximizing their own potential and profitability in an increasingly competitive environment. Once all areas of existence come to be managed according to the cynical entrepreneurial rationality, our bodies and mental and social skills become our human capital, which must be invested and utilized in the most profitable way possible. The logic of human capital not only concerns our working lives but intrudes into all spheres. Thus, individuals’ private lives become the objects of personal calculation and management. As a consequence, the contemporary subject finds herself engaged in a modern version of what Foucault calls “care of the self”, in a society controlled by an ethos of self-valorization. This locks enterprising subjects into a constant process of self-transformation and self-improvement aimed at making themselves ever more efficient, competitive, and employable (Dardot and Laval, 2013: 265).

Moreover, the mobilization of the enterprising subject functions as a way of privatizing social risk. The enterprising subject finds herself responsible and blamed for misfortunes that are beyond her control. In this way, unemployment may come to be seen as the result of poor self-management, and disease as the result of irresponsible lifestyle choices. This deprives certain goals of any common political meaning and makes it less likely that solutions will be pursued socially.

The absence of any meaningful common goals and the constitution of the individual as an aggregate of personal choices mean that life comes to be seen as a private project in which the values of self-expression and self-differentiation are individuals' existential responsibilities. We thus arrive at the obligation of the enterprising subject to become the creator of her own "authentic" identity. This will be examined in the fifth and final chapter of this thesis.

CHAPTER 5: THE IMPERATIVE OF AUTHENTICITY

In the previous chapter I examined the new type of subject that emerges within late capitalist society as a result of the dominance of neoliberal rationality: the entrepreneurial subject. We saw that the entrepreneurial self is constructed in such a way as to take responsibility for all aspects of her life. Consequently, life becomes a personal project which must be pursued through calculated and responsible choices within the regulated framework of the free market. In addition, the spread of the entrepreneurial logic to all areas of life and the transfer of responsibility to the individual obscure the social, economic, and power relations that define someone's life.

In this final chapter, I argue that just as the entrepreneurial subject is forced to take responsibility for social issues that were once matters of collective responsibility, she is further, and as a result, forced to take responsibility for her identity, which now also becomes a matter of personal choice. Thus, the entrepreneurial self is freighted with the responsibility of having to fabricate and perform her own authentic identity. As this implies, "authenticity" here is not to be understood as a pure essence which lies within the inner self, an inner quality that is either expressed freely or otherwise alienated and deteriorated. As we will see, the authentic self is something created, and so it implies an active role on the part of the individual. The entrepreneurial self must actively construct her authentic identity through calculated choices and practices of self-realization. Through such choices the self acts in accordance with the imperative of authenticity. It should also be noted that the active role of the entrepreneurial subject in fabricating her authentic self does not mean that this is a process which takes place outside of or underdetermined by power relations. The framework in which these efforts take place is already determined by late capitalist relations and neoliberal governmentality.

I will argue that the imperative of authenticity is generated and encouraged by the detachment of culture from the historical context in which it emerges. As we will see, late capitalist societies are characterized by what Wendy Brown calls the "depoliticization of culture", that is, the lack of recognition of the economic and power relations that produce a certain culture (Brown, 2006: 15). The depoliticization of culture means that culture comes to appear as a matter of personal choice and so a field within which one can achieve authenticity. At this point, certain reasonable questions may well be asked. From the beginning of the Enlightenment project, central to the idea of the liberal democratic state has been that it should be a culturally neutral institution. Thus, if this has always been the

case, then why today the entrepreneurial subject is called to claim something that is supposedly self-evident in all liberal capitalist societies. If liberalism has always conceived of itself as culturally neutral, what has now changed such that, only today, culture becomes a field in which personal choice is to be exercised? I will argue that the period of the nation state's dominance as the central political institution actually undermined the cultural neutrality that liberals prize, because nation states fostered cultural homogenization in an effort to sustain social cohesion and manage class opposition. However, the decline of the political importance of the nation state and the ascendancy of neoliberal governmentality – which uses culture in a different way from liberal governmentality – has led to the emergence of culture as a distinctive sphere of private choice.

In the first part of the chapter I discuss how globalization, the weakening of the nation state, and neoliberal rationality have detached culture from its associated economic and political structures. Because of this detachment, culture has become privatized and appears to be a matter of personal choice. Under these conditions, the entrepreneurial self is responsible for making personal cultural choices through which she can construct her authentic identity.

The next part of the chapter examines the imperative of authenticity in detail. As we will see, in late capitalism identity becomes an important aspect of one's human capital. Thus, the construction of identity and the fabrication of an authentic self become significant factors in people's attempts to survive in the ultra-competitive environment of the neoliberal era. I argue that the most important ways in which people construct their identities are through self-branding and consumer choice. On the one hand, the contemporary subject is obliged to brand themselves, to be authentic and perform their authenticity (Banet-Weiser, 2012), and for this to be achieved the entrepreneurial self must adopt a certain relationship towards herself. On the other hand, as we will see, the imperative of authenticity is manifested through consumer choices. However, this is not to say that the quest for authenticity is based on the commodification of authenticity or that this is an alienating process. Instead, consumer practices are means by which the entrepreneurial self constructs and performs her authenticity. As I will show, contemporary consumer practices pertain not only to products or services that satisfy material needs. More than ever, contemporary individuals "consume" abstract values and experiences that are means of constructing meaningful, authentic experiences.

In the last part of the chapter, I examine the destructive consequences that the imperative of authenticity has for individuals and for society as a whole. I claim that the imperative of authenticity results in serious problems for individuals' mental health and is connected with the rise of depression and anxiety problems in late capitalist societies. Moreover, because the demand of authenticity is mainly fulfilled through market choices, those who have the fewest means to discharge the obligation to be authentic are those that are more seriously affected by these problems. Nevertheless, personal infirmity is not the only problem that arises from the imperative of authenticity. I will argue that the political implications are equally serious, since the privatization of the project of constructing identities undermines the class struggle and a collective understanding of identity politics. Instead, it reinforces the belief that social problems should be addressed privately.

The cultural sphere as field of private freedom and self-actualization

Culture is one of the most complicated terms that the social sciences have attempted to grapple with. In their book *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* (1952), the anthropologists Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn list 164 different definitions of the word (Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1963). One major difficulty facing anyone seeking to understand the term is that it can be taken either narrowly, as referring only to the aesthetic creations of one or more people, or it can be extended to the point that it designates the entire way of life of a certain society (Williams, 2017: 256).⁹³ Thus, according to the interpretation the word "culture" refers to the aesthetic, artistic, spiritual, and intellectual accomplishments of a group or society, to the sets of values, beliefs, customs, symbolic practices, or even all aspects of life, in a certain society. We may schematically sort the various understandings of the notion of culture into two categories. The first are those definitions that restrict culture to the symbolic practices through which people shape their lives. The second are those definitions according to which culture refers to a whole way of life: not just symbolic practices but also economic and political practices and structures, every aspect of social life, and all kinds of social practices (Eagleton, 2016: ch.1).

History has defined the perception and the use of the term "culture", and of course the term has its own history. Although it is beyond the bounds of this thesis to examine in depth the history of the term, some remarks are in order if we are better to understand its contemporary meaning and use. The earliest use of the word goes back to the fifteenth

⁹³ Raymond Williams notes that "the difficulty about the idea of culture is that we are continually forced to extend it, until it becomes almost identical with our whole common life" (Williams as cited in Eagleton, 2016: ch.1).

century, when it was used to describe cultivation and livestock farming. By the sixteenth century, its meaning had been extended to the cultivation of the intellectual and spiritual attributes of people. By the eighteenth century, the term culture was associated with the artistic and intellectual accomplishments and characteristics of a certain group, or even an entire civilization (Bockock in Gieben and Hall, 1992: 231–234). Nevertheless, the term was not widely used until the nineteenth century. Until then, “culture” was mainly understood as a synonym of “civilization”, which denoted, and still does, all aspects of life in a certain society. Culture qua civilization referred to and included the sphere of the economy, political institutions and structures, religion, and all symbolic practices (language, customs, and the arts). Eagleton explains that this extended understanding of culture derives from the mode of production and political organization of premodern society. In feudal economies, he argues, material existence, political organization, and symbolic practice were indistinguishable elements of a functional totality. Under those conditions, it was inconceivable that “culture” could be defined in a way that distinguished it from the political and economic spheres (Eagleton, 2016: ch.1).

The emergence of capitalism and liberalism, along with the development of modern political structures, resulted in a distinction being made between the notions of culture and civilization. Liberalism introduced the idea that economic activities, such as production, trade, and consumption, are natural and therefore non-cultural. Civilization came to refer to the factual, objective condition of society (its economic and political structures), while culture was taken to relate to abstract values and forms of representation. Consequently, the term culture was detached from its material and political framework, and culture emerged as a distinctive sphere (Eagleton, 2016: ch.1). The separation between the cultural sphere and the economic and political spheres was expressed in the philosophy of the Enlightenment, which promoted the fundamental values of economic and political liberalism.⁹⁴ From the very beginning of the Enlightenment, the cultural and moral autonomy of the individual was considered one of its main political promises. A substantial part of the project of the Enlightenment was the emancipation of humanity from the constraints of tradition or, as Kant put it, “mankind’s exit from his self-incurred immaturity” (Kant, 1996: 56). In Descartes’s philosophy, the rational quality of the self is separated from its cultural, embodied experience and prioritized. The Cartesian subject is capable of stepping outside of the particularity of its cultural origins; it is prior to and

⁹⁴ Here I rely heavily on Wendy Brown’s *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance at the Age of Identity and Empire* (2006) and the interpretation of Brown’s work by Slavoj Žižek in *Violence* (2008)

independent of culture, thus free to rationally choose its culture for itself (Brown, 2006: 152). Žižek explains that the contrast between the universality of the rational liberal subject and the particularity of its cultural experience is resolved by culture becoming a matter of individual choice: “in liberalism culture survives but as privatized: as a way of life, a set of beliefs and practices, not the public network of norms and rules” (Žižek, 2008: 142).⁹⁵

In reality, however, culture was not fully detached from the economic and political structures of capitalist societies. The supposed cultural autonomy of the rational subject that the philosophers of the Enlightenment proclaimed, and the cultural neutrality that liberal democracies declared, existed only in theory. The development of the modern nation state was characterized by the imposition of a cultural homogeneity in the formerly culturally diverse territories of traditional empires and feudal societies.⁹⁶ Nation states function not only as political structures that monopolize the use of legitimate physical force within a certain geographical area but also as institutions that monopolize and impose particular national cultures and identities. Of course, it should be noted that the existence of a nation state does not require that its population share a common language, religion, or tradition (Tilly, 1990: 2–3). In fact, there are several nation states, such as the USA, Belgium, and the UK, to name but three, that exist without sharing a single ethnic or national tradition. Besides, nations and national identities extend beyond the territorial borders of nation states. What distinguishes a nation state from a nation is that the former is founded upon the unification of the population of a certain territory under the administrative authority of the state apparatus (Giddens, 1987: 172, see also Giddens 1985). Nation states are founded upon a political bond that covers a precisely defined territory and its population. In contrast, nations are founded on the sense of a common origin, tradition, identity, and national aspiration. However, although nations and nation states never fully coincide, they emerged under similar conditions, and they supported and fed off of each other. History shows that the political sovereignty of the nation state was supported by violent ethnic cleansing measures, such as forced migration, population

⁹⁵ Žižek notes that we here find the main opposition on which the liberal vision relies: between liberal societies, where culture is freely chosen, and those societies where people “are ruled by culture”. Whereas in the latter subjects are “totally determined by the lifeworld into which they are born”, the cultural neutrality of liberalism is such that subjects “are elevated above culture”, with the result that people are free to choose it (Žižek, 2008: 141). Brown makes the same observation: liberalism reproduces a distinction between those who “have culture” (liberal subjects) and those “whom culture has” (Brown, 2006: 151, 166).

⁹⁶ It should be noted that the transition from empires and feudal political structures to the modern nation state was a very long process of many different stages. Tilly suggests that this process occurred in various time periods and led to different organizational state forms depending on the particularities of the social structures and social groups in different regions (Tilly, 1990). For further reading on the development of the nation state see Poggi (1978, 1990).

transfers, and even genocide.⁹⁷ In addition to the violent imposition of ethnic and cultural homogeneity, other state policies, such as public education, were employed to encourage populations to adopt common languages, value systems, and sets of norms and beliefs. In many cases, national governments fostered the integration of different cultures either through forced assimilation policies or through more friendly social integration programmes. A striking example is the organized assimilation campaign undertaken by the government of the United States, which attempted to culturally transform the Native American population and integrate them into European–American culture (Hoxie, 1984). Similar efforts were undertaken in a majority of European states in order to integrate Roma populations (Fraser, 1995; Liegeois, 2007). In sum, despite the fact that liberal states claim cultural neutrality, in reality nation states imposed narratives of national culture and constructed what Benedict Anderson famously called “imagined communities” (Anderson, 2006).

Nowadays, more than ever, culture is seen as detached from the historical contexts in which it originally emerged, and there is a concomitant failure to recognize the power relations and economic relations that produce culture. This is what Wendy Brown calls the phenomenon of the “depoliticization of culture” (Brown, 2006: 15)⁹⁸. When this occurs, culture appears not only as detached from political, social, and economic relations but as something that can be chosen. To some extent, this is the result of globalization which has changed the role of the nation state. In global capitalism, national economies are so strongly interconnected that it becomes difficult to say whether they even exist (Rodrik, 2012). This has weakened the political importance of the nation state and, along with it, the symbolic and cultural strength of national narratives.

⁹⁷ The modern history of the Balkans is full of examples that show how the sovereignty of nation states was established through the violent imposition of ethnic homogeneity within a territory. The nations of the Balkans emerged out of the Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire, which were both multiethnic in character. Thus, the newly born states were formed out of territories in which people of different ethnicities, religions, and languages coexisted. The foundation of the nation states of the region was followed by wars and conflicts over territory and by the violent imposition within particular territories of ethnic and cultural homogeneity through population exchange, genocide, and other atrocities. For the history of the formation of the nation state in the Balkans, see Jelavich (1983, vol. 1 and 2) and Jelavich and Jelavich (1986).

⁹⁸ Brown defines “depoliticization” as “removing a political phenomenon from the comprehension of its historical emergence and from the recognition of the power that produces and counters it” (Brown, 2006). Paradoxically, the depoliticization of culture – the conceptualization of culture as an autonomous sphere disengaged from its political, social, and economic contexts – occurs in late capitalism, and so at the same time that, evidently, culture begins to play a significant role in economic growth. As Yúdice notes, immaterial production has given the cultural sphere a greater importance than it has had at any other moment in the history of modernity (Yúdice, 2009).

However, there is another factor that has contributed to the constitution of culture as a distinctive sphere and a field of choice. In his book *The Expediency of Culture* (2003), George Yúdice discusses the changing role of culture in the globalized world, and suggests that culture has become the object of a governmental restructuring that has attempted to reconstitute culture as a resource in order to achieve certain socio-political and economic ends (Yúdice, 2003). Taking as a case study the USA, Yúdice examines the diverse ways in which, throughout different periods of recent US history, culture was instrumentalized in order to serve economic and social ends and manage social problems. For example, during the Cold War, the promotion of artistic and scholarly freedom was a way of legitimizing US hegemony vis-à-vis the totalitarian economic and cultural policies of the Soviet bloc. From the 1960s to the 1980s, the National Endowment of the Arts (NEA) promoted a series of initiatives in order to democratize cultural production. During those years, various programmes were funded by the NEA in order to give a voice to marginalized groups living in urban centres and allow them a form of cultural expression. The policies of the NEA fostered a feeling of the superiority and legitimacy of the democratic USA over the totalitarian USSR. But they were also used for another significant purpose. Those initiatives, Yúdice suggests, aimed to channel conflicts within US society, which was characterized by significant class inequality and racial and ethnic divisions, into the sphere of culture. These policies were implemented in order to neutralize the opposition of certain social groups to the dominant order – not by silencing them, but by allowing them a voice (Yúdice, 1999).

This is a concrete example of what Žižek calls the “culturalization of politics”. Žižek explains that the culturalization of politics occurs when “political differences – differences conditioned by political inequality or economic exploitation – are naturalized and neutralized into ‘cultural’ differences, into different ‘ways of life’ which are given and cannot be overcome” (Žižek, 2007: 140). As a result, culture appears to have a natural essence and becomes the means by which politics is to be explained, the dominant framework according to which social, economic, and power inequalities are to be analysed and understood. The cultural sphere becomes the field in which political problems are addressed (Žižek, 2007: 140). Yúdice’s discussion shows that the culturalization of politics did not happen by accident; it is the result of a strategy that aimed to neutralize social and class struggles. Let us not forget that what is nowadays known as “identity politics” was originally connected with class-based and social demands for economic equality and, potentially, for an anti-capitalistic organization of society.

Neoliberalism has instrumentalized culture to achieve economic ends rather than political purposes, and it has legitimized the notion that culture is a sphere that can contribute to economic development. Neoliberal governments have generally favoured reducing state expenditures in the field of culture. Instead, the neoliberal state has fostered partnerships between states, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and civil society. However, the reduction of state-funded cultural production should not be interpreted as an attempt by the state, or by the conservative right, to suppress social movements or minority groups that have gained recognition and representation through cultural production. The defunding of cultural production should be seen in the context of to what has happened in the fields of social services, healthcare, and education: these have all been part of a greater change in the mode of government that has aimed at restructuring the relation between government, capital, and society in general, and this has necessitated a different type of legitimization in all these sectors and in the field of culture particularly (Yúdice, 1999).

The use of culture in the service of economic ends is part of the strategy of many leading international organizations, such as the World Bank, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In the UNESCO's "Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity", UNESCO calls on all its Member States to build partnerships between the public sector, civil society, and the private sector to promote cultural diversity because cultural diversity is "one of the roots of development" in a knowledge-based economy. Moreover, all Member States are urged to support their cultural industries and promote the establishment of such industries in developing countries and countries in transition (UNESCO, 2001). Similarly, in a 2004 report entitled "Cultural Liberty in Today's Diverse World", the UNDP Human Development Report Office suggests that there is a strong connection between cultural liberty and economic growth (UNDP, 2004).

Yúdice concludes that culture has emerged as a dominant discourse that supports governmental mechanisms and the biopolitical regulation of the population through "the social imperative to perform". According to Yúdice, "culture power" compels contemporary individuals to perform their diversity. Culture becomes a separate sphere in which distinctive groups and individuals can contest for their equal representation and visibility through performative identities. However, as Yúdice explains, these identities are more useful for the "state institutions and media and market projections that shape, respectively, clients and consumers" (Yúdice, 2003: 48) than they are for the performers of

these identities themselves. Under these conditions, Yúdice suggests, it becomes difficult to pursue political strategies and acts of resistance through culture and identity. Since neoliberal governmentality operates by managing populations through culture and identity performance, such attempts would not undermine contemporary forms of power but rather be completely consistent with neoliberal governmental rationality – regardless of how unconventional those identities might be.

In sum, the emergence of culture as an autonomous sphere that is separated from economic and political processes – rather than a sphere in which social relations are represented – privatizes culture and reduces it to a matter of choice, a lifestyle. The supposedly politically neutral nature of culture is used as a means of safeguarding and reproducing the capitalist order. Under these conditions, the sphere of culture becomes a field in which private freedoms and individual cultural rights are claimed. It also becomes the field in which the entrepreneurial self is faced with the imperative to construct her own authentic identity through autonomous, calculated choices, through practices of self-actualization and self-authentication.

Branding yourself authentic

To be an entrepreneurial self means to treat yourself as human capital and to manage this capital in the best possible way in order to increase its value and profitability. Like every successful company attempting to keep up with the demands of the ultra-competitive capitalist economy in the neoliberal era, the entrepreneurial self has to have a brand. As a marketing strategy, branding is essentially a way of distinguishing one product or company from the rest. It aims to advertise the uniqueness and the authenticity of a product or company. Like a company, the neoliberal subject has to fabricate and perform an authentic identity that brings out her unique qualities in such a way as to maintain her employability and maximize the profitability of her human capital. Such is the popularity and the importance of self-branding in the neoliberal era that teaching self-branding skills has become a business in itself. Nowadays, branding workshops and classes are offered all over the world, and the market is full of books and handbooks by all sorts of experts – career advisors, management theorists, self-help specialists, etc. – offering their insights into the merits of the practice of self-branding (e.g. Beals, 2008; Kaputa, 2006; Peters, 1999;

McNally and Speak, 2003; Purkiss, and Royston-Lee, 2012;).⁹⁹ In order to understand what the imperative to cultivate a self-brand means, we should make a small step back in order to look at the role of brands in the contemporary economy.¹⁰⁰

Branding has played a very important role throughout the history of capitalism. As early as the mid to late nineteenth century, the power of the brand had been put to work to facilitate the organization of production (Lury, 2004). The centralization and industrialization of production led to the detachment of the producer from the market and the consumer. A product that was produced in one region could be sold in another. The personal relationship between the consumer and the producer, or even the supplier, was now a thing of the past. In this context, the main purpose of branding was to guarantee the quality and the origin of the product in the eyes of the consumer. A brand was a mark that referred directly to the qualities of the product and aimed at building a personal, trusting relationship between the company and the consumer. In addition, brands were ways of signifying the distinctiveness of a product and its superiority over those of competitors, again through reference to certain qualities and attributes possessed by the product (Moor, 2007)¹⁰¹.

In more recent decades, however, the purpose of branding has changed significantly. The effectiveness of conventional advertising was questioned, and branding as a marketing strategy was preferred as it was considered to be more direct. In fact, branding aimed to obviate the need for advertising and to construct what Lury calls “self-promoted commodities” (Lury, 2004). For this to be achieved, a product’s brand must embody and communicate meanings, values, feelings, and relationships. In this sense, a brand is a conceptual abstraction. Gradually, the brand is detached from any particular product-related characteristics or qualities and is connected with abstract values. Thus, although branding still aims at building a relationship between the company and the consumer, it does this in a completely different way. The relationship is grounded not in a feeling of trust deriving from the guaranteed quality of the product but in common values and worldviews. Moreover, a brand not only aims to build a relationship between a company

⁹⁹ The amount of bibliography that promotes and advises on and self-branding practices is massive. Unfortunately this type of bibliography lacks any scientific justification of the merits of self-branding as it well as any critical examination of the phenomenon of self-branding.

¹⁰⁰ The importance of branding in the capitalist economy has been the subject of many important sociological accounts. For an extensive reading on the issue see (Klein, 2000), (Lury, 2004), (Arvidsson, 2006) (Moor, 2007) (Kornberger, 2010).

¹⁰¹ Moor notes that to a certain extend even in the nineteenth century, brands also attempted to ascribe meaning to the product, although this factor was of secondary importance. In these earlier years, brands were connected with values and meaning was linked with national or imperial power (Moor, 2007).

and the consumer but also to foster a relationship among consumers themselves and create a sense of community between those who consume the same products (Arvidsson, 2006).¹⁰²

The value and importance of brands in contemporary capitalism goes beyond the fact that they are an efficient marketing strategy. Moor argues that brands are now assets in themselves, a form of capital that can generate value because it constitutes a strong basis for the creation of a new product and the expansion into new markets (Moor, 2007). Marlboro is a good example of a company that used its brand name as an asset to expand from the tobacco industry into clothing.

An important characteristic of branding is its relationship with authenticity. While branding is often confused with commodification, that is, the transformation of an object, service, or relationship into a commodity, the practice of commodification differs significantly from the practice of branding. The distinction between the two is very important. Commodification implies the alienation of the authentic essence of an object or person because it prioritizes exchange value over use value. Banet-Weiser argues that the binary distinction between commercial and inauthentic vs non-commercial and authentic is too simplistic to explain a complicated marketing practice such as branding (Banet-Weiser, 2012: 11). She explains that authenticity does not somehow transcend branding practices. Branding does not function through the appropriation or commodification of “authenticity”; rather, it produces authenticity. This view suggests that authenticity is not something that pre-exists before being absorbed and manipulated by marketing strategies (as in the process of commodification). Unlike commodification, branding facilitates relationships of authenticity between corporations and consumers. A brand not only aims to highlight the uniqueness of one product over another but to create cultural, material, or immaterial spaces – networks and relationships that are based on feelings of trust, closeness, and authenticity (Banet-Weiser, 2012). Arvidsson has shown that branding is based on the active participation of the consumer. Brands are constructed in a context of “freedom”, in which consumers play an active role in the production of the meanings associated with the brand (Arvidsson, 2006). Thus, Banet-Weiser is right to claim that the production of authenticity is a fundamental aspect of branding practices.

¹⁰² Companies’ ascription of meanings, values, and affects to their products is based on consumers themselves: the production of these elements is based on the “work” of consumers, which is later appropriated by companies (Arvidsson, 2006). Lury and Arvidsson both point out that branding is taking place within a context in which consumers’ activities have become increasingly valuable for capital and in which marketing has an expanded role in profiling this activity and feeding it back into the production process (Lury, 2004; Arvidsson, 2006).

The practices of self-branding are akin to those of branding a product or a company. The differences between commodification and branding practices noted above are similar to those between the commodified self and the self-branded individual. The notion of the commodification of the self implies the alienation of the individual from its supposedly true essence as a result of the submission of the individual's work to capital. By contrast, self-branding refers to all those practices that aim to create and promote the qualities that make someone distinctive and unique. Banet-Weiser correctly highlights the active role of the subject in this process: "the construction of the self-brand *necessarily* acknowledges the individual's role as the producer of her individual life narrative" (Banet-Weiser, 2012: 60, emphasis in the original).

Therefore, self-branding should be seen as a process of self-determination that aims to develop, communicate, and promote someone's skills and personal characteristics. It demands of the individual a certain work and care of the self: practices of self-improvement, self-investing, and self-promotion. In this sense, self-branding is a contemporary, neoliberal version of what Foucault called "technologies of the self": all those practices and strategies "which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves" (Foucault, 1988: 18). The active role of the subject in the construction of their own self-brand should not lead us to the conclusion that self-branding takes place outside of power relations and economic relations (Banet-Weiser, 2012: 13). Again, the notion of technologies of the self allows us to understand the way in which power is immanent to self-branding. Foucault stresses that a particular technology of power does not function independently of all the other technologies of power (domination, discipline, security, etc.). Rather, technologies of power interact and codetermine each other and are connected with one another within a general mode of governmentality (Foucault, 1988: 19). Similarly, self-branding practices should not be taken as autonomous processes, completely independent of power relations. They are an aspect of the neoliberal mode of government that are manifested through the choices of the entrepreneurial subject.

In order to understand this last point, we should situate self-branding within the general framework of neoliberal governmentality and the late capitalist economy. Arguably, because of high rates of unemployment, the contemporary labour market is both sclerotic and ultra-competitive. For the majority of job vacancies, there is a significant number of candidates who meet the job criteria. Thus, each applicant needs to prove that she is the

one who should be hired instead of all the other candidates. As we saw in the previous chapter, the entrepreneurial self must manage herself as human capital. All aspects of her life and all of her qualities (skills, working experience, personality, networks, etc.) constitute her human capital. Self-branding is a practice that aims at highlighting what differentiates one candidate from another and indicates their superiority over their competition. Therefore, self-branding is crucial to success in the job market in the neoliberal era.

The practice of self-branding involves a work upon oneself that aims at increasing one's human capital in order to attract investors (employers, collaborators, advertisers). Just like a company brand, eventually a self-brand comes to function as an asset, and so it becomes an element of the human capital of the entrepreneurial self. What distinguishes self-branding practices as a form of human capital cultivation is that the value and profitability of one's brand does not derive from particular skills or capabilities. The value of the branded self is based on the recognition and popularity of the identity the self performs. Of course, in some cases, the recognition might derive from a certain set of skills or capabilities, but eventually what matters is simply the recognition of the branded self. One's brand must be unique: authentic (Gershon, 2016).

There is another reason that becoming a brand is a requirement in the neoliberal era. As we have seen, flexibility, resilience, and adaptability are significant features of the entrepreneurial self, features it must possess in order to keep up with the demands of the late capitalist economy and the neoliberal labour market. At the same time, the entrepreneurial self must be responsible and accountable. Work and labour markets in neoliberal societies are undeniably characterized by this tension between the demands of flexibility, resilience, and adaptability on the one hand and accountability and predictability on the other hand (Gershon, 2016). Thus, the entrepreneurial self is faced with the contradictory demand to present a coherent self that is suited to the requirements of a given company while at the same time to be flexible and adaptable. Authenticity is a way of demonstrating one's coherence as a person. Branding yourself authentic is a way of resolving the tension between the demand of flexibility and the demand of coherence and accountability. Authenticity is an important quality, for it designates that you can fulfil both the imperatives of flexibility and consistence at the same time (Gershon, 2016).¹⁰³

¹⁰³ For a discussion of the tension that the neoliberal subject experiences between flexibility and the coherence of its personality see also Boltanski and Chiapello (2006) and Sennet (1991: 51).

Branding yourself authentic means demonstrating to the public your value to a company and at the same time engaging in all those practices that create the image of a coherent, authentic self. In this sense, self-branding should be seen as a performative practice that aims not only at cultivating a certain image of the self but also at communicating and building networks through it. The entrepreneurial self must create its brand, but it must also perform it. To put it another way, the authentic self is created through its performance.

It follows that, as Banet-Weiser rightly argues, visibility and self-disclosure are intrinsic to self-branding. A brand always aims to communicate a message and to build a relationship between the sender and the receiver of that information. The value of a brand derives primarily from its visibility, and thence from its popularity and its recognition. Given all this, it is not surprising that the internet, interactive media, and digital social platforms are fundamental to the creation and promotion of the branded self: for example, the use of a personal profile for commercial reasons on electronic platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, etc. Through these platforms a significant number of people make extraordinary amounts of money simply by attracting advertisements, which are published on their profiles – the most obvious example of this phenomenon being the Kardashian family. This is only one way in which electronic self-branding can be profitable, but it is also the most striking given the direct relationship between the brand and the profit. However, electronic self-branding concerns ordinary people as well, and it has become a popular means of self-promotion. Many people – academics, journalists, and artists of all kinds – promote their work through social media in the hope that the recognition they gain from their exposure will increase their stock in the labour market. Since visibility and performativity are essential to self-branding practices, authenticity becomes not only a desirable asset but an unavoidable obligation. When someone is exposed to the public and becomes transparent, authenticity becomes a moral obligation (Banet-Weiser, 2012: 60).

Authenticity through consumption

The sphere of consumption has often been considered a sphere of alienation and inauthenticity – and not unjustifiably. For decades, consumption practices were determined by the mass production/consumption project of Fordist capitalism, which was supported, as we have seen, by Keynesian economic policies, the welfare state and bolstered by advertising. As I discussed in the introduction, the mass consumption project was criticized by the members of the Frankfurt school and especially Marcuse, who saw consumerism as

an essential pillar of the capitalist system. According to this view, advertising creates false desires and needs in order to maintain consumption at the highest possible levels and so to increase capital accumulation (Marcuse, 2006). Antipathy towards consumerism and its alienating effects was expressed not only in intellectual and academic circles but also by the social movements of 1960s and the art of the time (see e.g. Cooper, 2016)¹⁰⁴.

However, capitalism proved to be flexible enough to absorb and neutralize these criticisms (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007). To some extent, the neutralization of anti-consumerism critiques was accomplished through the abandonment of the mass production/consumption project of Fordism and the adoption of flexible production structures that produced a greater variety of goods in smaller quantities. In a strange sort of homeopathic therapy, the threat to authenticity presented by the uniformity and homogeneity of mass consumer culture was removed by means of consumerism itself: namely, through the commodification of difference and authenticity. Instead of advocating homogeneity, consumerist discourse shifted towards a celebration of diversity and of the authenticity that could supposedly be achieved through the plurality of consumer goods available on the market. Banet-Weiser summarizes the transformation of marketing discourse very well: from “buy, because everyone else is, be the same” to “buy our product, because it is different from everyone else’s, be different, be authentic” (Banet-Weiser, 2012: 32).

Nowadays, there is a surfeit of “authentic” products through which individuals can express themselves. Paradoxically, the sphere of consumption, once an arena of alienation, homogenization, and inauthenticity, has become the field in which the demand of authenticity can be fulfilled (Umbach and Humphrey, 2018: 96). The commodification of diversity and authenticity has not gone unnoticed by scholars and intellectuals studying contemporary consumer culture. Thomas Frank was one of the first to note the strong connection between subcultures and consumerism and to examine the ways that subcultures, and the commodification of subcultures, developed alongside a general consumerism. In his insightful study of the counterculture of the social movements of the 1960s in the USA, Frank shows how the counterculture was absorbed by the emerging advertising industry. Consequently, expressions of anti-conformism became just another consumer trend – “hip consumerism”, as Frank calls it – in the broader US consumer

¹⁰⁴Of course, there can be no clear distinction between intellectuals, academics, artists, and activists. However, it is important to note that the social movements of the 1960s were characterized by an alliance between those different circles. The Situationist International is probably the best example of this sort of alliance, as it was made up of avant-garde artists, intellectuals, and political theorists (see Knabb, 2006).

culture (Frank, 1997). Joseph Heath and Andrew Potter argue that the commodification of marginalized lifestyles and subcultures results in the reproduction of the structures of consumer society that these subcultures supposedly oppose (Heath and Potter, 2006). Thus, their interpretations suggest that the pursuit and expression of cultural diversity, plurality, and authenticity through consumption conceals, at a deeper level, the homogenizing logic of capitalism. Scholars specifically concerned with the commodification of authenticity have proposed that underlying the celebration and promotion of authenticity there is a profit-driven discourse that ultimately functions in just the same way as mass consumption. They thus insist that the consumption of authenticity is just as alienating and false as the consumption of mass products (Boyle, 2004; Heath and Potter, 2006; Potter, 2011; York, 2014). Consequently, these commentators conclude that authenticity is a “hoax” or a “con”, a false premise that manipulates consumers and serves needs of the capitalist economy (Potter, 2011; York, 2014).

I consider this interpretation misleading. It focuses narrowly on the commodification of authenticity, but this is but one aspect of the relationship between contemporary consumption practices and authenticity. In order to avoid falling into the same trap, we must avoid interpreting the sphere of consumption as essentially alienating and so by definition inauthentic. Moreover, we must move beyond an idealistic understanding of authenticity which takes it to be a quality that lies within the inner self and cut off from social relations. If one adopts such an idealistic interpretation, one is bound to see social, economic, and power relations as alienating and to ignore the fact that power is immanent to authenticity. Our understanding of authenticity must acknowledge that authenticity is in fact produced by certain social and power relations. If that is the case, then consumption may indeed function as means of authentic self-expression, as a way of constructing the authentic self (Umbach and Humphrey, 2018: 96).

This view is supported by two interconnected factors. The first is that, as many sociological surveys suggest, consumers in many cases perceive their consuming practices as authentic. In contrast to the mainstream view that most of our consumer choices are the result of imposed or constructed needs, in many cases consumers consider their consumer practices to be an aspect of their personal or social identity, a means by which they engage in genuine self-expression and self-realization. For example, many people identify themselves as vegans. Veganism is by definition a practice that can be realized through certain consumer choices. Thus, choosing one product or service over another – e.g. eating at a certain vegan restaurant – is a fundamental part of identifying as a vegan, and the same

thing might be said of many other forms of ethical consumption, such as shopping in a market that supports local producers or buying products that meet fair trade standards. In addition, there are many people who identify themselves as members of a certain group or consider an important aspect of their personality to be the fact that they pursue a certain hobby. In many cases, these identities are constructed and performed through certain consumption practices – e.g. biking, surfing, or hiking. In all those cases in which someone's identity is shaped through consumption choices (e.g. a vegan or a surfer), it is obvious that the authentic self is a constructed through certain consumption practices. What is less obvious is that consumption can be also a way of realizing and performing identities that are not considered to be matters of personal choice. In his provocative book *Consuming Race* (2014), Ben Picher shows how racial identities and meanings are produced and reproduced through everyday consumption practices. Choosing to buy certain T-shirts, consume certain foods, or listen to certain kinds of music are all ways through which someone constructs their racial identity (Picher, 2014).

The second – and probably the most important – factor is the nature of many of the products available under late capitalism. The growing markets in the fields of culture, information, arts, knowledge, and experiences have transformed consumer practices so that consumption can now be a means of self-development, self-realization, and the construction of authenticity. The most obvious example of this is the tourist industry, which does not focus on commodifying certain products but on constructing and promoting certain experiences (Knudsen and Waade, 2010). In a similar way, the consumption of services such as sports and fitness services, may be seen as routes to self-realization. It is hard to argue that a person who pays for a self-defence course, for a gym membership, or for yoga classes is thereby alienated, especially when most of these people would argue the opposite (....) The emerging market in self-realization workshops, books, and services (Illouz, 2006: 80) is another manifestation of consuming practices that involve not certain products but certain experiences that aim to shape and cultivate a particular kind of self-relation. It is hard to argue that this self-relation is less authentic than others.

Consumption has developed into something other than simply the means by which we satisfy material needs or acquire social status. Although these aims have not been totally eclipsed, of course, it is obvious that consumption in late capitalist society has become a practice through which individuals construct a meaning for their life. Thus, the consumption and the quest for authenticity do not conflict with one another. Žižek comments on the shifting trends in consumption practices as follows:

Consumption is supposed to sustain the quality of life, its time should be “quality time” – not the time of alienation, of imitating models imposed by society, of the fear of not being able to “keep up with the Joneses” but the time of the authentic fulfilment of my true Self, of the sensuous play of experience, and of caring for others, through becoming involved in charity or ecology, etc. (Zizek, 2009: 53)

This view of the consumption of authenticity undermines the conventional interpretation that authenticity achieved through consumption cannot truly be authentic. The fact that authenticity can be attained through consumption applies more obviously to those cases that involve services that aim to provide particular kinds of experience rather than to cases involving physical products. However, it also applies to the consumption of physical products which are essential for the performativity of a certain identity (surfer, biker etc.), or related to a certain culture or subculture. Therefore fabricating one’s authenticity through consumption practices mediated or attempted through market available choices, it is neither contradictive nor paradoxical, since one cannot deny that a consumer is not able to produce a sense of uniqueness or authenticity through those practices. These identities, however, which are essentially shaped through consumption choices and by lifestyles that are performed through consumption, often fail to be connected with the social structures – like class or ethnicity – and the way that these structures determine them is not recognized.

The malaises of authenticity

The relationship between capitalism and mental illness has been widely discussed by theorists who have questioned the reality of mental disorder. Foucault’s *Madness and Civilization* was groundbreaking in putting forward a political interpretation of mental disorder, describing the power relations and discourses that shape madness (Foucault, 2006). In their provocative book *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Deleuze and Guattari re-examine the fundamental schemas of psychoanalysis and investigate desire in relation to political and economic structures. They claim that there is a strong relationship between the institution of the nuclear family and the Oedipus complex, on the one hand, and the emergence of capitalism and the modern state, on the other. In their view, neurosis and schizophrenia are the result of the repression of desire under the capitalism mode of production (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983).¹⁰⁵ However, even though there has been a significant amount of work dealing with the relationship between extreme mental disorders

¹⁰⁵ It is not my aim in this thesis to analyze the arguments made by Deleuze and Guattari or to examine their contributions to the fields of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy. For a comprehensive introduction to Deleuze and Guattari’s arguments in *Anti-Oedipus* see Holland (1999).

and capitalism, there has not been the same sort of attention paid to mental illnesses that are much more common. Although late capitalist societies have seen a tremendous rise in the rates of mental illness, social theorists – with a few exceptions – have completely neglected the possibility that there might be a relationship here. Mark Fisher's *Capitalist Realism* (2012) is one work that takes this possibility seriously. He puts forward a political explanation of common mental disorders such as depression, anxiety, etc., arguing that the interpretation of mental illness as a matter of individual biological anomaly in the brain is insufficient and, in his view, essentially apolitical:¹⁰⁶

It goes without saying that all mental illnesses are neurologically instantiated, but this says nothing about their causation. If it is true, for instance, that depression is constituted by low serotonin levels, what still needs to be explained is why particular individuals have low levels of serotonin. This requires a social and political explanation; and the task of repoliticizing mental illness is an urgent one if the left wants to challenge capitalist realism. (Fisher, 2012: 37)¹⁰⁷

Writing before Fisher, Oliver James had, in his *The Selfish Capitalist: Origins of Affluenza* (2008), connected the rise of mental illness with the neoliberal policies imposed in Western countries. Increasingly precarious working conditions, increased economic inequality, and the personalization of risk and danger – all characteristics of the neoliberal era – have led to an increase in feelings of unsafety, instability, anxiety, and depression. The irony is that all these feelings are precisely the opposite of what neoliberalism and the immaterial economy demands of us: namely, enthusiasm, activity, energy, creativity, and happiness. In his fascinating study *The Happiness Industry: How the Government and Big Business Sold Us Well-Being* (2016), William Davies connects our era's obsession with happiness with recent economic developments. According to Davies, we can better understand this preoccupation with happiness if we take into consideration the nature of the contemporary economy. As production becomes immaterialized, the lack of work becomes more and more associated with mental health disorders rather than with physical health issues. In an economy in which immaterial labour has become the dominant form of production, depression and other mental disorders become the primary form of incapacity. It is obvious, then, that if governments and companies want to increase the quality of their workforces, then they

¹⁰⁶ The interpretation of mental illness as a chemical disorder of the brain is apolitical in the sense that it does not recognize or attempt to deal with the social causes of mental disorder. The dominance of this interpretation, however, is encouraged by certain political and economic actors. For a discussion of the role of the pharmaceutical companies in the imposition of a biological understanding of mental illness see Greenberg (2011).

¹⁰⁷ It is only recently that there are beginning to be challenges to the idea that depression or anxiety results from a chemical imbalance in the human brain. For example see Hari (2018), Irving (2009).

must ensure the happiness of their populations (Davies, 2016).¹⁰⁸ The importance of emotions in the immaterial economy means that someone's "emotional competences" can be converted into economic and social benefits. These thus become yet another aspect of the human capital that the entrepreneurial self has to manage (Illouz, 2006: 100).¹⁰⁹

Paradoxically, our contemporary obsession with happiness has arisen alongside increasing rates of depression, anxiety, and other mental disorders. I claim that this is related to the imperative of authenticity and the responsibility of the entrepreneurial subject to construct her own authentic identity. Specifically, the entrepreneurial self faces contradictory responsibilities imposed by the late capitalist economy and neoliberal rationality: the requirement to be flexible, adaptable, ever-changing, and evolving yet simultaneously coherent and authentic. The tension that results from these contradictory demands is also pointed out by Boltanski and Chiapello, who suggest that when one's identity becomes a personal and constant process, change and stability are simultaneously demanded of one: "becoming oneself" implies "changing in order to bring out and discover what one potentially was, so that one is no longer the same person while nevertheless evincing conformity to an original self" (Boltanski and Chiapello, 461). Along with the anxiety of being oneself, the demand of authenticity cultivates anxiety about relationships – another characteristic of our era and another serious reason for mental health disorders. This arises not only out of the contradictory demands of authenticity and flexibility but out of a general distrust of other people and of relationships in general. Now that the boundary between the economic and social spheres has been demolished, the time and space of production collide with leisure time. Thus, the boundaries between friendly, affective relations and the instrumental connections and acquaintances cultivated by the networking, adaptable entrepreneurial self become so blurry that trust and faith in others are inevitably lost (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007 455, 456, 457). The problem here is not the suppression of authenticity but the grown distrust and as a result anxiety people experience even when being in informal environments as a result of the imperative of authenticity.

¹⁰⁸ This obsession, Davies argues, is evident not only in the everyday discourse produced by mainstream and social media but also from the rise of the field of happiness economics, which is preoccupied with measuring happiness and relating it to economic development, either on a personal or a national level. Governments all over the world have been collecting data to track and measure the happiness levels of their populations (Davies, 2016).

¹⁰⁹ According to Illouz, the value that contemporary capitalism places on emotions is evident in the increasing importance to firms of the notion of emotional intelligence, which emerged in the 1990s. While IQ testing methods refer to skills connected with a person's rational, cognitive competences, emotional intelligence testing is a new way of measuring and classifying emotions in order to identify the productive capabilities that someone has in virtue of her emotional competences. Emotional competences are highly important in an economy in which small working groups and networked structures have replaced the hierarchies of Fordism, where docility was a much more valuable "virtue" (Illouz, 2006).

In his book *The Weariness of the Self* (2009), the French sociologist Alain Ehrenberg offers a genealogical examination of depression. His analyses thus go beyond a neurological understanding of depression to examine the social conditions under which depression emerged. Ehrenberg shows how this particular mental disease emerged in contemporary societies, but he also contributes to our broader understanding of the way neoliberal societies shape individuals and affect the way they perceive themselves. Ehrenberg argues that there is a strong connection between post-disciplinary mechanisms of normalization and depression. As discussed in previous chapters, disciplinary mechanisms are no longer the chief force regulating the relationship between the individual and society. According to Ehrenberg, as the disciplinary order declines and neoliberal rationality is in the ascendant, the demands of entrepreneurial rationality, personal autonomy, and self-responsibility replace the requirement of obedience. The norms of initiative and self-responsibility replace that of docility. However, burdened with responsibilities that, in many cases, they cannot fulfil, post-disciplinary subjects find themselves physically and mentally exhausted. Consequently, depression becomes the new abnormality, the new mental pathology that replaces neurosis:

Liberation might have gotten us out of the drama of guilt and obedience, but it has taken us straight into the demands of responsibility and action. And so the weariness of depression took over from the anxiety of neuroses. (Ehrenberg, 229)

For Ehrenberg, depression is the counterpart of the demands of activity, flexibility, creativity, self-expression, and self-realization, and it arises out of states of dependency, in which an individual is insufficiently autonomous or self-reliant. The demonization of the welfare state and the people supported by it is, of course, part of the neoliberal ethos. Depression is the inadequacy of the entrepreneurial self to manifest itself, to perform the demands of self-responsibility and autonomy.

At this point, it is interesting to consider Ehrenberg's comparison of depression and neurosis. In the disciplinary environment of earlier stages of capitalism, identity was defined by social structures. The failure of someone to act or fulfil the notion of the self resulted in a neurotic disorder, a sickness of the person who "attempts to move away from a self" (Fritz Perls, as cited in Guignon, 2). By contrast, neoliberal societies do not impose personal identity but instead hold the individual responsible for constructing her own personal identity and becoming authentic. When someone is unable to fulfil this requirement – to become her own authentic self – this leads to a feeling of insufficiency,

anxiety, exhaustion, and depression. Our compulsive efforts to fulfil the imperative of authenticity results also to feelings of guilt since they lead us to a constant struggle for self-improvement and self-realization which result to a feeling that we have never done enough to achieve it (Spicer, 2011). Neurosis was a disease that resulted from negating a sense of self that was imposed by society; depression is a disease that results from affirming the requirement of autonomy but being unable to fulfil it. It is caused by the exhausting effort to become an authentic self.

Ehrenberg also highlights a transformation in the relationship between society and the individual. He recognizes that there is indeed a tension between society and the individual that, as we saw in the first chapter, in industrial capitalism is characterized by a conflict between the authentic self and the alienating, homogenizing forces of society (as described by Rousseau). The psychological aspect of this tension is best described by Freud, who claims that social demands (the superego) represses human impulses repelling them to the unconscious. However, as we have seen, the tension between the social and the individual has been replaced by neoliberal governmentality and the rise of the entrepreneurial self. The social as a field of and technology for the regulation of the self has been replaced by the mechanisms of self-control and self-responsibility. The contemporary individual does not find herself in conflict with the social, for the social has now withered away under the pressure of the forces of globalization and neoliberal rationality. Instead, the contemporary subject struggles to keep up with the neoliberal demands of self-sufficiency and self-realization. Thus, the individual's relationship with the rest of the society is founded upon her ability or inability to meet these demands. The personal struggle of the individual to achieve these goals can leave her isolated and result in exhaustion, burnout, and depression.

It goes without saying that the malaise deriving from the imperative of authenticity does not affect every social class in just the same way. As we have seen, self-fulfillment, self-realization, self-differentiation, and other qualities connected with the demand of authenticity are realized through education and through working and consuming practices all of which are heavily determined by someone's class. This implies that individuals lower down in the class hierarchy will not have the same means to construct or perform their authentic selves. For example, working-class citizens, such as manual labourers, waiters, drivers, and retail clerks, are less likely to relate to their work with a sense of self-fulfilment than are middle-class citizens, such as lawyers, academics, and doctors (Inglehart, 1977: 150). This means that working-class citizens are less likely than other citizens to be able to satisfy the demand for authenticity through their working practices. At the same time, the

unemployed, the underemployed, and the working class have less purchasing power, that is, fewer means to pursue their authentic development through consuming practices. As we have seen, their inability to satisfy the imperative of authenticity affects, in turn, their employability; it makes it less likely that the underemployed or unemployed will be able to secure a full-time job, and it makes it harder for the employed to demand better wages and working conditions. Because of the nature of their work and their restricted purchasing power, the working class, the underemployed, and the unemployed populations are thus caught in a vicious circle: their inability to satisfy the imperative of authenticity reinforces those conditions that make the satisfaction of this imperative an unachievable task. Consequently, those parts of the population are more likely to suffer from feelings of inadequacy, exhaustion, and guilt, which can eventually lead to mental-health problems such as depression and anxiety.¹¹⁰ On top of all this, since someone's ability to satisfy the imperative of authenticity affects her employability, the unemployed and the working class are less likely to be able to be socially mobile within the class structure of late capitalism. Thus, the imperative of authenticity also functions to discipline members of the working and the petite-bourgeois classes to accept their class position.

However, despite the fact that social factors determine one's ability to pursue the task of authenticity, in a society in which authenticity becomes a personal project pursued through individual acts of choice, it appears – falsely – that personal identity is not constrained by class, race, or gender. This conception of authentic identity has been well documented by social theorists who, wittingly or not, reproduce the new type of oppression that goes along with it. The theories of reflexive modernity and individualization, as described by Beck and Giddens, emphasize that practices of choice are the fundamental way in which people construct their own identities (see Beck, Giddens and Lash, 1994). Both scholars emphasize the compulsory nature of the process individualization¹¹¹ and the fact that it spreads to encompass the whole of society. However, they totally neglect the fact that this process takes place in a class-based society. Beck even goes as far as to suggest that class is a “zombie category” (Beck, 2002).¹¹² Thus, individualization theories suggest that individualization transcends class boundaries. But it would be much more accurate to say

¹¹⁰ Many have noted the relationship between social class and mental disorder (e.g. Langner and Michael, 1963; Murali and Oyeboode, 2004)

¹¹¹ Beck makes clear that although contemporary individuals produce themselves through an aggregate of choices, individualization as a process is not at all a matter of choice; it is an obligatory procedure, and this obligation applies to all. Paraphrasing Sartre, Beck suggests that people are condemned to individualization (Beck, 1992). In a similar spirit, Giddens writes: “we all not only follow lifestyles, but in an important sense we are forced to do so – we have no choice but to choose” (Giddens, 1991: 8).

¹¹² For a criticism, see Atkinson, (2007)

that the individualization process takes place within class boundaries, because even when cultural and lifestyle choices are obligatory for everyone, regardless of social class, this does not mean that the choices that someone makes are not defined by class factors. Bourdieu's work on habitus and on the practices of distinction goes beyond the more or less obvious fact that someone's purchasing power determines, to a large extent, their available choices to investigate how cultural preferences and consumption habits are defined by and reproduce someone's class origin. He reveals that class differences are internalized and embodied by individuals, defining their tastes, talents, skills, bodily movements, and aspects of character – factors that appear at first to be naturally given (Bourdieu, 2010). According to this perspective, identities and lifestyle differences, which appear to the individualization theorists to be aggregates of free individual choices made in the course of individual, self-reflexive projects, are in fact determined by social class (Moran, 2014: 149–151).

The increasing rates of depression confirm that, as strange as it may seem, the quest for authenticity and the obligation to be oneself actually threaten individuality itself (Žižek, 2002). The contemporary subject is driven by contradictory aims, and this leads to the exhaustion and collapse of the self. Further, the disorders caused by the imperative of authenticity also undermine collective action. The quest of authenticity cultivates a turn to inwardness which undermines social struggles by pushing them to the level of the individual. Political and social problems are undermined to an “internal psychological struggle” rather than collective social struggle (Spicer, 2011). When the “identity problem” becomes privatized, when the construction of an authentic self becomes a personal project for which the individual is fully responsible, all those factors that, until relatively recently, were taken to define people's identities – class, gender, race – become meaningless or irrelevant to their lives. When subjects fail to acknowledge that their identities are socially determined, any sense of collective identity is undermined, and collective political action is thus rendered more difficult. As a result, socially generated problems – economic inequality and exploitation, sexism, racism – cannot be addressed. Consequently, the subject resorts to private solutions for collective problems, as these seem to be the only plausible or meaningful ways of proceeding. The subject is, then, caught in a vicious circle: the struggle to achieve self-realization and authenticity is followed by a sense of disempowerment, which is followed by an attempt to seek a private solution to this disempowerment, and so on.

Žižek has expressed similar concerns about the political implications and consequences of the imperative to “be authentic”

In our post ideological era, instead of trying to change the world, we should reinvent ourselves, our whole universe, by engaging ourselves in new forms of (sexual, spiritual, aesthetic...) subjective practices? [...]. Withdrawal into privacy today means adopting formulas of private authenticity propagated by the recent culture industry – from taking lessons in spiritual enlightenment, and following the latest cultural and other fashions, to engaging in jogging and body-building. Against this kind of privacy, we should emphasize that, today, the only way of breaking out of the constraints of “alienated” commodification is to invent a new collectivity. (Žižek, 2002: 85)

Thus, while the imperative of authenticity harms the working class the most, it also undermines the class struggle and makes the achievement of economic equality less likely. This in fact makes it harder for the majority of the population to pursue the ideal of authenticity. Although class struggles do not directly aim at the individualistic goal of authentic self-fulfilment, one cannot deny that the achievements of the labour movement, such as the eight-hour day, better pay and working conditions, health insurance, pensions, and holiday entitlements, are extremely important in allowing individuals to cultivate a sense of self-fulfilment. In addition to its harmful consequences for the class struggle, the imperative of authenticity also makes other forms of social action more difficult. Ironically enough, although the imperative of authenticity takes advantage of the values of diversity and pays lip service to identity politics, it in fact disempowers identity-based movements and marginalized groups. As many have noted, the identity politics that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s was founded upon demands for economic equality and social justice and was characterized by a strong sense of social identity (Duggan, 2004). As we have seen, the imperative of authenticity, by contrast, facilitates a sense of personal responsibility for the construction of one's own identity beyond social identities. In doing so, it subverts a sense of shared social identity among individuals with common race, gender, and sexuality characteristics and undermines the efforts of those groups to collectively demand equal recognition and civil and economic rights.

Conclusion

Neoliberal rationality forces the individual to be responsible for a whole host of things that were once matters of collective responsibility or social provision. The entrepreneurial subject is obligated to create her authentic self through calculated choices. Thus, the entrepreneurial self develops a certain relationship with herself that requires practices of

self-branding and self-promotion. The creation of an authentic self takes place through practices of self-branding and self-promotion and also through consuming practices.

Understanding the authentic self as something constructed through individual choices avoids the problems that arise from understanding the authentic self as something that pre-exists as a pure core within the subject (something that is then alienated by capitalist relations and commodification). Thus, it avoids the dualism between authentic or fake. However, this view does not imply that the demand of authenticity is liberating, nor does it pretend that the authentic self exists outside of economic relations of exploitation or power relations. On the contrary, it shows that the imperative of authenticity reproduces the economic imperialism of neoliberalism, which extends within the subject and comes to define every aspect of her life. Although the demand of authenticity is associated with a celebration of difference, it goes hand in hand with the homogenizing logic of entrepreneurialism. Thus, far from existing in opposition to capitalist relations, the authentic self emerges within them and reproduces neoliberal rationality and the structures of late capitalism.

Moreover, the imperative of authenticity causes serious problems for individuals' mental well-being. The injunction to construct one's own authentic self leads individuals into a never-ending struggle for self-valorization – a goal that can never truly be achieved – and results in feelings of inadequacy and a loss of personality. This explains the sky-high rates of depression and anxiety in our societies. In addition, the political consequences of the demand of authenticity are extremely worrying. The imperative to be authentic does not affect everyone in the same way, and it is more of a burden to those in the lower classes who have the least means to pursue authenticity through consumption. At the same time, by encouraging an individualistic conception of social and political life and promoting individual solutions to social problems, it weakens the sense of collective identity. Thus, the demand of authenticity undermines collective action and the class struggle. Finally, despite apparently championing the values of diversity and the inclusion of all identities, it actually makes the goals of identity politics harder to achieve.

CONCLUSION: CAPITALISM WANTS YOU TO “BE YOU” – RECLAIMING THE DEMAND FOR AUTHENTICITY

The demand of authenticity is not new. As we have seen, it emerges alongside the modern subject, capitalist relations of production, and liberal governmentality. However, although by freeing individuals from the constraints of feudalism, sovereign power, and tradition, capitalism created the ideal of the authentic self, it also subjected individuals to biopolitical mechanisms, moulding and adjusting them to the demands of capitalist production. Disciplinary mechanisms ensured that subjects were docile and productive by subjecting them to bodily and moral norms compatible with industrial production. As well as disciplining the individual, liberal government employed biopolitical mechanisms to measure, regulate, and secure the life processes of the population and protect society from market forces. Gradually, the biopolitical regulation of the population developed into an organized form of “social government” that was realized through the welfare state and Keynesian economic policies. Subjected to disciplinary mechanisms and “social government”, the industrial subject was constrained in such a way that individual deviance and diversity was discouraged and the social sphere homogenized. In this context, authenticity was taken to be the ideal that opposed the constraints imposed by capitalist society; indeed, at the time, the demand of authenticity had an anticapitalist aspect.

Today, however, far from suppressing authentic self-expression, late capitalist societies demand that you “be yourself” – that you be authentic. Important social theorists have noted the shift in Western capitalist societies towards embracing the values of diversity and authenticity. Post-Marxist scholars, such as Harvey and Jameson, have claimed that the development of the flexible structures of capitalism has given rise to the culture of postmodernism, which values ephemerality, diversity, and heterogeneity rather than homogeneity. Boltanski and Chiapello claim that late capitalism has co-opted the critiques advanced by the social movements of the 1960s and that, as a result, a “new spirit of capitalism” has developed, alongside new forms of organization in capitalist firms. Common to both of these approaches is the claim that, although diversity and authenticity have prevailed as dominant values in the ideological sphere of late capitalism, in reality these values can only be pursued as commodities in the capitalist market. The autonomist Marxist tradition claims that, as a result of the rise of immaterial production, late capitalism constitutes a new biopolitical environment in which all aspects of life are submitted to the rule of capital. The multitude, a social subject with a revolutionary potential, resists the

biopolitical order of immaterial capitalism and, in doing so, affirms its diverse character and creates authentic modes of life.

As I argued in the first chapter, the main problem with these theories is that they do not examine the relationship between late capitalism and the constitution of subjectivity. Thus, this thesis has aimed to fill this gap through an examination of the relationship between late capitalist societies and authenticity, exploring how transformations in the capitalist economy, neoliberal government, and new modes of surveillance combine to constitute the late capitalist subject. This was achieved through a synthesis of the theories of Foucault and Marx, which as we have seen complement each other rather than compete with one another. The combination of Foucault's account of the productive nature of power and the immanent relation of modern forms of government to the constitution of subjectivity with a Marxist class analysis has enabled us to examine the dominance of the imperative of authenticity and the entrepreneurial self in the context of the class structure of our society.

As we have seen, neoliberal governmentality breaks with the logic of panopticism and social government. Instead of disciplining the individual and protecting the social, neoliberal rationality promotes individual autonomy within the regulated framework of the free market. The neoliberal self is prompted to treat herself as human capital and become an "entrepreneur of herself". The entrepreneurial self must be autonomous and self-sufficient, which means not depending on the protection offered by the welfare state but on her own ability to manage her human capital well. Being an entrepreneurial self also implies the internalization of a calculative logic, competitiveness, the personalization of risk, the assumption of responsibility, adaptability, resilience, and flexibility in all aspects of life. As we have seen, the immaterial economy does not so much need the docile workers of the factory; more than ever, capitalism requires self-motivating, responsible, and self-controlled "entreploees". To this end, firms develop new forms of labour regulation with a view to instilling self-motivation and self-control – but also self-expression, self-realization, and authenticity – in their workers. This neo-normative control of the worker, which encourages the employee to become authentic within and without the working environment, aims to ensure that the employee's entire personality – her thoughts, ideas, emotions, connections, and social skills – incorporate the targets of the firm. At the same time, it brings it about that the individual is committed to an endless process of perpetual cultivation and expansion of her human capital, which can also be beneficial for the firm. The imperative of authenticity serves another purpose. It mediates between the neoliberal

demand for flexibility, adaptability, and constant change, on the one hand, and the demand for coherence, autonomy, and responsibility, on the other. It stresses the importance of stability while demanding constant self-improvement and self-transformation from the individual. As has become clear, although the imperative of authenticity may at first seem liberating, it actually serves as a means of disciplining the working class in the interests of the needs of contemporary firms and of privatizing social responsibilities and risks.

This thesis has also argued that, as contradictory as it may seem, the imperative of authenticity implies a necessarily incomplete process in which individuals struggle to construct their own identities. As part of this process, the entrepreneurial self must engage in practices of self-branding. The self-branding entrepreneurial self must construct and perform an authentic identity that accentuates her unique qualities in such a way as to maintain her employability and maximize the profitability of her human capital. As I have stressed, the imperative of authenticity affects all aspects of the entrepreneurial self.

Authenticity is mostly pursued in the field of consumption. While it is often assumed that authentic experiences must be those that are had outside of commodified capitalist relations and consumer culture, there is nothing contradictory in the idea that authenticity can be attained through consumption. Indeed, if we were to adopt this latter view, we would be in danger of slipping in a useless nostalgia for an idealized past in which there was no demand of authenticity. Authenticity through consumption does not mean having to consume products that are unique or are presented as authentic but rather developing consumer practices that are associated with a particular identity and have a certain meaning: practices that, in this way, contribute to the constitution of one's authentic self. The authenticity thus achieved is no less real, but obviously it is achieved through the reproduction of a fundamental pillar of capitalism. The fact that authenticity can be attained through consumption practices is another reason why I have suggested that, although the imperative of authenticity applies to everyone equally, it does not affect individuals from different classes in the same way. Clearly, the unemployed, the underemployed, and the working and petite-bourgeois classes do not have the same purchasing power as the bourgeoisie; thus, they have fewer means at their disposal when seeking to satisfy the neoliberal imperative of authenticity. And because, as we have seen, authenticity increases someone's employability, the imperative of authenticity reproduces class inequalities by creating a vicious circle in which those in lower-paid jobs (or without

jobs at all), who lack the resources to consume their way to authenticity, find that their chances of finding a higher-paid job are diminished even further.

This thesis has also examined the ways in which neoliberal governmentality and new modes of surveillance are bound up with one another, something to which most surveillance scholars have paid little attention. I have argued that the imperative of authenticity is also cultivated by new modes of surveillance that, as we have seen, are less interested in holding us to certain moral standards than in capitalizing on our pursuit of authentic expression. The neoliberal era has introduced us to a post-panoptic surveillance architecture that is based on the collaboration between public and private institutions. The post-panoptic era eliminates every last blind spot of modern surveillance mechanisms and introduces a world of total transparency. This transparency does not threaten our freedom, however, but exploits it. The two main characteristics of new modes of surveillance are that they are based on advanced technological infrastructure and that they are profit oriented. With regard to the first, we have seen that our daily activities are increasingly mediated by electronic environments that provide us with prescribed actions rather than genuine options. Our interaction with and through these visual or physical environments excludes deviance from the start and ensures that only authorized individuals participate in certain social activities. You are either an authorized user of an ATM, for instance, or you are not. The machine does not care who you are. Contemporary modes of surveillance are morally and culturally neutral; they are indifferent towards your beliefs, your sexual and racial background, your lifestyle, and all other aspects of your identity. In this sense, contemporary modes of surveillance are open to diversity and to authenticity. This is even more obvious in the data-oriented surveillance mechanisms applied by internet companies. Our internet-mediated life constantly generates data which are tracked, stored, and manipulated by big tech companies. The accumulation of data, and not our moral discipline, is what interests profit-oriented electronic surveillance. Thus, far from simply permitting the expression of our peculiarities, tastes, and desires, internet companies benefit from and so encourage their expression. Expressing your authentic self is what Google and Facebook want you to do. Indeed, the imperative of authenticity is most obviously taken up on social media, where we voluntarily expose our daily lives to public scrutiny. By exposing our daily lives and thoughts on social media, not only do we generate the data on which big tech companies depend but also we reproduce the neoliberal demand for entrepreneurial activity. In the virtual world, our willingness to express ourselves becomes part of the practices of self-branding and human capital valorization.

In sum, although the quest for authenticity is often taken to be something that opposes the constraints imposed by society, in reality the demand of authenticity is no longer a form of resistance to capitalist relations. This may have been the case under industrial capitalism, but in today's capitalism subscribing to the imperative of authenticity not only fails to deliver us from the social relations of capitalism but in fact reproduces late capitalist social structures and neoliberal rationality. We reproduce our subjection and exploitation.

In addition, although the imperative of authenticity is promoted by mainstream media and self-help literature as a means of cultivating a healthy relation to oneself, we have seen that, on the contrary, the search for authenticity becomes an internal struggle with deleterious consequences for the individual. Authenticity is an unrealizable goal, a never-ending and even unbearable task that results in feelings of inadequacy, exhaustion, and guilt for not having done enough to achieve one's goal. Thus, the imperative of authenticity leads to burnout and depression, mental disorders so common in our era. The imperative of authenticity applies to everyone, but it does not apply to everyone equally: its more harmful consequences are felt by those at the lower end of the social stratification, those who have the least means to constitute their authentic selves.

Finally, the imperative of authenticity undermines collective social and political struggles. It cultivates the perception that our lives are not defined by social relations and that we can define our life at will through responsible and calculated choices. When everything becomes a matter of choice, we fail to recognize that, and how, we are defined by social structures – social class, gender, and racial roles – and this makes it more likely that we will pursue individual solutions to problems that are, in fact, social and political in nature.

In an effort to call into question the imperative of authenticity faced by the entrepreneurial self, Bröckling wonders whether there might be ways of “being different differently” (Bröckling, 2016). Is there a way of negating the imperative of authenticity without losing the sense of freedom that the imperative implies, and without undermining individuality itself? Perhaps we should add to this question another: is there any meaning at all in this quest for authenticity in a society that still allows the exploitation of man by man, the flouting of basic human rights, poverty, and war? Resisting the imperative of authenticity does not mean negating our personality or suppressing our particularities. It means viewing the quest for authenticity not as an isolated struggle to construct our authentic self but as an effort to realize our individual potential through solidarity and participation in social struggles.

This thesis has provided a critical examination of the dominance of the imperative of authenticity in late capitalist societies and has discussed the implications of this dominance. I have shown that the dominance of the imperative of authenticity is not the result of an ideological transformation in late capitalism or the outcome of the increased commodification of “authentic” objects or spheres of activity. Instead, I have suggested that the rise of the imperative of authenticity can be traced to changes in the capitalist economy, the dominance of neoliberal forms of government, and the development of new modes of surveillance, all of which have contributed to the development of a new subjective form, the entrepreneurial subject. In this way, this thesis has advanced a critique of the imperative of authenticity that moves beyond the dichotomy of “authentic” versus “fake”.

This thesis has not, of course, sought to provide guidelines for how an authentic life may be attained. Yet acknowledging that the imperative of authenticity reconciles individuals to neoliberal government and the exploitative structures of capitalism does imply that the individual sense of freedom and autonomy that the imperative of authenticity promises cannot be attained unless those structures are put into question. Indeed, it is a paradox that while capitalism, especially in this neoliberal era, leads to spiraling inequality and subjects the majority of society to deteriorating working and living conditions, it promises us self-fulfilment and demands of us that we become our authentic selves. Although collective social struggles aiming to achieve a society of social and economic equality do not directly result in individual self-realization and do not promise a sense authenticity, they aim at those conditions through which each of us can truly pursue self-fulfilment in dignity. And although Marx’s communist vision, where a person may cultivate all of her skills freely, and be a hunter in the morning and a philosopher at night, may still seem utopian, collective demands for a fairer distribution of labour and income, for universal public healthcare and public education, are concrete ways in which individuals might achieve those conditions that make it possible for each person to develop her skills freely, in all directions, and hence provide the conditions in which each might truly fulfil the demand for authenticity.

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