

# **Managerial mythologies and false consciousness in postmodern capitalism.**

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**Abstract:** Capitalism seems to be more powerful than ever in the age of liquid modernity. Since the collapse of state communism in Eastern Europe and the reforms in other countries, there is not a real threat to this economic system built around fluids and deterritorialized relations between bodies and commodities. We are witnessing the attempts to dismantle most economic rights after so many years of class struggle, letting capital and individuals flow freely in the markets in a massive deterritorialization. This new power of capitalism is reflected in its discourses. Management discourses and narratives have become increasingly important, and they are expanding further, colonising every social field with their managerial culture. Many business books are published every year. According to Boltanski and Chiappello, these texts are the main *loci* in which the new spirit of capitalism is inscribed. Why are these discourses so successful? It would seem that the images and metaphors which appear in their messages, that is, their imaginary, induce the members of the corporations to work harder, giving them a meaning not only for their tasks, but for their whole lives as well. It is said that there is also resistance: individuals respond with irony to these messages, they do not believe in them, but the fact is that inside organizations there are no critical answers, which could transcend the individual bodies in some sort of long-term collective action. Managerial discourses are also complemented by seductive discourses regarding hedonism, showed in advertising. Life becomes, in Welfare societies (in the Empire), a permanent oscillation between consuming hedonism and the suffering of paying growing debts (such as mortgages, vehicles, education, job skills, holidays, conferences), which means that the individuals attach themselves to the capitalist machine in order to give an answer to both pleasure and debts.

These issues are too complex for just a conference paper. The aim of this one is simply to focus on how these management discourses are basically organized as Mythologies, which put the worker (as well as the manager) in a state of false consciousness. Under this concept are expressed the limits that exist for the rise of a new subjectivity that can deal with and criticize this new spirit of capitalism. Mythologies are understood in the way Roland Barthes does in his early work: managerial narratives are based on myths, and the essence of these myths is that which appears natural but which in reality is a social construct. This paper will also examine how these discourses have been transformed. Whereas the post-War discourses were focused on rationality, careers, assembly lines, hierarchies and territorialization, recent discourses have used different concepts: information, knowledge, networks, fluidity, mobility and deterritorialization. In spite of this transformation, managing becomes a natural law in Welfare society, giving no alternatives and developing an image of a specular and spectacular society which cannot offer to mankind different expectations as to how Life should be. Now it seems that Life cannot be conceived without capitalism: it is even desired.

This has a clear impact on politics: the fulfillment of pleasures, the necessity of being attached to the capitalist machine in order to pay debts, and the powerful myths of capitalist managers limit the possibility of the rise of a different subject, not committed to values such as productivity, professional ambition or consensus. Individuals don't become subjects, as they are under that state of false consciousness which is reinforced, in the age of permanently temporary war, by images of a clash of

civilizations. Fear and need for security merely add another dimension to alienation, showing that only life under capitalism is bearable. All these processes truly reinforce capitalism and domination: freedom is just an illusion of freedom. The question now is how to introduce again a critical culture in both organizations and society and, especially, how to give birth to a new subjectivity that can surpass false consciousness.

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Was nicht fremd ist, findet befremdlich!  
Was gewöhnlich ist, findet unerklärlich!  
Was da üblich ist, das soll euch erstaunen.  
Was dir Regel ist, das erkennt als Missbrauch  
Und wo ihr den Missbrauch erkannt habt  
Da schafft Abhilfe!

B. Brecht

## **Introduction.**

My contribution for this Ephemera Conference is a brief reflection upon the relation between management, politics and life, from a sociological perspective. It probably will have to do with “Mind” more than anything else. It is focused on the average people of our Western societies, including the ones who are living this experience of non-fascist life in this train. In the paper I try to understand why it does not seem to be an space for Revolution in this age of postmodern capitalism. Capitalism looks more powerful than ever, and there seems to be no alternative. The vast majority of the population support a market-based system, which offers them a huge number of commodities to achieve pleasure or evasion. Even if many of them would aspire to a different life, there is a general recognition that there is no alternative. Most of the people believe that they are living in freedom. Revolutions do not get support anymore in the West: there is a total disenchantment. We hear about multitudes uprising against the Empire (Hardt and Negri, 2000), but most of those supposed to form part of the multitudes seem to be fascinated by the spectacle of the society of consumption. Just imagine most of the average people we know (including sometimes ourselves): work from Monday to Friday, paying the mortgage, paying the bills, buying in supermarkets their Christmas presents, watching TV at night, bringing their sons and daughters to schools and universities where they will learn how to behave and think in the framework of a

capitalist society. They are not thinking of a revolution, but about where to go in the next holidays. Mind is closed in the capitalist framework.

### **Capitalism without frontiers.**

Capitalism, as Marx and Engels described in the *Manifesto*, needs a constant revolution of the mode of production to survive. It needs to *nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere* (Marx and Engels, 2004)). Since the collapse of state communism in Eastern Europe and the reforms in other countries, there is not a real threat to this economic system built around fluids and deterritorialized relations between bodies and commodities. We are witnessing the attempts to dismantle most economic rights after so many years of class struggle, letting capital and individuals flow freely in the markets in a massive deterritorialization. It is the age of globalization, and in the whole world capitalism spreads with just a few barriers. These barriers are challenged by the new leaders of capitalism through the declaration of wars which take place in foreign lands. These wars are intermittent and against invisible enemies, they cost money but not too many lives. They stimulate both industrial and non-industrial production as well as helping to impose discipline among the citizenry through fear of terrorism.

But these terrorism threats do not stop the capitalist machine. The World Trade Center has been destroyed, but Wall Street has not stopped. The Circle Line, or the Platform 2 in Atocha can be closed for a while, but soon they re-open and the market economy revitalises again. Capitalism is powerful again, and this new power of capitalism is reflected in its hegemonic discourses and in the absence of effective counter-discourses. Managerial discourses have become increasingly important during the last decades and they are expanding further, introducing management into every social field. Terms such as efficiency, effectiveness, improvement or competitiveness in a global economy seem to be a core part of every political party program or discourse. It is a total colonisation of all spheres of life, including politics. Therefore, in all of the “so-called” democratic Western countries, the choices of different models of both society and politics have dramatically decreased. Each political party may offer different programs, but with only slight differences. There is a consensus, an agreement not just on the basic rules of the

game, but on the discourses they present to the citizenry. There is no focus on the social problems as such: just offers of a better management of security, economy or health. This consensus is based on the market economy, and all the Western democracies simply follow this path. The only facts that matter are numbers, results, management. There is just one Lord above us all, the sacred Market, and basic decisions which can be taken in the so-called *sphere of the political* are related to issues such as assuring the freedom of capital movements, pretending to manage labour markets as well as the skills of workers, and getting a competitive advantage for the nation, in the global markets. This means that there seems to be no option for politics which does not arise out of management of both capital and labour resources. In this context, discourses about management become crucial, as the sphere of the political is reduced to simple management.

It would seem that images which appear in these messages work on two levels:

1. On the one hand, the workers in the corporations are induced to work harder, as these symbolic discourses give meaning to their tasks and lives. People make efforts to get the best positions so they can avoid the risks of being out of the market (poverty, lack of status, fear of the unknown). It would seem that the images and metaphors which appear in their messages, that is, their imaginary, induce the members of the corporations to work harder, giving them a meaning not only for their tasks, but for their whole lives as well. It truly becomes a form of false consciousness, which is a polemic concept, indeed, but... is there any other way to explain the way of life most of us have, spending our earnings on consumer goods, going to work every day without any complaint, or becoming fascinated by commodities of all kinds? Most of the individuals are simply totally engaged with the system, chained to debt, trying to acquire as many *gadgets* as possible. Masses are totally alienated by consumption and the media.

It is said that there is also resistance (Jermier *et al.*, 1994): individuals respond with irony to these messages, they do not believe in them, sometimes there is a wildcat strike, or even an organised movement. But the fact is that inside most of the organizations there are no critical answers, which could transcend the individual bodies in some sort of long-term collective action. There are some acts of resistance, indeed, and an opposition which is real; power does not shape us completely, and there are

always ways of escaping, as tactics in daily life (de Certeau, 1990). Nevertheless, these acts do not seem to be as frequent or powerful as they used to be in the past. Managerial discourses are also complemented by seductive discourses regarding hedonism, showed in advertising. Life becomes, in Welfare societies, a permanent oscillation between consuming hedonism and the suffering of paying growing debts (such as mortgages, vehicles, education, job skills, holidays, conferences), which means that the individuals attach themselves to the capitalist machine in order to give an answer to both pleasure and debts.

2. On the other hand, political parties seem to be fearful of offering real alternatives to the global capitalist system. Some parties in the Right openly support capitalism, but in the Left there is a total identity crisis. The Leftist parties with more voters just move to the centre and support capitalism with passion. Therefore, the ones with chances to achieve victory in the polls just struggle for power, but with no aim of building a world based in something different, as they fear exclusion from the global market. It has been many years since the Left basically has surrendered, accepting the impossibility of Justice and Equality. Justice becomes an empty word when we get from the system all kind of ephemeral pleasures. We hide in our shells and the Other disappears from our thinking. What matters is the Freedom to Buy.

In a certain way, Fukuyama was right in his forecast. We seem to be living an “End of History” (Fukuyama, 1992), because it seems there is no possible space outside of a certain market economy and a liberal democracy. Political spaces appear saturated, because there is a curtain of images that cannot allow anything else to be imagined. But we have to put into question this absence of alternatives. Is it possible to imagine a different kind of politics? Maybe this absence of alternatives is merely mythical? Is this new managerialism in politics a myth in itself? It is now the moment to turn one’s attention to myths.

### **Mythologies.**

What do we understand by ‘myth’? A myth could be defined as a collective representation that reflects certain social practices and functions, and takes the form of a

narrative. These narratives have historical foundations, and commonly involve a foundational act in society or the beginning of a concrete social practice, such as a rule or a custom. Social myths have often been studied in structuralist approaches, which have focused on them from different perspectives (Lévi-Strauss, 1970; Greimas, 1973; Maranda y Köngas-Maranda, 1971). Nevertheless, the version developed by Roland Barthes throughout his small masterpiece “Mythologies” (Barthes, 1973) is the most relevant for this approach to managerialism<sup>1</sup> in contemporary society.

For Barthes, myths are not just common in “primitive” cultures. They are present everywhere in *bourgeoisie culture*, although they are not building great structural narratives, but merely a corpus of discourses. In *Mythologies*, Barthes describes myths in different aspects of French daily culture. There are mythologies in food (wine, steak and chips), commodities (toys, cars) or journal reports (the iconography which is present around actors and writers). For Barthes, daily life is perceived as a group of signs and symbols that, in spite of their apparent “naturalness”, are undoubtedly ideological. They are an inverted reflection, presenting what is social as simply natural. When these signs are structured in discourses, they are called myths. Therefore, their symbolic form is expressed through a narrative. They operate as intersubjective structures of signification, organised around a concrete Mythology. Myth has the task of giving an historical intention a natural justification, and making contingency appear eternal, which, as Barthes claims, is the exact process of bourgeois ideology (Barthes, 1973: 142).

Thus social facts are taken out of history, and social representations become mythical. Each social sign has several signifieds associated with one signifier: there is a disagreement that avoids consensus in reaching the same signified. Nevertheless, this signified can be imposed by authority or power. It becomes the natural signified: the myth has been born in that moment. The function of *Mythologies* is to integrate the individual in a concrete symbolic order through an imposition of meanings. I myself have always been convinced of the power of this concept to explain crucial discourses in our society. For instance, most of the people work for organizations, social

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<sup>1</sup> Roland Barthes’ work has evolved through different stages. Barthes himself describes them (1978): a first period influenced by Marxism; a second period which is purely structuralist; and a last post-structuralist work. Obviously his first period, in which *Mythologies* is the basic book, is sociologically the most valuable and the one closer to Marx.

institutions where tapestries of myths have the function of creating bonds of solidarity between the members, in spite of the different social positions of each one of them. The easiest example is the case of management narratives, with all their fuss about leaders with vision, workers who achieve spectacular results and corporations that conquer huge markets<sup>2</sup>. All these narratives and rethorics are based on myths, and the essence of these myths is that which appears natural but which in reality is a social construct. They offer a vision of the organization that puts some organizational aspects into the foreground whilst the rest of social and historical situations and facts remain silent.

Managerial discourses have changed a lot throughout the years. During the post-World War period, the focus on these discourses was mainly on instrumental rationality, understood in the way Weber and F. W. Taylor did (Weber, 1968; Taylor, 1967). Bureaucratic capitalism lied on the strength of big corporations, on the New Industrial State (Galbraith, 1972). Those organizations were hierarchical and based on high doses of authority, following the panoptical model described by Foucault (Foucault, 1979), and meant the solution to the problem of a free market that needed to be regulated in order to avoid crises. However, since the late sixties there has been a shift, mainly due to several factors such as the development of markets with new competitors, the transition from an industrial economy to an economy based on services, and a progressive contestation from wide social groups of this form of bureaucratic capitalism (about all these issues, see Boltanski and Chiappello, 1999; Castells, 2000; Piore and Sabel, 1984; Harvey, 1989). In the management narratives, the main topic starts to be Change. Change is essential to avoid the future shock, the shifts in the new age of discontinuity (see Toffler, 1971; Drucker, 1969). The bureaucratic model is progressively replaced by new forms of organization based on flexibility and adaptation, and focused on the idea of “Customer as king”. Markets are not controlled anymore. In the most recent discourses, the emphasis is placed upon knowledge, networks, entrepreneurialism, adaptation and commitment to a culture<sup>3</sup>. So, there has been an historical transition from a stable Keynesian model to a sort of fuzzy world, a disorganized capitalism, a liquid modernity where the rules of the rational model do not seem to work anymore (Alonso, 1999, 2001; Lash and Urry, 1987, 1994; Offe, 1985;

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<sup>2</sup> Examples of recent successful managerial texts are: Hammer and Champy (1993), Hamel and Prahalad (1994), Peters (1992), Drucker (2001, 2002), Kanter (2001) or Goleman (1996).

<sup>3</sup> Gilles Deleuze describes this shift as the transition from a panoptical model of discipline in society to a more subtle regime in the “societies of control” (Deleuze, 2005).

Bauman, 2003). In spite of this transformation, managing becomes a natural law in Welfare society, giving no alternatives and developing an image of a specular and spectacular society which cannot offer to mankind different expectations as to how Life should be. All of these Mythologies describe a world that is just a misrepresentation of what the world really is. Thus, they induce in both managers and workers a state of false consciousness in which they cannot imagine any other possible organization (and society). Now it seems that Life cannot be conceived without capitalism: it is even desired.

It is surprising to find how many myths are involved in these discourses. It is not the aim of this paper to describe all of them, but let me point out a few examples of them:

- Mythology of cooperation: both managers and workers share the same interests, such as the survival of the enterprise or common benefits. The top director and the clerk seem to be on the same level, so their engagement must be equal.
- Mythology of the engaged worker: “good” workers (most of them) are committed to their tasks and can always give more of themselves, “bad” workers protest, resist and even join trade unions (nowadays this last aspect is simply off the discourse). Recently there are not bad workers anymore, just those who are not-enough-committed.
- Mythology of the management styles: there is a road to success, some new theory (fad) of good managing. Other ways simply lead to poor results. There are no questions about the framework, even if it is a challenge for everyone. Moreover, it is not possible to discuss the framework.

From the eighties, there are two new Mythologies that are especially powerful. The mythology of the Worker who demands Freedom means that the worker is seeking desperately to be empowered and highly-committed. The mythology of what it means to be conservative rejects anything that has to do with old ways of doing things, such as hierarchies, bureaucracy or planning.

It is easy to find a very similar situation in politics, as regards these new managerial discourses. Once ideologies are not offering any hope to the citizens, numbers prevail. Nowadays, politics seems to be about better management: better security, better control

on immigration, better administration of tax income, better administration of the Welfare State... Managing better is having common sense: everyone seems to agree that it is important to be “realistic”. So, the new discourse is related to performance, to achieving higher figures; ideas and ideals simply vanish away. Politics becomes depoliticized speeches that are just about numbers and comparisons.

It is easy to recognize new mythologies in the political discourses about better management of societies. I will give some examples:

- Mythology of cooperation. Basically, all of us live in the same society and there is a consensus on the main issues: for instance, that we need flexible markets so everyone can be employed, all of us are concerned about being productive, etc. There is not any central conflict in society.
- Mythology of the worried citizen. Citizens are worried about insecurity, terrorism, immigrants, economy, lack of flexibility, things that do not work right, etc. Fear is the key to politics.
- Mythology of political style. Difference in styles of management are crucial, whereas they are not questioning the whole framework. Leadership becomes very important but confined to an aesthetic dimension.
- Mythology of the Citizen who demands Freedom. Citizens do not want their lives to be intruded upon by the State anymore, they want the right to invest in their pension funds, the right to be entrepreneurs, etc. They want to be... empowered.
- Mythology of the Politics of the Past: planned economies, rigid labour markets, utopias, are all part of the past. This means that it is possible to cut social rights or stop looking for equality in order to achieve a better administration of goods.

When politics becomes management, there is a substantial shift. We just talk about common sense and rationality, and if management is supposedly based on common sense, then everything which is not related to management is in the sphere of irrationality. This has a clear impact: the fulfillment of pleasures becomes compulsory; there is a necessity of being attached to the capitalist machine in order to pay debts; the powerful myths of capitalist managers limit the possibility of the rise of a different subject, not committed to values such as productivity, professional ambition or consensus. Individuals do not become subjects, as they are under that state of false

consciousness which is reinforced, in the age of permanently temporary war, by images of a clash of civilizations<sup>4</sup>, expressed through the fight against terror. Fear and need for security merely add another dimension to alienation, showing that only life under capitalism is bearable. All these processes truly reinforce capitalism and domination: freedom in a capitalist society is just an illusion of freedom.

### **False consciousness.**

Therefore both workers and citizens fall mostly under a state of false consciousness. The term false consciousness has been used since Marx and other Marxist philosophers developed it (Lukács, Debord). Lukács (1974) explained that the transformation of the commodity relation into a “ghostly objectivity” cannot content itself with the reduction of all objects for the gratification of human needs to commodities: “it stamps its imprint upon the whole consciousness of man; his qualities and abilities are no longer an organic part of his personality, they are things which he can “own” or “dispose of” like the various objects of the external world. And there is no natural form in which human relations can be cast, no way in which man can bring his physical and psychic “qualities” into play without their being subjected increasingly to this reifying process” (Lukács, 1974: 100). For Lukács, the “falseness”, the illusion implicit in this situation implied a class-conditioned unconsciousness of one’s own socio-historical and economic condition. Reification is the necessary, immediate reality of every person living in capitalist society. Just when the *proletariat* recognizes himself as a commodity his knowledge is practical. Therefore, when he recognizes himself as a mere commodity is the moment in which consciousness arises, and from that point of departure the *proletariat* is able to fight.

The problem with Lukács’ last argument is that nobody wants to fight today, even if the “true” consciousness (of being just a commodity in the system) arises. That is probably due to the fact that this consciousness does not only operate collectively in our societies, as the idea of collectiveness is now disappearing. Postmodern capitalism is based on consumption, and it stimulates individuality. We are in a truly individualistic society,

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<sup>4</sup> Successful concept from Samuel Huntington (1993).

with a cult of the successful individual. In the sphere of the individual there could be obviously a reaction against the system, a rejection of it. This could be true in the case of someone who had nothing to lose except his chains. But what happens when the individual obtains things instead? We are not in a regime where the slave gets nothing in return, at least in the Western countries where social policies equalised people (not in the rest of the World). Yes, there are still people in situations of poverty in our Western societies, but they do not represent the majority anymore. We depart from a situation in which we can speak of affluent workers who have something to lose: house, car, holidays, goods, family. We fear their loss. The increasing precarity in the West has not led to a social revolt, but to a more disciplined labour force. All of us work with fear to lose our job, and we learn to obey and not to resist. We accept precarity and all the spheres of life become precarious as well, even Life itself (we can die in a blast taking the underground or the train). Furthermore, we are afraid of losing our income, even if it is small, as we have to pay our debts. The capitalist machine has offered us the fulfillment of our desires and we have to give something in return. We can watch the images we want, we can listen to the sounds we like, we can taste, smell and touch things we desire. And it is almost impossible to reject any of these pleasures. People get frustrated when they cannot achieve them, and their reaction is to do anything to reach them. Thus they work longer hours, they compete with others to achieve higher salaries, some commit even crimes when they cannot obtain them inside the law borders. People ask for loans and mortgages to enjoy their commodities immediately, to get instant satisfaction. They truly believe that Life is about hedonism, and even if they do not believe it, they have to attach to the machine to face another problem: the Debt.

The subject needs to pay the debts he has acquired with society since he was born. We all owe something since the beginning. The land is not for free, shelter is not for free, food, drink and clothes are not for free. Thus the subject must be attached to a system in which through the selling his labour force he is able to pay his debts. The question is “how can I manage to pay all these debts?”. It is expensive to eat, to sleep warm, to die. We pay for everything. The payment of the debts is difficult, we have to sell our labour force to do it. Thus we work and we are too distracted to think about why we do it. We do not think, we do not reflect, we just work and consume. We are scared of losing our lifestyles. This is also reinforced by the lack of stability of the system, not based anymore on structures, but on movement. Precarity of labour should bring arms to the

people, but in the end precarity attach them more to the system, as there is always a promise of leaving precarity and get a more stable position in the labour market. We move so fast that we do not have enough time to sit down and think. We are dealing with the coils of the serpent.

Thus we are in a state of false consciousness: we believe that Life can just be understood in that way. Its civilization and its discontents. In this context politics become utopic for most of the people. What kind of politics can be conceived in a context in which people just try to achieve the pleasures offered by the market? Just a simulacrum of politics, which fears any social transformation that could damage the market economy. A simulacrum of politics adapted to a simulacrum of life.

Should this politics deserve to be called as such? To answer this question, we have to make a crucial distinction between politics and policy. Policy can be understood as the management of the order of things, whereas politics represent a shift, a threat to the given system, an effort to create a different society. Thus, managerial politics are a paradox, as Mythologies prevail. Things are revealed as eternal as there is not any chance of *thinking different*. There is basically stability, social stagnation, and a concern about how to win more deputies in a competitive poll. If there is not even a chance of putting into question the frameworks in which politics is done, then we have no politics, but just mere policy, pure management. The main myth is that nothing can be changed because any solution other than liberal democracy and free market, any solution different to Capitalism, does not work: it is even heretic.

### **Conclusion: the reinforcement of capitalism.**

Is it possible to define managerial politics as true politics? Not at all. Management represents simply a narrow technical rationality<sup>5</sup> that puts into question anything which could surpass the capitalist framework. Politics, then, becomes somewhat of a spectacle which, following Debord, cannot be defined as a collection of images, but as a social relation among people which is mediated by images (Debord, 2005). In this case, the

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<sup>5</sup> Here I follow the classic distinction of rationalities described by Adorno and Horkheimer in which instrumental reason is opposed to critical reason (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1973).

image is that we are living in a democratic pluralist society, in which we act like customers who choose several options. But politics has no relation with consumption. Thus, managerial myths represent the barrier against the political moment, silencing the question of the real framework: Capitalism.

Management eliminates political moments and reduces everything to the restricted common sense of figures, numbers and results. But is it possible even to affirm that management is based on real common sense? Pierre Bourdieu explained in his *Métier de sociologue* that common sense has no epistemological status: in fact, the new scientific spirit is based on a “epistemological break” (following Bachelard, 1975), which means that to achieve knowledge requires a distance from the so-called common sense (Bourdieu *et al.*, 1983). More recently, Boaventura de Sousa Santos, the Portuguese sociologist, has described the necessity of a new “double epistemological break”, in which, after that first break, common sense re-articulates itself in a new approach, in which knowledge becomes a true common sense, new and emancipatory (de Sousa Santos, 2003). So, management is not common sense, or at least it is just a very narrow one. Rationality in management can be also put into question. What kind of rationality are we discussing? Just a technical rationality, a logic of measurement which suppresses any possibility of alternatives or the rise of a different subject, not committed to values such as productivity, professional ambition or consensus. Rationality is something that has to do with a different world, with more equality, more freedom, more justice. Rationality is about rethinking Capitalism critically.

False consciousness again. Under this concept are expressed the limits that exist for the rise of a new subjectivity that can deal with and criticize this new spirit of capitalism, limits imposed by the spectacle and its managerial politics. They represent the existing order's uninterrupted discourse about itself: they are, quoting Debord again, the self-portrait of power in the epoch of its totalitarian management of the conditions of existence. They are reinforcing the ideology of capitalist society, in its representation of the mere “policy moment”. The only way of surpassing this situation lies in the recognition that this politics is just a spectacle, just mythological. This implies being aware of the logic of false consciousness which rules in our daily lives, and the necessity of imagining, using our “radical imaginary” (that is, the common root of the actual imaginary and of the symbolic which is, finally, the elementary and irreducible

capacity of evoking images (Castoriadis, 1987: 127)), a different project of society, transforming the existing order. The system is strong, but in the end the subjects can be able to escape.

Only our practical consciousness possesses the ability to transform society. The question now is how to introduce again a critical culture in both organizations and society and, especially, how to give birth to a new subjectivity that can surpass false consciousness. Could it be done through education, through art? Yes, indeed. But we have to be very imaginative, and realise that the risk we are facing is that these critical art and critical education can be spreaded among just a few. We need them to be spreaded among the majority if we really want to talk about a Multitude who is facing the challenge of an unfair system.

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