

# The neoliberal framing of (critical) psychology

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“Economics are the method; the object is to change the heart and soul.”

Margaret Thatcher<sup>1</sup>

“Neoliberalism is not Adam Smith; neoliberalism is not market society; neoliberalism is not the Gulag on the insidious scale of capitalism.”

M. Foucault

“Capitalism ... has always been a regime of both destruction and liberation; that is where its historical uniqueness lies as well as its still operational attraction.”

Thomas Seibert

“We are witnessing a Great Experiment in the making of a new neoliberal humanity through the crisis. Will the neoliberal model of what it is to be a human being become definitive for the next fifty years?”

George Caffentzis

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<sup>1</sup> Sunday Times, 3 May 1981: “What's irritated me about the whole direction of politics in the last 30 years is that it's always been towards the collectivist society. People have forgotten about the personal society. And they say: do I count, do I matter? To which the short answer is, yes. And therefore, it isn't that I set out on economic policies; it's that I set out really to change the approach, and changing the economics is the means of changing that approach. If you change the approach, you really are after the heart and soul of the nation. Economics are the method; the object is to change the heart and soul.”

*Abstract*

We live in a transitional social period of historic proportions, in which the historical class compromise of Fordism has been revoked 'from above.' In response to what has been 'achieved' and based on their current strength, those 'above' are seeking a new model of social organization and are trying to push it through - let's call this model 'neoliberalism.' Like its predecessor, Fordism, neoliberalism demands and enables a specific form of social organization, which 'needs' (both enables and presupposes) certain types of 'average' people. Let's call these 'forms of subjectivity,' i.e. configurations of subjectivity and new templates for historical normality.

What prevailed in the 20th century as Psychology—and shapes our inherent understanding, whether approving or critical, of a normal person and his/her subjectivity—was just *Fordist* psychology, i.e. a psychology that had to help organize (i.e. develop and use) the productive force 'individuality' in a manner useful for Fordism. Psychology has/d to help get people to think and act 'functionally' - why else should bureaucracies or ruling classes invest in it?

The nascent neoliberalism involves other (normality) requirements - which are always simultaneously both hindrances and opportunities for the subjects! Today, the productive force 'individuality' is simply being organized differently and poured into more current efficiency/profit molds of subjectivity. The respective concepts of a person in Fordism and neoliberalism can be condensed in buzzwords: Fordist 'homogeneous normality' vs. neoliberal 'differential normality' from 'above'—we are still and always dealing with a practice of normalization of (developing and exploited) individuals!

In Fordism, it was the task of the predominant social sciences (such as psychology) to homogenize people along specific socially produced patterns, social categories (both: to control and reorient them, to fix them): the right/normal man, the normal worker, normal sex ... Neoliberalism no longer needs homogeneity (that much). It 'operates' with differentiality. Homogeneity is not as crucial and important, everyone can (but also must) be individually useable in his/her own way or prove (!) his/her usability individually. Individuality, idiosyncrasies, peculiarities are not only ok., but may effectively support one's utility even better.

For neoliberalism, collectives are not only no longer 'in,' they even smell of homogeneity - yuck! And exactly here lie both the crux and the trap of 100 years of criticisms from and of dominant psychology: any critique of Fordist psychology boiled down to questioning homogeneity - and expounding individuality. However, homogeneity was not only submission to a 'norm;' at the same time it (also) meant or promised social protection - which had to be won, to be sure! It is exactly this social protection that is the original sin of the neoliberal religion! If criticism fails to reflect the dialectic of homogeneity and (the promise of) social protection by historicizing itself and its context, by becoming aware of its respective societal relativity, then its painful thorn against Fordist homogeneity will quickly become a knitting needle useful for the individual's straitjacket in his/her struggle with neoliberal differential normalcy. Criticism is not some timeless rhetorical jewelry, nor an academic frock one puts on and carries around individually, but rather a social relationship with the historical

mainstream as the counterpart; it is a social relationship in which real subjects (must) form historical regimes of agency in and for their lives!

In addition, there are dynamics of 'dis-simultaneity' (*Ungleichzeitigkeit*) in the organization of our societies: neither Fordism nor neoliberalism were or are the same everywhere and for everyone! There never was, nor is there now, a single, possibly dominant, mode of working, mode of living or mode of desiring: neither intra-societally nor inter-nationally. Not all (social groups of) people live in the same historical Now - with the same opportunities and obstacles! There were and are structural contradictions - such as class, gender, 'race'/colonialism, ... - and the relationships between these shape sociability (societality) historically. Any one, geo-politically specific, psychology depends on the confrontation with these structural contradictions: as scientific topic, as academic discipline, and as professional occupation.

### *Keywords*

Fordist psychology, neoliberal psychology, NGOization of psychological labor, history of psychology, critique of psychology, forms of subjectivity, configurations of subjectivity, homogenous normality, differential normality.

## **Introduction**

We live in a transitional social period of historic proportions, in which the historical class compromise of Fordism has been revoked 'from above.' In response to what has been 'achieved' and based on their current strength, those 'above' are seeking a new model of social organization and are trying to push it through. By no means does this new model aim only at economic changes in individual countries! Rather, what is at stake is a reconfiguration of society that involves all aspects of its organization: institutions, government, labor, individuals, needs, relationships, rights, etc. The way society looks (or has to look) is to be designed anew and radically differently.

Let us call this social movement 'from above', this political project<sup>2</sup> for the salvation and, at the same time, for the design of a capitalism appropriate for our times, *neoliberalism*.

Like its historical predecessor 'Fordism,' neoliberalism *demands* and, *at the same time, enables*, a certain, a concrete form of social organization; this social organization requires 'modally' ('on average') particular, very concrete types of people - and that means both: Neoliberalism *both* enables such new types of human beings *and* requires such types of human beings. I propose calling these

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<sup>2</sup> „The point for neoliberalism is not to make a model that is more adequate to the real world, but to make the real world more adequate to its model. This is not merely an intellectual fantasy, it is a very real political project ...” (S. Clarke) <http://homepages.warwick.ac.uk/~syrbe/pubs/Neoliberalism.pdf>

human types *configurations of subjectivity, historical normality matrices, or forms of subjectivity* who (can) develop within historically determined *regimes of agency*.

‘Psychology’, as we have come to know it for more than 100 years, is a historical product the respective manifestation of which articulates certain forms of social organization, i.e., simultaneously requires and enables them. This implies that the epochal societal changes affect psychology as well and in a specific manner and that they demand a redefinition of its functions and its functionality for this new historical form of sociality.

With this text, I would like to initiate the largely neglected discussion (also within our *Kritische Psychologie*) about the social dimension of agency, of subjectivity, and of their real contradictions. The necessity of a continuous, historical-social contextualization of (critical) psychology assigns us many tasks for the coming decades... if we understand Critical Psychology as an open, collective project and do not want to limit it to a historically, geopolitically and theoretically fixed building of a few people.

I want to move forward in five steps. In doing so, I am aware that my concern can only be outlined here in the form of theses. The following text really sketches only the proposal of and the invitation to a large open project. I do hope that, despite the necessary schematic character, the outlines of the 'bigger picture' become somewhat discernible:

- The first step is about the different proliferating discourses, in which and with which the epochal changes are being addressed. These discourses oscillate mainly between unintentionally conservative discomfort, fairly helpless lamentation, and neoliberal complicity.
- The second step seeks a beginning, it names the germ cell, or the basic historical contradiction of concern here; and, in terms of psychology, this cannot be anything but the societal productive force '*individuality*'. Formulated as a catchphrase: No value appreciation (*Wertschöpfung*) of the productive force *individuality* is conceivable, let alone organizable, without a simultaneous appreciative evaluation (*Wertschätzung*) of and value adding to individuality. It is exactly here (and for this very purpose) that psychology steps onto the (social) stage: The dialectic of *appreciated value* and *appreciative evaluation* of the productive force *individuality* unfolds in and as psychology along (at least) three trajectories: as scientific subject matter, as academic discipline, and as (professionalized) labor.
- In the third step, I address two historical-societal models that have tried to organize profitably the productivity and creativity of individuals, and that means both: to develop *and* to exploit productivity:
  - A. The first attempt is the historical class compromise of Fordism with its *homogenous normality*.

B. The second attempt is in the process of becoming and designates the (still) top-down dominated neoliberal transformation of sociality with its new *differential normality*.

- The fourth step brings us closer to the dialectics of 'individuality' and 'collectivity' and names the obligation to include our very criticisms of dominant psychology in a merciless historization. It is the only way to avoid turning the sharp thorn of our critique of Fordist subjectivity into a flexible knitting needle for its neoliberal corset.
- With the fifth and final step, I address the inner tension and dynamism in the organization of our societies. The focus here is on the multitude of social dis-simultaneities: Like Fordism thus far, neoliberalism is not same everywhere and for everyone.

### **1. Proliferating discourses oscillate between unintentionally conservative discomfort, lamentation, and neoliberal complicity**

The societal upheavals are the subject of manifold, proliferating discourses. 'Subject' and 'subjectivity' are apparently experiencing a renaissance and are no longer just a 'disruptive factor.' But a quick glance at the now unmanageable literature reveals a series of dominant terminologies of mishits and confusions, the 'new-speak' flavor of which often tastes very much of marketing and communication agencies. Following are a few examples of typical 'modes' of speaking about the novelty in neoliberalism:

1. An old-new mode of speaking continues to transfer conflicts, problems and contradictions in the organization of activities, in the organization of work onto individual subjects, to translate them into problems for individual subjectivity and individual subjects (e.g., through the therapeutization of conflicts, through the interpretation of school-learning as an issue of individual motivation, etc.).

2. Another mode of speaking oscillates within a constructed dichotomy between freedom and the "domestication of subjects" (Michalitsch 2006). The descriptions and analyses get caught up too easily either in the web of implied conservatism, in an unspoken 'everything is getting worse' and 'things used to be better,' or tumble into the ostensible opposite. Subjects are either in for (total) submission, complete subsumption, or for a new freedom and the liberation from bonds, traditions, etc. However, such a dichotomous either-or is really more of a rhetorical phrase and simply impractical, since it imagines individuality, subjectivity as a genie, whom one (and who might that be?) is able to let out of the bottle and lock up again in there. Or, in a different simile, it is like the power

at home that can be switched on or off according at the (company's) will. Such a perspective on liberation and submission makes them appear as abstract and unhistorical qualities, essences of individuals who are either oppressed *or* liberated; it articulates a certain theoretical-practical perspective on subjectivity and work. Vogelsang (2009) posits similarly, "It is not work that is being 'subjectivized': its subjects have always been those who work in the collective. Rather, it is a goal of management to transfer the new contradictions, which, themselves, are caused by automatization in the name of profit maximization, into the subjectivity of those working, and to do it with new forms of work that makes workers abdicate their solidarity because they manifest those contradiction as internal restrictions and as a commitment to compete with other workers" (115).

3. In a third new mode of speaking, the 'new' is greeted with a bouquet of neologisms: the new labor force is showered 'from above' with many wonderful campaign slogans [*Kampfbegriffe*], which really serve as more of a perfidious mis-nomer [Entnennung] than an explanation of the dynamics of the new. Here is a basket of such neologisms from the last 20 years:

- "Labor-entrepreneurs" [Arbeitskraftunternehmer] (Voss & Pongratz 1998)
- "the I-brand" [die Marke Ich] (Seidl & Beutelmeyer 2006)
- "One-man business", "E-Lancer" [Ein-Mann-Unternehmen] (Vanselow 2002)
- "I-Corporation" [Ich-AG] (Peters 2001, Strauss 2003)
- "I-Stock" [ICH-Aktie] (Davis & Meyer 1999; Lanthaler & Zugmann 2000)
- "I-Entrepreneur" [ICH-Entrepreneur] (Lanthaler & Zugmann 2000)
- "Job-Nomads"; "Job-Mercenaries" [Jobnomaden; Job-Söldner] (English 2001)
- "Life-Entrepreneur" [Lebensunternehmer] (Lutz 2003)
- "Employee-Entrepreneur" [Mitarbeiter-Unternehmer] (Deutschmann et al., 1995, 445)
- "Co-Entrepreneur" [Mitunternehmer] (Kuhn 1997; Wunderer 1999)
- "Network Entrepreneur" (Burt 1997, 2000)
- "Self-Employed" [Selbstangestellte] (Faust et al. 1999)
- "Sole proprietor-LLC" [Selbst-GmbH] Fischer et al. 1999)
- "Self-Enterprise" [L'entreprise de soi] (Aubrey 2000)
- "Entrepreneurial Employees" [unternehmerische Angestellte] (Franzpötter 2000)

The proposed new terms - such as "I-Corporation" - are not somehow misguided linguistic lapses; rather, they are partisan and highly biased. Through terminological splitting, the 'new' such concepts attempt to describe is effectively being mis-nomed [*entnannt*]. To put it another way: since such terms do not clearly name their *particular, concrete* epistemological-political concept of the subject, but rather imply it to be a *general* perspective, their strategic splitting

does not illuminate the ‘new’, but obfuscates it further. The darkness of such concepts emanates from their ostensible spotlight!

Even the newspapers offer more differentiated and reasonable analyses of this issue, for instance in an interview with former federal judge Thomas Fischer in *Freitag* (23/08/2017):

*“Does the individual emerge as an entrepreneurial self?”*

Well, he believes as much or he’s talked into believing it, or he doesn’t have a choice.

*Which of these is the best solution—or the least of the three evils?*

The last. He doesn’t have a choice. That means he has an opportunity to accept it or not, to change it or not. The term ‘entrepreneurial self’ is sheer euphemism. Obviously, not every day-laborer turns into an I-Corporation just because he was suddenly declared to be ‘in season.’ Anyone can be told: You are now a self-employed entrepreneur, you don’t have any protections anymore, no guarantees for your life, and we just can’t know what tomorrow brings. Of course, that’s pure ideology. The world does not consist of an infinite number of powerful I-Corporations, but of ever-fewer powerful corporations and ever-more disempowered individuals.”<sup>3</sup>

To wield terms like, for instance, ‘homo economicus,’ implies a very specific, limited and weird notion of economics, not only with regard to the *individual* (‘homo’), but especially with regard to *economics* (‘economicus’), which initially meant nothing more than ‘householding’. What could be the novelty of a ‘householding’ or ‘housekeeping individual’, a literal ‘homo economicus,’ and what could be said against such a ‘householding individual’? Spontaneously perhaps: ‘great, but c/old coffee’. The uniqueness, which is presented here as something ostensibly new, emerges only from an implied limitation: It is only when ‘homo’ and ‘economicus’ are understood as something special, and especially limited, that the term gains meaning at all—even if it still does not create anything new. If ‘homo’ does not mean more than the bourgeois private individual and ‘economicus’ simply a microeconomic unit—run in a style reminiscent of that of the notorious Swabian housewife—then the term dissolves and leaves nothing of much novelty. With this limitation, nothing much has been explained, neither in terms of the individual nor in terms of keeping or managing a household! But the Latin verbiage is probably meant to suggest something very important and new!

As Jan Rehmann (2007) points out, such a mode of speaking rehearses a “managerial point of view,” which “regards followers from the perspective of

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.freitag.de/autoren/jan-c-behmann/frau-emcke-hat-immer-recht?utm\\_content=buffer226ca&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=facebook.com&utm\\_campaign=buffer](https://www.freitag.de/autoren/jan-c-behmann/frau-emcke-hat-immer-recht?utm_content=buffer226ca&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_campaign=buffer)

their leaders" (p. 85). Governmentality-Studies, for example, made do "for the most part" with "immanent-empathic retellings" (p. 85) of "statements by entrepreneurs, management literature, governmental statements" and the "mainstream press" (p. 82). Through the terminological split, the practice of a restricted perspective - the *particular* point of view of management, corporation, capital, of those in power - is presented as being *universal*. With this restriction, the perspective of those in power is perceived as the only one and is thereby reified. The 'wishes' and prerequisites of entrepreneurs, managers, and the 'market' are repeated blindly and theorized as effectively inevitable-divine orders, as predetermined.

Such an uncritical analysis practices a kind of analogy, a deductive logic of human behavior: requirements posited by those in power *for* subjects are misinterpreted automatically as behaviors adopted *by* subjects. Human behavior is thereby reduced to the *execution* of behavior; within such a framework, psychology limits itself to blind functionalism: human behavior can be conceptualized solely as functioning within predetermined and unchangeable circumstances. Theory already sees the subject and subjectivity as not autonomous nor as existing *in relation* to (dominant) social requirements; rather, they exist only as a *function of* these requirements. The ultimate question can therefore only be how well they function and (are able to) reproduce specific requirements: successfully or unsuccessfully. *Autonomy* vis-à-vis the dominant requirements can only appear, and be articulated, as a dysfunction of the *subject* – not as a dysfunction of the *social order*. In such a (theoretical) framework, concrete subjects and their behaviors are reduced to a pre-game show - the main event is their final submission.

However, if we do not want to reduce subjectivity to an individual quirk, an already existing essence, but to comprehend it as a historically concrete social relationship, which must first be produced as well, then we must speak about historical formations of subjectivity, which are enabled by, or based on, different forms of how labor is organized. The reconstruction of actions by real subjects does not require *dichotomy* and *terminological splitting*, but the *historicization* and *dialectics of power* and *subjectivity*; the historicization of concrete social organization and the development *and* emancipation of subjects. The autonomy of subjectivity cannot be dissolved in the (dominant) requirements *for* subjects; human action cannot be reduced solely to functioning and the execution of tasks. The focus must be on the real dialectics of restriction *and* development, of exploitation *and* the realization of subjectivity. Expanded liberation of subjects is not achievable without more extensive usurpation - and vice versa: no increase in usurpation without expanded liberation! The goal is new configurations of subjectivity - a "re-assembly" of humans" ("Um-Montage" - R. Misik) - in the



process of social upheaval, during which new modes of working, living and desiring are (to be) created as well.

## **2. Productive force ‘individuality’: No appreciation of value without appreciative evaluation**

In the second step, we search for a beginning, for the essential historical contradiction; for our discussion, this cannot be anything but the societal *productive force ‘individuality.’* Individuality and subjectivity are not abstract, complete, ahistorical (and ostensibly internal) essences, which are brought out in the historical present, graciously to be allowed to unfold or to be exploited more effectively. Individuality or subjectivity are not a desk lamp that can be switched on or off by a specific historical organization of societ(alit)y. The dialectic of recognition and exploitation means that the organizational form of society provides frameworks for historical configurations of subjectivity ('regimes of agency');<sup>4</sup> that it creates spaces in which, and for which, individuality is created and able to unfold. It is the (re)organization of society that requires *and* enables individuality in the first place, and in the process requires and enables its differentiation, its cultivation.<sup>5</sup> For Marx, formed, developed individuality is the pivot point of material conditions: “Forces of production and social relations – two different sides of the development of the social individual – appear to capital as mere means, and are merely means for it to produce on its limited foundation. In fact, however, they are the material conditions to blow this foundation sky-high.” (1857/1973, p. 706)

*Individuality and subjectivity are a socially evolving product! The 'appreciation' of individuality is not a noble act of grace; it is a necessary practice!*

The profitable organization of actions by and of real subjects between autonomy and heteronomy constitutes a real contradiction, a real problem for those in power as they organize societal work. Formulated as a question, this contradiction could be: How can individual productivity and creativity be developed *and* exploited (or even developed *to be* exploited)? Or, as a slogan: No

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<sup>4</sup> Which are related to the state and level of class struggle!

<sup>5</sup> ‘Cultivation’ of individuality also comprises its qualification, education, ‘reparation,’ freedom, self-actualization (where both components, ‘self’ and ‘actualization’ are contested fields); on the other hand, it also refers to the social ‘dissemination’ of the ‘cultivation’ beyond aristocracy and bourgeoisie.

*value appreciation (Wertschöpfung)* of the productive force ‘individuality,’ without its simultaneous *appreciative evaluation (Wertschätzung)*.

The cornerstones of capitalist development have always been the formation and discipline of individual bodies (Federici 2013), i.e., the focus is on the ‘(in)capacity’ of individuals, which must be transformed into productive labor through various ‘measures’ (such as terror, law/criminalization, discipline, organization of work, reparation, ...).<sup>6</sup> While, in the beginning, the goal was to fight the passions of one’s own body, to eliminate, discipline, subjugate, ‘postpone’, spatially restrict or marginalize them, the point was not the supposed switching on or off of subjectivity,<sup>7</sup> but rather its historically specific – productive – formation/forming, which includes the education/formation and reparation of subjectivity.

Heretofore, all known forms of social organization have been contradictory and based on a hierarchy of ruling power. Thus, the historical ‘upgrading’ of individuality and subjectivity can neither (have) be(en) a harmonious affair nor can it be understood as somehow additive-quantitative. In our societies - based on a hierarchy of access to ruling power -, the real, concrete constitution of the ability to act cannot be anything but contradictory. Critical Psychology, too, understands agency as double-sided: it is described as both restricted and generalized (e.g. Holzkamp 1983). Specific ‘moments’ do not occur in a pure sense—either restrictive or generalized—rather, they manifest as contradictory hybrids, as relationships within the respective historical regime of action potential (cf. PAQ 1987, 204).

However, the productive force ‘individuality,’ is not only an ‘opportunity’ for those in power, but - as such - also represents a danger for them. The ‘problem’ for those in power is less the issue of ‘autonomy: yes or no’; rather, it is the concrete and practical question of the quantity and quality of *necessary* and *subjugated* autonomy, and therefore also of the scope and quality of participation by the subjects:

- What quantity and quality of autonomy is needed in, and for, any specific form of work organization? What quantity and quality could become dangerous?

The recognition and development of the productive force ‘individuality’ and the profitable organization of the labor of productive and creative individuals has always been, and still is, prerequisite for, and core of, the existence and

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<sup>6</sup> These are the simple processes in ‘the making of the working class’ (including its internal partitions along of gender, ‘race’, ...).

<sup>7</sup> This does not mean that an actual ‘turning off’ of subjects (through their elimination) did and does not exist! Witch hunts, colonial genocides, or mass starvation due to so-called ‘structural adjustment programs’ of the IMF at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are only a few examples.

development of psychology. The *elevated significance* of individuality and subjectivity is a structural element for the development of so-called modern - industrial-capitalistic - societies. An increased importance of individuality (if only to be used and exploited) presupposes and fosters its recognition, its cultivation - and that cannot happen without the appropriate and adequate allocation of societal resources - for instance, to the field of psychology.

### **Three lines of psychology**

The existence of capitalism presupposes, and simultaneously enables, a historical re-orientation and re-formation of the relationship between individual and society. And this is exactly the moment when - and for which - psychology joins the (societal) game. The special framing of psychology in, and through, a specific societal organization, the dialectics of value appreciation (*Wertschöpfung*) and appreciative evaluation (*Wertschätzung*) of the productive force 'individuality' unfolds in psychology along (at least) three trajectories:

- as scientific subject matter,
- as academic discipline and
- as (professionalized) work.

#### **1. Psychology as a scientific subject matter**

As emphasized previously, individuality and subjectivity are not ahistorical essences; they are not genies that are allowed out of the bottle only on occasion, only when it pleases those in power. Rather, individuality and subjectivity are, themselves, a developing social relationship, in which the respective historical relationship between the individual and society is articulated and developed. The *historical transformation* of the psychic – the focus of psychology – compels us to reflect on the historical-concrete *formations* of this relationship, which, in turn, are enabled, and demanded, in and by historically-specific organizational forms of work. The *regimes of agency* with their historical *normality matrices*, their *configurations of subjectivity*, depend on the specific manifestation of the class struggle and the productive forces and, in our contradictory societal circumstances, are themselves necessarily contradictory.

#### **2. Psychology as (scientific) discipline**

The emergence of psychology (the social sciences as a whole) – in its mainstream as well as its critical variations – is based on social changes of a historical magnitude. In the twentieth century, we have come to know modern psychology as 'normal' and powerful and we operationalize it to an ever-greater

extent; however, this praxis field, this social practice received its social relevance and power only *with* and *for* 'Fordism'.<sup>8</sup> Our seemingly obvious understanding of the 'normal,' the 'average' human being and her/his subjectivity are those of a *Fordist* psychology, which has/d to contribute to turning the productive force 'individuality' into something fit and useful for Fordism – which means both: to develop/cultivate *and* to exploit it.

By necessity, the organizational changes in societability affected also the societal organization of knowledge production and knowledge operationalization (Wallerstein 1996). Thus far, the thing we were able (and/or forced) to draw on as dominant psychology (or social science) has been nothing but the respectively victorious variation of a (class)struggle in the production and operationalization of knowledge, which sold itself as producer and vendor of useful knowledge and skill, primarily to national-governmental bureaucracies and administrations (as well as to other well-heeled elites). It has been only via an alignment with the bureaucratic-hegemonic pre-requisites for *governing* the population ('gouvernement' in Foucault's sense) that questions and answers would be acknowledged at all for research and/or policies. Consequently, without such an alignment (utility), any questioning and knowing, any ability and solution are, in the most literal sense, worth-less; with all implications of such worth-lessness even for the social (re)production by psychologists (and social scientists)!

As will be developed later, this technocratic and ostensibly neutral-objective division of labor in the production of knowledge is nothing but the application Tayloristic-Fordistic principles for the organization of labor onto the scientific industry. The goal and promise of the Tayloristic organization of labor is to increase the efficiency of work and, *simultaneously*, to neutralize the workers' power over the production process. What is paradoxically apparent here is the fact that, in the dominant social sciences, exactly the same mechanism of a neutralization of power via the organization of labor emerges conceptually only as knowledge about supposedly deficient 'objects' of study (say, industrial workers) - if it is theorized at all.

It is only through the very involvement of the discipline 'psychology' in the formation of the psychic *for* the Fordist organization of work that a 'societal need' is delineated for which corresponding social resources are/were, in turn, then made available. It is precisely this 'societal need' and the involvement of psychology (as academic discipline) in the forming/formation of subjectivity in our contradictory societies that assigns psychology a dual function, a

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<sup>8</sup> Very briefly we can say that – up to now - the social nation-state did not only need and create a 'national Railway' and 'national Post', but also a 'national' Psychology, Education, etc.

contradictory functionality: we can condense this dual function into the slogan, 'support *and* control' of subjects.

As part of the labor-divided chain of the productive force 'science', psychology, itself, is a specific component (a tool, an apparatus, a discipline) in the fragmented, but also fragmenting, treatment of the social question in capitalism. Since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the historical 'deal' between those in power and the social sciences has been not to negotiate (let alone, solve) the social question as an issue of the social (dis)order, but solely to address it (in research and policies) via the development and repair, via the 'improvement,' adaptation, and marginalization of individuals and (small) groups. Formulated as a slogan, the 'deal' consists in a subserviency, a servitude in exchange for (the promise of) *wage labor* and funds.

After more than 100 years of societal recognition with real effects, 'psychology' by now represents a very powerful design factor in and for this societal order, with tremendous impact on human life. If we choose not to ignore, for harmony's sake, the contradictions in our societies, we have to acknowledge that the societal production factor 'psychology' offers not only supposed solutions (benign or good) to societal problems. As a productive force in contradictory societies, psychology, it self, remains contradictory: the more 'efficient' it becomes, the more it becomes an integral part of the very problems it feels called to help resolve.

As victorious variations in the (class)struggle for the production and operationalization of knowledge, the contradictory functionality of the (dominant) social sciences in the service of bureaucracies and the powerful face, from the start, another set of policies around knowledge. Historically, the original competitor to authoritarian or liberal variations of a science of population-government or bio-politics was the perspective of a production of questions and knowledge that would originate 'from below': *in and for* social movements. This perspective remained very under-developed; it is only marginally visible - if at all; and has even been suppressed as 'un-scientific' or 'ideological,' among others. Often, the political-epistemological perspective of social movements - the historical, the ideological counter-model to the dominant social sciences of the 20<sup>th</sup> century - survived (only) as a 'critique of the mainstream,' as the illegitimate half-sister of the discipline's most current mainstream. With this, it was framed (aligned to as well as limited by) by the wiggle room the mainstream, itself, was privy to! In other words, it was the mainstream that posed the tasks and asked the questions - and it, in turn, had received them from those in power at any given point, from the contractors of the respective departments in the Faculties of population government. And thus, the historical-hegemonic division of labor in the production of knowledge could be reproduced: In this technocratic design,

the bureaucracy comes up with topically worth-y questions and possibly offers resources; certain experts apply their scientific tools and deliver ostensibly 'neutral' results to these customers; they, in turn, disseminate the results to third (specialized) parties for further usage.

The perspective of social movements 'from below,' on the other side, starts with the *autonomy* of subjectivity and aims at transcending subjects' mere *functionality*; it aims also at participation in policies around knowledge. Therefore, the investigative focus can turn not only to 'functional' aspects of action and be limited to those; it must be able to also include resistant, "useless" (Wolf 1999), divergent, transgressive, unconventional, non-conformist aspects of action. The subversive appropriation of reality by subjects, which - by necessity - includes not only the *adaption to*, but also the *alteration of* reality, must not be excluded conceptually and a priori. It is the commitment of a policy of knowledge 'from below' not to remove the emancipatory 'teleology' of human action already at the conceptual stage.

### 3. Psychology as work

The redefinition of functions and functionality of psychology for the new historical form of societability refers to all three psychological trajectories: scientific topic, academic discipline, and professionalized work. Without any doubt, the social upheaval (of neoliberalism) includes the work of psychologists as well (Marvakis & Triliva & Tourtouras 2016) ... and definitely not only with regard to working *conditions*. Rather, the transformation also aims at all *requirements* and *opportunities* for activities we have come to accept as concrete occupations or professions in the Fordist regime. In neoliberalism, the historically created professions of psychologist, social worker, sociologist etc. are *themselves* up for debate and, potentially, for elimination.

An important lever for the transformation of psychological work is the process of the NGO-ization of (the organization of) work and social policy. This NGO-ization functions as a prototype of neoliberal (psychological) work and creates new *spaces*, *contents*, and even *subjects* of work. The NGOization of (psychological) work designates not simply the eventual substitution of the public with the private; rather, it describes the creation of a new regime of relationships between the public and the private in work and social policy.

It is more helpful and more realistic to frame the NGOization of psychological work as a *methodology*, a technology, a procedural method, which transform and re-configures the functions of all participating actors and constituents of work and social policy: the NGOs themselves, the government, the individual subjects (the workers and customers, clients, beneficiaries) as well

as their respective relationships. The new embattled practices and infrastructures of work demand and create therefore new subjectivities (professional subjects and ‘clients’) and new *forms of practice*.

Reflected psychological work remains a necessarily practical balancing act between control *and* support, between emancipation *and* functioning of the ‘clients’ - but also between the own emancipation and functioning of the psychological (employed) wage laborer, of the private ‘service provider’ – by now also of the psychological NGO-precariat. However, given the neoliberal upheaval, the *new* questions confronting psychological workers now are:

- Support *and* control, adaptation to which social order? *Functioning* in and for which social structures?
- Which assumptions of the norm does psychological work support now? Which normality does it serve?
- Will *Fordism* remain the (only) societal frame of reference for work around normality?

### 3. Historical attempts

In the third step, I briefly discuss the two extant historical-social attempts at organizing individuals’ productivity and creativity in a profitable manner: The first attempt is the historical class compromise we have come to know as ‘Fordism’, with its ‘*homogeneous normality*.’ The second attempt refers to the emerging neoliberal transformation of society, still dominated ‘from above,’ with its new, its *differential normality*.

#### A. Class compromise of Fordism - *homogeneous normality*

Historically, in capitalism, the first profitable organization of actions by actual subjects happens in the very configuration Gramsci termed *Fordism*. Fordism enabled and, at the same time, demanded a new “type of work” and a new “type of human” (Gramsci), who, in turn, required an appropriate approach to psychology - as academic topic, as ‘national’ discipline of social science, and as professional practice. This concrete form of organization tends to try to submit all relevant expressions of life to the capitalist interest in utility: from ideas about normality, to the rhythms of everyday life, to the expectations held by subjects. For the purpose of describing the articulation of this historical configuration onto the organization of action, it is helpful to distinguish between at least three ‘levels’ or ‘fields’: the *mode of work*, the *mode of life*, and the *mode of desire*.

Total authority over the productivity and creativity of the population defines a core of capitalistic class rule. While it may sound banal and well-worn: the goal of the Fordist organization of work is the maximal exploitation of the developing human labor, the increase of productivity, and the decrease of production costs. In the previous organization of labor, workers could control the process of production to a much greater extent thanks to their knowledge and skills. The new ‘problem’ that emerged from this for capitalists concerned the manner in which control over workers could be expanded - for instance, with crew leaders and foremen. For Taylorism - a promising product of the new social sciences that had emerged at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century - the solution to the capitalists’ problem was to replace the old mode of work with a new one. At the core of “scientific management,” the term vendor Frederick W. Taylor (1911) chose for his product, are a few general principles, which have to be adapted to the specific conditions at any one location. This set of interwoven modifications significantly increased workers’ productivity and the overall efficiency of factory work. Taylor’s organizational principles are:

a) *Technical fragmentation* – i.e., the break-down of complex tasks into discrete, easily quantifiable and measurable activities.<sup>9</sup>

b) *Social division of labor* – i.e., allocation of sub-activities to special group of workers and a rigid structure of reporting lines.

c) *Psychological splitting* of the total action (*Handlungsgesamt*) into separate components for, respectively, planning, execution and controlling/supervision: the ‘what,’ the ‘why’ and the ‘how’ of the action.

Through these organizational principles, the workers’ authority over their work (as process *and* as content) is reduced, while management gains increased control over the workers. Practically, this means that the workers are dispossessed and disempowered by the sheer organization of work - any ‘manipulation’ of the workers’ ‘goodwill’ is therefore completely unnecessary. Cognitive, intellectual elements of work are reduced as much as possible; increasingly, work means only implementation. ‘Action’ increasingly describes only the ‘execution’ of ‘orders’ placed by others. The worker has been tied into a process s/he cannot control; s/he participates in a structure s/he cannot control - s/he is a cog in a greater machine and this cog’s only job is to function.

Essentially, the epochal restructuring brought about by Fordism concerned the role of work in society: Fordism affected changes in its content, form, and organization. However, work - i.e. valued and value-creating human activity for the (re)production of life - can never be reduced simply to wage-earning,

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<sup>9</sup> This principle paves the way for future ‘automation.’ It is only a question of time until a robot will be able to execute the clear-cut, delineated, and repetitive parts of a particular work process.



industrial factory work. That would mean swallowing the logic held by capital - hook, line, and sinker! Work never concerns only 'material goods' (likely industrial), but also dignity, joy of life (and desire), belonging, sociability etc. The specific development and control of subjectivity and the actions by subjects must refer to more than industrial work and its organization.

This explains why the *mode of work* in Fordism is not limited to the industrial production process. Rather, this particular mode of organizing work also places very particular demands on all other realms of life; certain organizational configurations become possible and are even presupposed as 'functional.' The way industrial work is organized emanates as a prototype onto other arenas of life in society. That is why Gramsci posits a new "type of human," which is both necessary for, and generated especially by, Fordism. "Gramsci conceptualizes a complex developmental connection. Certain requirements of work necessitate a certain type of human, without it - what will later be called the 'subjective factor' - they are difficult to execute. However, his type does not emerge simply as a response to these new work requirements; rather, it is the product of strategic cultural programming by industrialists and entrepreneurs, among others" (Haug 1998).

Consequently, Gramsci suggests the notion of a more comprehensive *mode of life*, which is both supported and required by the Tayloristic *mode of work*. This Fordistic mode of life is based on homogeneous conceptualizations of life paths; keywords here are, for instance, seriality and biographical homogeneity.

The repetitive and intense type of work inherent in Fordism cannot be sustained solely through force; what is needed is a balanced ratio of compulsion (self-discipline) and conviction (including pay raises). Alcoholism and sex threaten to undermine workers' self-discipline and, with it, their willingness to function at work. Referring to the 1920's, Gramsci writes, "The new industrialism wants monogamy, it does not want the worker to waste his mental energy on the urgent and chaotic quest for sexual satisfaction" (Gramsci, Prison Notebook 4, § 52, 531; Gramsci 1999). Therefore, Gramsci elaborates, "moral functions become a matter of public policy" and "the campaign against alcoholism, the most dangerous factor affecting the labor force, turns into a "state function" (p. 530). Now we can name the third area onto which Fordism radiates and both enables and creates its particular type of human: the *mode* in which subjects *desire*. Fordism both supports and demands that subjects adhere to rigid collective norms; to this end, it provides a comprehensive 'national morality': family, sexual morals, behaviors around health and learning, regularity, order, discipline etc. I mentioned earlier that, in Fordism, the individual does not possess an ostensibly a-historical characteristic 'individuality.' Rather, the social phenomenon and the concept we call individuality is the product of a specific

historic context, the result of social processes of both individualization and homogenization. From a social perspective ‘from above,’ these processes of individualization and homogenization may only concern the (practices of) normalization of (developing and exploited) individuals! From this perspective ‘from above,’ the dual functionality of the dominant psychology and of the social sciences in general, as socially effective institutions for the support *and* control of subjects, would be limited to the formation of Fordistic subjectivity; its task would be the ‘presentation’ of a concept of the human as one of *homogenous normality*. The adaptation of its clients, its ‘beneficiaries,’ would then mean only their formation and restauration for Fordism and its templates of normality.

### **B. Neoliberal transformation, emerging and dominated ‘from above’ – *differential normality***

To address the second social attempt at organizing the productivity and creativity of individuals in a profitable manner, we transport ourselves into the historical now: to the emerging neoliberal transformation of sociality, which is dominated ‘from above.’ A different set of requirements (for normality) dominates in this neoliberal attempt at organizing profitably the subjects’ constant shifts between autonomy and heteronomy; and, for those subjects, these requirements always present as both obstacle and opportunity! The productive force ‘individuality’ is now being organized differently and with the intention of pouring it into efficient and profitable molds of subjectivity - the key concept here is ‘*differential normality*.’

Just to make sure there are no misconceptions, though: Fordism does not, in any way, ‘disappear’ from the world stage! Rather, the new form of neoliberal organization is additive and brings with it new modes of work, new modes of life, and new modes of desire. (For examples of such congruences and dissimultaneities, see below in step five.)

The ‘point’ of the Tayloristic-Fordistic organization of work was to ‘expropriate’ the workers’ power, which was inherently connected to their competencies for the work process, by means of organizational modifications such as the social division of labor and the psychological splitting of action into planning, executing, and controlling/supervisory aspects of work. It is exactly the Fordistic model of organizing work that is called into question by this new project of those in power - and it does so in the most radical way imaginable. The neoliberal organization of work changes the Fordistic mode of division of labor; it even reverses it to a certain extent. How could a more expansive sense of responsibility on the part of participating individuals be realized otherwise, given

the rigid division of labor and tight chain of command that characterize Taylorism/Fordism?

Therefore, the neoliberal project is a re-action, the bourgeoisie's creative, active response, which aims at a new, historically specific, manifestation of the "balance of power" (N. Elias). The neoliberal project proposes to re-unite the planning, executing, and controlling aspects of work *within* the same person - and it is enabled in this endeavor by technological and social advancements. This strategy 'enriches' the experience of work by those who, heretofore, merely executed it; their subjective, self-reliant participation becomes easier to realize and it elevates the appreciative evaluation of this developed, differential individuality.

However, this enrichment in and of work also jeopardizes the maintenance of the (pre)dominant order, since workers (re)gain more power to control the work process and could, conceivably, use this power for their class struggle. And just like that, an old contradiction inherent in capitalism is back on the agenda and urgently demands a historically new solution:

- How to avoid having an 'outdated' mode of dividing labor (of organizing work) impede (or even preclude) increases in efficiency?
- How to delegate more responsibility - which also means more control - for work processes to 'lower levels' without losing control of the 'demands' and 'desires' - by those who *are* 'below' - for ever more comprehensive authority?
- How can technically and socially new opportunities for an increase in efficiency be organized without losing the helm, i.e. the control of work, to the producers?

For those in power, therefore, the new, expanded individuality and subjects' additional opportunities for power over work processes represent the self-inflicted exposure to an old-new explosive, one that Taylorism had already aimed to defuse by means of "scientific management". The carrot of the expanded appreciation of individuality now demands an appropriate stick to be wielded by those in power to prevent the horse from *ever* leaving the barn. Within Fordistic homogeneity, the collective organization of structures of solidarity by those 'down below' had been the exceedingly dangerous thorn that had to be dulled 'from above'. In neoliberalism, this urgency becomes even more acute for those in power: Apparently, now there is nothing more dangerous than an assembly of subjects who have even been fitted with expanded individuality (knowledge, skills, and tools). It does not take much of a leap to get from mere social assembly to the demand for control over not only (work) *execution*, but also work *content* (which, up to now, is still determined by capital). A quick mental sparkler shall suffice here! How can individuals take on more control over social

processes (and do so independently) without landing on the ‘stupid’ idea of wanting (to be able) to take over the whole shebang?

*Neoliberalism is the very political project ‘from above’ that seeks to resolves this historical contradiction to the benefit of those in power.*

As delineated above, a core component of capitalistic class rule is the comprehensive authority over people’s productivity and creativity. Within the framework of neoliberal transformation processes, those in power cannot stop at optimizing only the structural exploitation in the workplace. To secure their claim to power, they must work continuously at establishing and stabilize their dominant influence on society as a whole. The “balance of power” (N. Elias) between capital and labor must be changed permanently and social conditions must be aligned accordingly. Institutionally, it must be ensured that performance potentials - not only in work processes - are (able to be) utilized fully. Neoliberalism is not only an ‘economic arrangement’; rather, it requires comprehensive social and cultural re-configuration. The necessary propulsion energy for this is being ensured through the creation of ubiquitous and constant pressure or threat, both as mental scenario and as concrete reality. Thus far, brutalization has been shown to be inherent in neoliberalism. Politically, too, brute force ‘from above’ has generally been necessary to realize neoliberal changes - despite grand promises to the contrary. Over the past 40-50 years, the neoliberal menu included dictatorship, debt crisis, “shock strategies” (N. Klein), war, state terror etc.

The neoliberal lever for the neutralization of any jeopardy to the dominant order, its most ‘convincing’ stick, is the intentional-artificial generalization of precarity, especially since the wealth that is produced would suffice to do away with precarity altogether! “This is a context where capital seeks not a social contract with labour but a contingent and provisional contract, a contract where nothing is guaranteed for the worker or would-be worker other than the hope or possibility of work but not necessarily a sustaining wage or a life that can be planned into the future” (Adkins 2016: 1). “Precarity as a form of rule” (P. Bourdieu) is characterized by the *unleashing of the competitive mindset* and by the isolation of workers, both of which are triggered by this generalized precarity: “Precarity is part of a new form of rule based on the establishment of an insecure condition that has become generally enduring, with the aim of forcing workers to submit, to accept their exploitation” (Bourdieu 1998: 100).

As a *form of rule*, neoliberalism does not (only) include ‘economically rational’ work organization (in terms of productivity), but also the ‘preemptive management of insurgency’: completely ‘senseless’ suffering, the deterioration and waste of human labor and resources, the destruction of perspectives as well as of lives. An ‘army of reservists’ that will never be ‘de/employed,’ simply to

prevent anyone from even raising their heads! Neoliberalism is a brutal religion! It is – as George Caffentzis remarked – a new "conditio humana," rather than just the solution to a supposed economic crisis.

The Fordist organization of labor already struggles/d with the contradiction between the organization, the 'unleashing,' of human productivity and the *simultaneous* control and containment of subjectivity. Of course, the practical implementation of this contradiction, i.e., the 'unleashing' and *concurrent* containment of productivity always also includes/d, implies/d some (calculated or calculable) 'productivity *los*' due to 'productivity *withheld*' by active subjects.

However, the 'industrial terminology' used here should not mislead anyone into assuming the contradiction between 'unleashing' and 'containment' of subjectivity were limited to the realm of industrial factories. If 'work' is understood to denote 'creative and productive activity,' the concept cannot be limited to industrial wage labor. Consequently, if developing and (to be) developed human productivity and subjectivity are not limited to industrial wage labor, it is easy to see that the contradiction between the unleashing and containment of subjectivity exists just as much within other relevant social contexts - and that it is being organized and put into practice there as well. The process of learning within socially organized learning contexts (key word: 'school') is one example. Socially organized learning is *both* the development *and* the containment of individuality and subjectivity through those concrete forms in which learning is organized to assume dual social function(ality) in our contradictory society. The dynamic unfolds along both axes: through the individual-centeredness in dominant learning theories and through the practice of confining the organization of learning to 'interpersonal acts' between students and teachers in a concrete space (Marvakis 2014; Marvakis 2019 - this issue).

The new neoliberal model of social organization restructures and recontextualizes all three trajectories of psychology; the dual functionality of psychology (support *and* control) re-emerge more clearly; the historically created divisions of labor are being 'reorganized.' This reorganization refers, of course, also to the fragmented 'treatment' of the social question in and by separate disciplines within the social sciences, or to psychological practices via NGOization (qualification by de-specialization, instead of the previous qualification by specialization). Because of this reorganization, the allocation of resources in general is also up for debate again. For us 'service providers' within the psy-complex, this means that we have to prove again that/how we are useful as social scientists. Historically, a re-evaluation of our utility for the elites is again on the agenda.

If, during these radical societal changes, the social sciences (which includes psychology) do not want to jeopardize the social recognition they have enjoyed

to date, and, with it, their sustained social reproduction, they must re-legitimize it for the new form of sociality. The old-new 'basic virtue,' the 'transfer service' performed by psychology for the benefit of the neoliberal transformation, consists in contributing to the extended '*commodification of the psychic*', its (re)definition as a marketable good. This means the reframing of social phenomena and societal problems as private commodities, which respond to individual, private demands...and, in the neoliberal logic, must be paid for privately as well.

In neoliberalism, the new function of the state does not accept any 'compensatory' duties - as was still the case in Fordism. The new, neoliberal role of the state focuses on providing opportunities for individual profit and organizing such opportunities as needed. Rather than the amelioration of poverty, or at least initiatives to fight it (even if it were just for social 'appeasement'), the task of the state apparatus is the fight against the poor. One pertinent example is the huge 'prison-industrial-complex' in the U.S.A. and its extremely precarious integration of prisoners into the capitalist utilization machine.

In Fordism, the functionality of the dominant social sciences is to homogenize people along specific socially produced patterns, social categories. This means both control of and support for individuals (the normal worker, the normal sex, etc ...). In neoliberalism, this Fordist homogeneity is not (as) necessary. Neoliberalism 'operates' through *differentiality*. To 'be normal,' homogeneity is no longer as crucial and important. Everyone can (but also has to!) become usable according to his or her own fashion and also prove their usability individually (!). Individual 'quirks' are not only ok; they may even increase one's usability.

Volker Woltersdoff describes this new dynamic very convincingly, "The neoliberal transformation of society encourages riskier sketches for one's life, the kind that had been marginalized in the Fordistic welfare state with its rigid ideas about gender and sexuality. These sketches can now be instrumentalized as models of individual, private risk management. Those who can afford it are able to profit from the flexibilization and new precariousness of work and living conditions and to realize more unique designs for their lives. On the other hand, to some, the rigidity of heteronormative identities guarantees a sense of ostensible safety, while they experience their flexibilization only as the destabilization and loss of privileges. Accordingly, Christine Wimbauer, Mona Matakef, and Julia Teschlade (2015) observed that those who are affected or threatened by increasing precarity hold especially adverse attitudes towards the expansion of equality. This constellation favors the perception in broad strata of the population that tolerance towards sexual and gender-based diversity is a project promoted by neoliberal elites. In neoliberalism, diversity coopts

inequality and uncertainty; in other words, differences legitimize and naturalize unequal treatment.”<sup>10</sup>

In neo-liberalism, too, those in power are concerned with ‘normality’ - just with a new form of normality that does not mind differences - as long as they do not impede one’s individual proof of utility. However, this also increases the ‘visibility’ (as a moment of ‘recognition’) of variations, the differentiations in ways of life and desire; simultaneously, the production of body, sexuality, gender becomes more ‘obvious’ and, therefore, more ‘negotiable.’ The neoliberal meat grinder devours divers, differentiated ways of working, living, and desiring – however, they have to be visible and present in the public discourse. This very ‘visibility’ is part of the dialectic of ‘recognition’ as both the prerequisite and the result of exploitation: “What does not, cannot, or may not exist is much harder to exploit.”

However, increased individuality around one’s proof of utility also includes a new ‘re-casting’ for acting subjects. ‘Belonging’ (via homogeneity) no longer appears to be ‘guaranteed,’ nor is it an unconditional and permanent source of ‘protection.’ The recent social practice in Germany of so-called ‘Greek-Bashing’ may serve as an example of how neoliberal interaction protocols are being rehearsed by the public. After several decades of co-existence, completely adapted - i.e. ‘integrated’ - Greek labor migrants had to answer for themselves in front of their German neighbors and to prove individually that they did not represent one of those lazy Greeks Mr. Schäuble and Mrs. Merkel had described. These Greek labor migrants - long-time locals in Germany - could no longer count on social/collective rights, resources, safety measures etc., but had to individually prove their utility to be able to retain traits such as ‘belonging’ (Marvakis 2012).

This rehearsal of neoliberal interaction protocols affects both sides: the ‘demanders,’ themselves, are impacted by the ‘demands’ they make - despite or because of their presentation as ‘protected perpetrators’ “they contribute to their own destabilization because they legitimize the very principles that will take hold of their own throats as well, just a little later. To limit one’s solidarity to only ‘oneself and one’s own’ ultimately means the total abdication of solidarity - *even to oneself!*” (Marvakis 2012).

The practice of ‘Greek-Bashing’ is not just an annoying ‘national(istic) game’; rather, it represents the rehearsal of the neoliberal formation of a regime of integration (cf. Marvakis 2010). During Fordism, the promise of integration made to the homogenized group of migrants was simple: ‘You can expect regular wages and social services; however, you’ll remain foreigners, no matter how

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.zeitschrift-luxemburg.de/fuer-eine-queerfeministische-klassenpolitik-der-scham/#sdfootnote1sym>

long you work and live here.’ Compared to this, what is the new neoliberal promise of integration? The new ‘integration compromise’ is two-fold: Firstly, it aims at the *individualization* of migrants and migrant groups, which implies their simultaneous hierarchization. In a series of classification initiatives, the total set of foreigners is being segmented and subjected to differentiated measures, which, in turn, are connected to differentiated promises. Secondly, more often than not, the *promise of integration* is no longer geared at groups, but at individuals, who, in turn, have to deliver the required services, regardless of where they acquired them, as their ticket to the social integration lottery. Consequently, ‘integration’ is less and less a social promise or advance; instead, integration becomes a requirement, for instance to attend integration courses, pass naturalization tests etc., which are designed to prove an individual’s *capacity* to be integrated. In other words: Collectively, migrants are suspected of being incapable of integration, so each one must present pieces of evidence of his/her individual suitedness for integration. The general right to hospitality (as formulated decades ago in a regulation by the immigration police) is being replaced by one’s individual, and perpetually suspect, capacity for integration. This development towards an individualized integration policy also renders obsolete the clear demarcation between citizens and foreigners that had supported the Fordistic paradigm of a ‘guest laborer.’ This includes the diminishing of any automatic priority for members of the majority society over immigrants. The notorious ‘elevator-effect’ (upward social mobility for certain wage-earning Germans due to the employment of migrant laborers in low-prestige jobs), for instance, has become largely a thing of the past. In the competitive battle of neoliberal societies, not even one’s status as a citizen can retain its functionality as ‘protective shield.’

#### 4. Thorn or knitting needle - Historization of criticism

I explained earlier that, in Fordism, the *collective* organization of structures of solidarity 'from below' is an extremely dangerous thorn – the tip of which must be dulled ‘from above’. In the fourth step of my presentation, I will address the dialectic of 'individuality' and 'collectivity.' The neoliberal transformation forces us to historicize our previous critique of the dominant psychology without reservations.

For the ideology of neoliberalism, *collectives* are not 'in'; on the contrary, they smell of *homogeneity* - yuck! In *Le Monde Diplomatique* (December 1998: 2), Bourdieu even calls the neoliberal project a “programme of the



methodological destruction of collectives”.<sup>11</sup> It is exactly in the shadow of this aversion of neoliberalism to collectives that we find the crux and pitfall of our 100 years of critiquing the dominant psychology. As Jens Bisky<sup>12</sup> describes, to date, the “criticism has been aimed at the ‘social-bureaucratic construct with its standardizations, norms, and homogenizations. ... [They] handicapped the individual in developing his autonomy, to live self-determined lives, accountable to himself.’ The unions took care of ‘vertical injustices,’ neoliberalism was accompanied by successes in the emancipation of women, gays, migrants, the ‘reduction of horizontal discrimination along cultural traits.’ The focus was on equality and identity, less on exploitation. *Whoever does not want to talk about the gains in freedom made by neoliberal individualization can hardly understand their paradoxical effects.*” (ibid, emphasis A.M.)

Current neoliberal responses to 'uncertainties' and 'risks' show that the reduction of those risks (for instance through measures of prevention and precaution) and the protection of subjects are simply not the goal. Rather, these neoliberal exercises are - first and foremost - about strategic quantifying, about individualizing, so that opportunities for profit may be organized. As evidenced by various campaigns (smoking, nutrition, ...), neoliberal social policy does not forego the *terror of virtues*. The (social, health, economic, ecological, ...) uncertainty, the risk has a right to exist only as a commodity; with ‘risk’ as commodity, it is possible to organize and generate individual profit.

To date, the critique of Fordist psychology has questioned *homogeneity* – and promoted *individuality*. But homogeneity was and is not only submission to a 'norm'; rather, it also means (or promises) *social protection* – which was hard-won and should be transferred through the 'norm(ality)' of belonging! However, this social protection – even as a promise – represents precisely the original sin of neoliberalism as religion!

The neoliberal transformation confronts our critiques with old-new tasks, e.g.

- Reflecting the *dialectic* of *homogeneity* and (the promise of) *protection*
- Updating our relationship to the historically new quality of individuality; and, relatedly,
- Updating our understanding about the relationship between freedom *and* security. The promise for development, for expansion of individuality must be decoupled from competitiveness; freedom and social security (protection, justice, and solidarity) must be thought of jointly.

<sup>11</sup> <https://mondediplo.com/1998/12/08bourdieu>

<sup>12</sup> In his book review of Oliver Nachtwey's *Die Abstiegs-gesellschaft* <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/soziologie-abrutschen-aus-der-sicherheit-1.3055230>

Without topical answers to these old-new tasks, we will not be able to prevent the thorn we hoped would be painful for Fordist homogeneity from – intended or not - becoming a very useful knitting needle for the corset, for the straitjacket subjects wear in their struggle with the differential normality of neoliberalism.

In this endeavor, it does not help at all to conceive of criticism explicitly or implicitly as an essence. Criticism is not a timeless piece of rhetorical jewelry; it is not an academic frock one dons once and carries around forevermore. Criticism, itself, is a *battlefield*; its epistemological-political counterpart at any given moment is the historically victorious mainstream of psychology. Criticism is a dynamic *social relationship* – even among the critics, themselves. It is exactly in such circumstances, that real subjects form new *regimes of agency* for their lives, which, then, must be discovered and grasped conceptually:

- How do concrete subjects subversively appropriate their new reality and how do they try to become and remain able to act within?
- Where, when, and how do subjects try to resist their reduction to just 'functioning'?
- Which emancipatory hopes do subjects connect to their everyday actions?

By no means, then, can Critical Psychology afford to focus solely on exposing and denouncing the 'conquest,' the 'colonization' of ever more 'backyards' of subjectivity by neoliberalism. Rather, what is needed are attempts to reconstruct the real dialectic between the exploitation of more (moments, aspects, possibilities, ... of) subjectivity in the context of the neoliberal transformation. However, this exploitation cannot be undertaken *without* the prior recognition, the realization and the development of such 'backyards' of subjectivity!

## **5. Social dis-simultaneities: Neoliberalism is not the same everywhere and for everyone**

Thus far, we have not even woven the inequalities, the inner tensions and dynamics of our societies into our analysis of their organization. With the fifth and last step, this dynamic will now be sketched out. Here, we direct our gaze to the manifold social 'dis-simultaneities' (*Ungleichzeitigkeit*): Neither Fordism nor neoliberalism were and are the same everywhere and for everyone!

The capitalist 'penetration' of society, of the world, does not show its effects everywhere nor does it show them in the same way across the board. Never and nowhere has there been a single, dominant, mode of working, living,

and desiring - neither within one specific society nor inter-nationally. (Social groups of) People do not all live in the same historical present - contemporary subjects experience very different opportunities and handicaps! The question under scrutiny has to be: Which specific groups of people in which areas are affected, and in what manner, by specific modes of working, living and desiring?

Because of their international dynamic, capitalism and individual societies are neither static nor 'nationally' homogeneous. Capitalism is an international system. Consequently, the term 'society' must connote more than a single country or nation. Rather, societies are geo-political spaces, which 'enter into' unequal international relationships (a "pecking order," I. Wallerstein), which, in turn, have centers and peripheries. Neoliberalism therefore manifests differently in capitalistic 'core countries' than it does in 'peripheries.' *Nota bene*, though, that centrality and peripherality are not fixed GPS coordinates!

The capitalist dynamic subsumes geo-political and social spaces, people, resources, and modes of life under the framework of capitalist reproduction; it integrates them into the context of capitalist exploitation. In these new spaces, Tayloristic modes of work, life, and desire are being employed first and, eventually and initially, the class struggle is centered around *Fordistic* compromises. In these newly added geo-political spaces, the recognition and expansion of *Fordistic-homogenized individuality* is a historical achievement. Consequently, there is demand for 'appropriate' social sciences that can provide support *and* control to further the governmentality of the population.

Our societies, as we have come to know them to date, are veined by structural contradictions - along affiliations to class, gender, or 'race' (colonialism) etc. It would not make sense to expect those contradictions in our social reality not to encounter dis-simultaneities and contradictions in the individual consciousness.<sup>13</sup> Structural contradictions generate multi-layered systems of power and diverse political subjects. Historically and geo-politically, sociality is shaped by the relationships between these political subjects. Any geo-politically specific psychology is contingent on the respective engagement with these structural contradictions as well, and along all three of its trajectories: as scientific subject matter, as academic discipline, and as professionalized work.

'Emancipation,' like mere 'functioning,' is not an a-historical constant; we must consider the historical-concrete opportunities *and* handicaps encountered by concrete subjects. Similarly, it is imperative that we historicize the specific geo-political, cultural, etc. contexts of any criticism and pinpoint its respective social 'relativity'; only then do we remain aware of the social frame of reference that undergirds *all* critique.

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<sup>13</sup> Thomas Barfuss speaks about "Bizarre Consciousness" (2002).

(Critical) Psychology can exist only in the plural form - with several 'psychological systems' (in all three areas), both intra-societally and internationally. After more than 100 years of criticism, the desideratum consists of the same (old) questions, for which we must find specific-topical answers:

- Whose psychology are we reproducing?
- Psychological knowledge and competence for whom? For the bureaucracies or within social movements?
- Whose life experiences do social science theories reflect, perceive and appreciate as valuable?
- Which social group(s) and whose interests are articulated in the supposed 'solutions'?
- Which (epistemological, political and social) standpoints are embodied by the respective theory and practice?
- Which (collective) subjects strive to understand and change their reality - and, to that purpose, require access to different, better, knowledge and capacities?

### Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to Charles Tolman and Eva Strohm for their more than generous work with bringing the text to palatable English. Presentation at the “Ferienuni Kritische Psychologie 2018” (Berlin, September 2018; a first draft was presented at the GSFP-TODAP Conference, Berlin, March 2018).

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