

McDonaldization, Rationalization, and Increasing Stupidity

Special Appendix III

**Review and Commentary:**  
**Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello's**  
*Le nouvel esprit du capitalisme*  
**and**  
**Andreas Reckwitz's**  
*Die Gesellschaft der Singularitäten*

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In the following the terminology is employed rather loosely. “68 revolutionaries”, “hippies”, “counter-culture movement” are used interchangeably, just as are “dominant leftist paradigm”, “liberal progressives”, “the mainstream left”, the “liberal left”, and the derogatory equivalents used by conservatives such as “social justice warriors”, “Cultural Marxists”, or “political correctness”. It should be kept in mind that my political position is leftist conservatism (*linkskonservativ*) in that I start from leftist concerns and premises and end up with conservative conclusions. Leftist conservatism usually amounts to opposing liberal progressives on anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist grounds. This position is less common in the United States than in, say, Germany. In the United States, most of the left have, in the past thirty years, been transformed into “liberal progressives” who, according to the leftist conservative position, are agents of Neoliberalism and American imperialism in disguise. The remaining left who have remained true to the original leftist position from the 1960s (anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist) are called here “traditional left”. Their dwindling number has prompted Nancy Fraser to announce “The left has ceased to exist in the United States”.

My ideal audience in the following are conservatives and classical liberals who are discontent with the current social justice revolution and should therefore join hands with leftist conservatives.

The “goal of history” in my theoretical framework is determined thermodynamically as the maximal formation of dissipative structures (the human economy). Those that facilitate this formation are enforcers of the power structure (the liberal left) and those that try to retard the process constitute the resistance movements (the conservatives and other rightwing elements).

The following continues the review of David Harvey’s *The Condition of Postmodernity*. The most important distinction that I have derived from my review of

Harvey's classic is that between white men's masculinity prominent in the Fordist era and the femininity that characterizes postmodernism (flexible accumulation). The Western notion of masculinity since Enlightenment is the rational man imposing rational forms on an irrational, chaotic matter that is femininity *par excellence*.<sup>1</sup> This notion of masculinity underlies the rationalization process in Weber's sense and reaches its most developed expression during Fordist-Keynesianism. It is this notion that is devalued, and it is the feminine chaos that is celebrated, after the transition to flexible accumulation.

In the following review I shall continue the old practice of citing the authors in original French and German. All translations are my own.

### **1. The unsatisfying *critique de la critique critique* of the current age**

A series of scholars have been trying to offer a comprehensive description of what exactly constitutes postmodernity and late capitalism since the very beginning of the postmodern age. The classics in this series (from the earliest onward) are Jean-François Lyotard's *La condition postmoderne* from 1979, David Harvey's *The Condition of Postmodernity* from 1989, Frederic Jameson's *Postmodernism: or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* from 1991, and Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello's *Le nouvel esprit du capitalisme* from 1999. (There are also minor works in this regard, such as Thomas Friedman's *The World Is Flat* from 2005.) Then, as the latest, in 2017, comes Andreas Reckwitz's *Die Gesellschaft der Singularitäten*.

My interest in this kind of works stems from my concern with how to explain the sudden inversion of Western culture to its opposite during the transition to (what I have called) the consumption phase of capitalism and how to characterize the *modus operandi* of this new phase of capitalism so as to complete the analysis in my Thermodynamic Interpretation of History. All the works I have listed above have, according to my use of them, something to contribute to the clarification of this issue. Although the aim of these classic studies of postmodernity is merely to describe the *modus operandi* of the consumption phase of capitalism (to use my terminology), if one understands them correctly, then, in my view, one can easily deduce an answer to the question: why has Western society inverted to its opposite?

This is because, in my view, it is the consumerization of Western society which has required it to invert to its opposite – from male-dominated to female-centered, from “white man” as the norm to the emphasis on disadvantaged minorities, from pervasive sexism and racism to hysterical scrambling to root out all possible sexism and racism, and from a masculine world of rationality and hierarchy to a feminine, postmodern world overflowing with empathy. In my view, to understand how this consumerization and inversion have occurred, we must take into account the manner in which the values of the counter-culture movement of the late 1960s have become the dominant value system in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. All the three classics on postmodernity which I review – Harvey, Boltanski and

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1 Josephine Donovan cites Carolyn Merchant to assert that this Western, modern, notion of masculinity started with Francis Bacon (*Feminist Theory*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, p. 28). As will be seen, throughout the following I have built on the old feminist identification of the patriarchal association of women and nature with the irrational Other.

Chiapello, and Reckwitz – either say, or can be made to say, something about this process (the normalization of what was originally “abnormal”). It is the counter-culture revolution, continuing into the social justice revolution of contemporary time, which has facilitated the latest development of capitalism (i.e. consumerization and globalization) and inverted Western society. The counter-culture movement is about promoting everything that is the opposite of Western society at the time and the modus operandi of the latest capitalism and postmodern society *is* precisely its value system. Even the process of inversion can be approximately traced by following the continual evolution of the value system of the counter-culture movement after 1968. Take, for example, feminism. The second wave feminism started as an offshoot of the counter-culture movement, and that marks the time when the cultural inversion began. As American society was pretty much consumerized two decades later, the second wave feminism moved into the third wave when feminist women of color challenged the paradigm of heterosexual white women dominant in the second wave. Today American society is one hundred percent consumerized and this is the time when intersectionality has become the dominant, and totalizing, paradigm of the left encompassing all gender, racial, and gender non-conforming issues. By this point American society is completely inverted culturally (in intersectional thinking, what used to be the most marginal, say a black transsexual lesbian, is now the most privileged) and economy is entirely consumer- and service-based. In other words, the easy correlation of the superstructural development with the evolution of the substructure. I have argued that, in this sense, the current dominant leftist paradigm – call it “social justice”, “Cultural Marxism”, “political correctness”, “intersectionality” – has never been the resistance against a power structure as it would like to imagine itself to be but has always been the new face of *the* very power structure it has pretended to fight against, i.e. the free-market system although not patriarchy.<sup>2</sup>

While my goal has always been to complete my thermodynamic interpretation of history, my interest in these studies on postmodernity is currently also fueled by my dissatisfaction with the usual criticism of the dominant leftist paradigm that is made from the conservative or classical liberal viewpoint. In the business of the critique of the liberal left (*critique de la critique critique*)<sup>3</sup> the conservatives and classical liberals figure currently as the most important: they are the only educated and reasonable critics among the wide-spectrum of the right who have vowed war against the left. (Leftist conservatives like myself are either non-existent such as in the US or have hardly developed their view such as in Europe.) I listen frequently to Dennis Prager and Jordan Peterson and their likes criticizing

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2 I’m here using “intersectionality” not in its theoretical sense but as it is meant in the popular imagination (the meaning that really matters). This is the sense in which “intersectionality” is a “meme” that has “gone viral” (as defined by Ange-Marie Hancock in her *Intersectionality: An Intellectual History* (Oxford University Press, 2016)). Since its conception in Black Feminism in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Kimberlé Crenshaw and Patricia Collins), “intersectionality” has today become so widespread and “totalizing” as to become the dominant leftist paradigm *tout court*. According to my view, this is because “intersectionality” is particularly congruent with the modus operandi of the new capitalism. In the popular imagination, “intersectionality” is mainly about generating and identifying different identity groups and, implicitly, ranking them in a hierarchy of privileges that is the exact opposite of the ranking system of the previous Fordist (patriarchal) era: the most intersectionally disadvantaged group in the previous era is considered to be the most privileged group in the intersectional thinking of the current era of flexible capitalism.

3 The phrase of course comes from the first book which Marx wrote jointly with Engels, *The Holy Family (Die Heilige Familie oder Kritik der kritischen Kritik)*, in which they criticized the dominant critics of society at the time, Bruno Bauer and his young Hegelian clique. For a short note on this work, see *Marx-Engels Werke*, Band II, Dietz Verlag Berlin, 1962, Vorwort, p. v – vii. According to Raoul Peck’s 2017 dramatization, “The Young Karl Marx”, it is Jenny who originally proposed the title, and in French.

the left and cannot but feel disappointed.<sup>4</sup> The first thing to note is the decline of the quality of the criticism – just as it has happened on the left. The critique used to be more sophisticated with, say, Friedrich Hayek or Alan Bloom. The second is that the goals of the conservatives and classical liberals are already outdated. They deplore the abandonment of classical liberal ideals such as freedom of speech and freedom of thought in favor of social justice ideals which are increasingly crystallizing into a new structure of domination. Such sort of objection is utterly pointless since the social justice warriors have already everywhere established that freedom of speech is but a pernicious thing whose principal purpose is to enable bigots to promote hate, discrimination, and domination with impunity. Classical liberal ideals are simply no longer the goals of American society in particular and Western societies in general. The third concerns their lack of interest in the question of why. The conservatives and classical liberals constantly try to demonstrate that the social justice warriors are wrong about this and that, but never bother to pose the question of *what function social justice serves in North American society in particular and Western societies in general*. From the viewpoint of my thermodynamic interpretation of history I have always asserted that social justice is on the ascendancy today because it is a reinforcement mechanism of the new order of capitalism in the postmodern age. (And my goal in this review essay is to demonstrate that the above-mentioned postmodern studies also in essence support this conclusion of mine although they are subtle enough as to not appear to be critical in any way of the current social justice revolution.)<sup>5</sup> The fourth, related to the third, concerns their confusion – which they share with their opponents on the left – about what “capitalism” really means. As I have pointed out elsewhere, the classical liberals and conservatives have mistakenly taken the outdated notion about the production phase of capitalism (bourgeois and Fordist) to be the correct definition of “capitalism” and criticized the “Cultural Marxists” for failing to conform to the ideals of classical liberalism which underpin this production phase. In other words, it has simply escaped their notice that “Fordism” (with its classical liberal underpinnings) has already transited to “flexible capitalism” (with its underpinning in social justice). It then becomes impossible for them to understand that “Cultural Marxism” is not about opposing capitalism and is in fact the new ideological underpinning for the new, consumption phase of capitalism – that, the more they want to promote capitalism as if it were their darling, the more they have to battle Cultural Marxists and the erosion of classical liberal values. As I shall demonstrate below, because nobody really understands what capitalism is and how it functions *today*, when people say they are for or against capitalism, their words simply cannot be taken seriously. And, finally, the fifth. Because the classical liberals and conservatives have never paid attention to the changes in the capitalist system which have given rise to the dominant leftist paradigm and the feminist culture, they believe erroneously that they can fight the new tides simply by reasoning and arguing. They thus miss out on the fact that the fastest and surest way to dismantle the social justice revolution is, as I have pointed out elsewhere, fixing the economic substructure. (Namely, their lack of

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4 That includes both the “intellectual dark web” and the other conservatives and classical liberals I frequently listen to, such as Heather MacDonald, Christina Hoff Sommers, and Janice Fiamengo. I do not include other Youtube stars such as Diana Davison, Stefan Molyneux, Black Pigeon Speaks, and the young Lindsay Shepherd (rather a leftist conservative), nor identitarians such as Brittany Pettibone and Laura Southern, and certainly not the Alt-Right.

5 Jordan Peterson has in many lectures traced the origin of the radical left, and the postmodernism which supports them, to the New Left, Marcuse, Foucault, Derrida, and so on. This is a narrative common among the conservatives, but it is erroneous in my view. His view about the proper functioning of the left as voicing the discontent of those stacking up at the bottom of the necessary social hierarchy, and about the radical left as the proper left going too far, although illuminating to a certain extent, is unsatisfactory for me.

understanding of what capitalism really is has caused them to become unjustly hostile to the Marxist idea that one can really change human nature by changing the economic condition!)

What I'm getting at is this. Putting aside my thermodynamic interpretation of history, although the famous theorists of postmodernism (from Harvey through Boltanski-Chiapello to Reckwitz) all come from the mainstream left, their attempts to comprehensively describe the new dominant conditions have resulted in an understanding that could be of tremendous use for those classical liberals and conservatives struggling with the excesses of the current social justice revolution. The classical liberals' and conservatives' denunciation of the leftist tradition of criticism of capitalism as the foundation of Cultural Marxism and refusal to take it seriously is truly unfortunate (they do it at their own peril). You can't really effectively criticize the "Cultural Marxists" unless you understand *why they are here in the first place*, i.e., *here to underpin the new consumption phase of capitalism*. That is, unless you understand *what capitalism is really about*. For this end, one *has* to rely on the classic studies of capitalism coming from the mainstream left. While completing my thermodynamic interpretation of history, I wish to be able to convert the classical liberals and conservative to this historical materialist way of understanding the social justice revolution which has inverted Western society. At the very least, I wish to be able to persuade them that there is a better understanding of capitalism out there on the basis of which they may re-assess their condemnation of the "Cultural Marxists" and their support of "capitalism".

## 2. My theoretical viewpoint restated

As you have seen, I have always believed I have, as a historical materialist, furnished the ultimate answer to the fundamental question: why has Western society inverted to its opposite? Why has patriarchy with its racism passed into matriarchy with its multiculturalism? Why has the preeminence of the white man along with his prejudices disintegrated in the Western world in the past three decades? The ultimate cause is the de-manufacturing of North America in particular and Western societies in general and their transformation to post-industrial, flexible, and consumption-oriented service economy (what Harvey has called the "flexible accumulation regime"). Here capitalism wants to promote women in two senses: (a) women's way is better suited to the service economy, and (b) women's way is better suited to an entirely consumption-oriented economy.<sup>6</sup>

(a) Women's way of perceiving (what feminists have called "women's epistemology") meshes with the new economic substructure under neoliberalism and globalization: the refrain from systemizing and the

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6 I do not mention here that capitalism, according to my view, has a *formal* reason to oppose sexism and racism and to promote equality independently of whether it has entered the mode of service economy. Namely, the greater the equality in a society, the higher the consumption rate, and so the larger the corporations' profit margin. Under this view, even if capitalism has never been globalized, when the national economy passes from the production phase to the consumption phase, the breakdown of racism and sexism will be the natural consequence. In fact, the feminism which will emerge will probably be more healthy (true gender equality instead of matriarchal rule) and racial equality more meaningful (the actual improvement of African Americans' material condition instead of everybody merely paying lip-service by expressing sympathy). Here I only want to discuss my other view, that the new capitalism (flexible capitalism dominated by the service sector) particularly wants to promote women because they are better suited to the service and consumption economy (the *circumstantial* reason). In my Thermodynamic Interpretation of History, I have failed to make the distinction between the formal and the circumstantial reason.

respect for the contingent and the particular. Women are doing better than men in the new service economy, and the new capitalism favors them over men, because their way of being is better suited to the service sector which dominates all post-industrial societies: their propensity for intuition and relationships rather than going about as an autonomous, rational subject. I have listed every characteristic that is associated with the one side or the other in my Thermodynamic Interpretation of History. The dichotomy is usually summed up as the “ethic of justice” vs the “ethic of care”, the male “systemizing” brain vs the female “empathizing” brain, that men are more interested in things and women in people. It is clear that, while the former are better suited to the manufacturing-based Fordist economy of the previous era, the latter are more adapted to the new service economy and flexible accumulation regime.

The congruence between women’s way of perceiving and being on the one hand and Harvey’s description of postmodernism (contingency and fragmentation) on the other illustrates how Western civilization has been feminizing since the 1980s in order to support its new economic substructure. As the embodiment of the new capitalism (i.e. with the entire economic system supporting them) women are fast replacing white men’s masculinity and values with femininity and feminine values in every domain of society. This is what many conservatives have called the “backlash against masculinity”, which includes the feminist hysteria over male sexual violence against women and demonization of everything male as “toxic masculinity”. The new capitalism has generated an imperative to root out the old, unsuitable, way by labeling it “evil”. The old “white man’s way” which dominated the previous Fordist-Keynesian era is now denounced as “Newtonian”, “Cartesian”, “hierarchical”, “oppressive”, and “one-sided”. The denunciation is not inaccurate in the sense that, as shall be seen below, the previous industrial era to which the “white man’s way” is better suited is best characterized as the era of “rationalization” in Weber’s sense, with all the attendant negative consequences (the “irrationality of rationality”).

Now, explaining the disintegration of patriarchy in the Western world by appealing to the expansion of the service sector and the shrinkage of goods-production is today no longer so heterodox although not yet attempted frequently enough. As has been seen, Hanna Rosin has argued something similar. More examples: Geoff Colvin once begins his op-ed in Time Magazine by exclaiming: “In the new economy, value moves to skills of social interaction, and you don’t need rigorously designed social science experiments to tell you that women will probably perform those skills best.”<sup>7</sup> Rachel Ngai and Barbara Petrongolo, from London School of Economics and Queen Mary University respectively, preface their 2017 joint paper with the following observation:

Our emphasis on the evolution of the industry structure is motivated by a few stylized facts. First, the sustained rise in female work since the late 1960s in the United States has been accompanied by a fall in male work, and a rise in women’s relative wages. In 1968, women’s hours were about 37 percent of men’s hours, and their wages were about 62 percent of male wages. By 2008, these ratios rose to 73 percent and 81 percent, respectively. Second, the entire (net) rise in female hours took place in the broad service sector, while the entire (net) fall in male hours took place in goods-producing sectors, including the primary sector, manufacturing, construction, and

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7 “How the New Economy Hurts Men and Helps Women”, Time, 04.08.2015.

utilities. This pattern is closely linked to the process of *structural transformation*, and specifically the reallocation of labor from goods to service industries, with an expansion of the service share from 56 percent in 1968 to 75 percent in 2008....

First, the production of services is relatively less intensive in the use of “brawn” skills than the production of goods, and relatively more intensive in the use of “brain” skills. As men are better endowed of brawn skills than women, the historical growth in the service sector has created jobs for which women have a natural comparative advantage.... While the introduction of brawn-saving technologies has to a large extent compensated the female disadvantage in physical tasks, women may still retain a comparative advantage in services, related to the more intensive use of communication and interpersonal skills, which cannot be easily automated. The simultaneous presence of producers and consumers in the provision of services makes these skills relatively more valuable in services, and a few studies have highlighted gender differences in the endowment and use of such traits.... In particular, Borghans, Bas ter Weel, and Weinberg... show that the rise in the use of interpersonal tasks accelerated between the late 1970s and the early 1990s, and that women are overrepresented in these tasks. Finally, a recent strand of the experimental literature highlights some gender differences in other social attitudes such as altruism, fairness, and caring behavior.... which may be more highly valued in service jobs, and especially in those that involve assisting or caring for others. Women’s comparative advantage in services is clearly reflected in the allocation of women’s hours of market work. In 1968, the average working woman was supplying three-quarters of her market time to the service sector, while the average man was supplying only one-half of his market time to it. As structural transformation expands the sector in which women are overrepresented, it has potentially important consequences for the evolution of women’s hours of market work. Indeed, in a shift-share framework, almost one-third of the rise in the share of female hours took place via the expansion of services....<sup>8</sup>

Many studies have confirmed that, the greater women’s participation in the workforce, the more prosperous the society (i.e. the more profits for the capitalists). This is certainly because the new economy is no longer Fordist manufacturing but polyvalent service-based. Under such conditions, capitalism naturally wants to promote women, values women’s abilities and values more than men’s, and has an immense interest in launching a backlash against traditional masculinity. Men are clearly not doing as well under the new economic condition. For this reason, men’s rights activists are sounding the alarm: more men are unemployed than women, it’s predominantly men who are doing the dangerous and degrading jobs, men kill themselves far more frequently than women, there are more men in prisons than ever before, far more boys are dropping out of schools than girls, they get worse grades than girls on average, men suffer a lot more violence than women, men are more frequently homeless than women, there are now fewer male drivers than female drivers, men are tremendously

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8 “Gender Gaps and the Rise of the Service Economy”, *American Economic Journal: Macroeconomics* 2017, 9(4): 1 – 44. To make their view simpler, I have opted to not mention the third factor which they have listed, the marketization of household production.

disadvantaged in rape cases, in divorce, and in the criminal justice system overall... that in general men live a far less happy, not to mention shorter, life than women. Many other commentators who are not men's rights activists have sounded similar alarm (from Christina Hoff Sommers on the conservative side to Hanna Rosin on the liberal side). It's not entirely clear how much of all this is attributable to the change-over to post-industrial, service economy since, even under natural condition (and even under the patriarchal conditions in the past), the distribution of men's fortunes, just like the distribution of their IQ scores, is much more spread out than that of women (more men on the top *and* on the bottom).<sup>9</sup> What does seem clear is that "the pendulum has swung to the other extreme." Today the police automatically assume every woman victim of alleged rape is telling the truth whereas before they could hardly be persuaded to take rape allegations seriously; today a woman "victim" can convict a man of sexual assault in the court room by her words alone whereas, before, women were automatically dismissed as unreliable witnesses in legal proceedings; before man's body was considered the norm in medicine, but, today, while society pours tons of money into research on women's health, it spends relatively little resources on studying men's health.<sup>10</sup> Given all this, in order to be fair, one should at least heed men's rights activists' complaints and investigate the matter when one cares about equality under the changing economic conditions. Yet, whenever men's rights activists speak up, or whenever anyone wants to show concern for males, they are inevitably beaten down and silenced by feminist activists so as to end up with no venues in which to speak about their concerns. It is as if the feminists are determined to prevent men's increasingly disadvantaged position from being known. In my framework, then, the feminists play the role of the enforcers of the new capitalism despite the fact that they frequently express antagonism to capitalism: first of all, the feminists promote "women's epistemology" as superior and more proper to the current age so that women's values can replace men's values faster in society just as the new capitalism needs so; secondly they do everything they can to hide the fact that men might be disadvantaged in the new world because they must make everyone believe that we still live in the patriarchal dark age and that women are still unfairly disadvantaged. Because capitalism needs women more than men, it sends out (so to speak) the feminists to pressure society to promote women *beyond equality* by perpetuating the myth that society still hasn't done enough to rectify women's disadvantaged condition. What capitalism in the Western world really wants is a matriarchal system in which women rule while men are marginalized – unlike the legendary matriarchal societies in history in which men did not quite suffer while women ruled – since such system is required for the optimal functioning of a service economy. Yet the capitalists cannot say so but must present matriarchy as equality and equality as patriarchal oppression, since most people want neither patriarchy nor matriarchy but gender equality. The way the new capitalism makes us believe we still live in patriarchy and thereby obliges us to do everything we can to promote women is to make the feminists repeat continually that everything is still patriarchy and fabricate statistics to show how disadvantaged and unsafe it is to be a woman in America. ("Victim feminism" is thus the optimization mechanism of the service economy.) So far only men's rights activists have noticed that feminism is not about fighting for equality at all, but for inequality in favor of women. What's most important to

9 Margaret Stokowski has made just this point in her *Die letzten Tage des Patriarchats*, to be mentioned again below.

10 A certain retired social worker Patrick Graham, who had survived the false accusations of a mentally ill woman he had never met, posed this "fundamental question" during a speech at the International Conference on Men's Issues in July 2018. He remarked that, 40 years ago, police officers regularly ignored rape victims (asking them "What were you wearing at the time?" and then sending them home) while, today, they are enthusiastic about investigating even the most outrageous claim such as his accuser has brought up. Today, every rape case causes the public to go into a hysteria about "rape culture" whereas, before, it barely made into the news. The pendulum has indeed swung.



note is that it is mostly white men who are falling down and silenced like this (i.e., the feminists are trying to silence men's rights activists because they perceive the latter to be advocating for white men in particular). It is an indicator of "anomie" in Durkheim's sense that, in the past decade, while suicide rates among blacks and Asians have remained constant, the suicide rate among middle-age white males have skyrocketed.<sup>11</sup> Yet anything resembling advocacy on white men's behalf is today vehemently denounced and suppressed by women activists and society at large – the exact opposite of what used to be the case. It is this dramatic turn-around which is the most interesting sociological question (my "fundamental question"), even if other disadvantaged male groups (such as African American men) have simply stayed in the same miserable condition during all this turbulent time.

(b) I have also continually argued that, when the economy has become more consumption-oriented than production-oriented, the society will inevitably value women more than men, and that, hence, the proliferation of feminism in a given society is usually correlated with the nation's rising trade deficit. A consumption-oriented capitalism prefers women to men because women's way of being (their preference for the concrete, the contingent, the particulars) is geared toward consumption while men's "systemizing" brain is geared toward production and domination. While women seem to be more caring of others (more "empathetic"), they also take better care of themselves, especially of their own body. (All the while men treat their own body as if it were disposable, merely as an instrument for transcendence in the words of Simone de Beauvoir.) It's then expected that women will buy more consumer products to take good care of themselves. The new consumption-oriented capitalism also loves women because of the gender-roles that still remain: women are responsible for purchasing the vast majority of consumer products sold in the United States because they are buying for the whole household, not just for themselves. Besides being adept at empathizing and oriented toward the concrete, women are also more passive. Just like empathy, passivity is now a virtue under the new capitalism – whereas productivity and rationalism used to be the virtues in the previous Fordist era. First of all, the transformation to a service economy means that there is no longer real production in society: the "production" of a service economy consists merely in moving things and money around and talking to people. All real goods are imported. It is a culture where people, like parasites, digest goods which they did not produce themselves. This is a more passive way of life. Secondly, our consumption habit has itself changed in the new economy. Consumption is becoming increasingly passive as an increasingly greater part of it consists in mere "eye-ball movement". We now spend an increasingly greater amount of time letting ourselves be bombarded by images and sounds coming out of cable TV, Youtube, and Netflix. For both reasons, capitalism wants to socialize us to become more feminine by promoting women and marginalizing white men, the former bearer of masculinity. Women's non-violent, less active, and more talking way is now valued more than white man's opposite way because it is better suited to both the service economy and a consumption economy. On this account, the feminists are again the new consumption capitalism's warriors since their job consists precisely in persuading society to spend more resources protecting women (a more valuable resource for the capitalists) while relegating (white) men to the margin (now an inessential resource).

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11 I saw this on a recent episode of BBC News "Our World". The documentary focuses on the situation in Montana. Namely, it is the white men in red states, of the new under-class as shall be seen, who are most afflicted. More on this later.

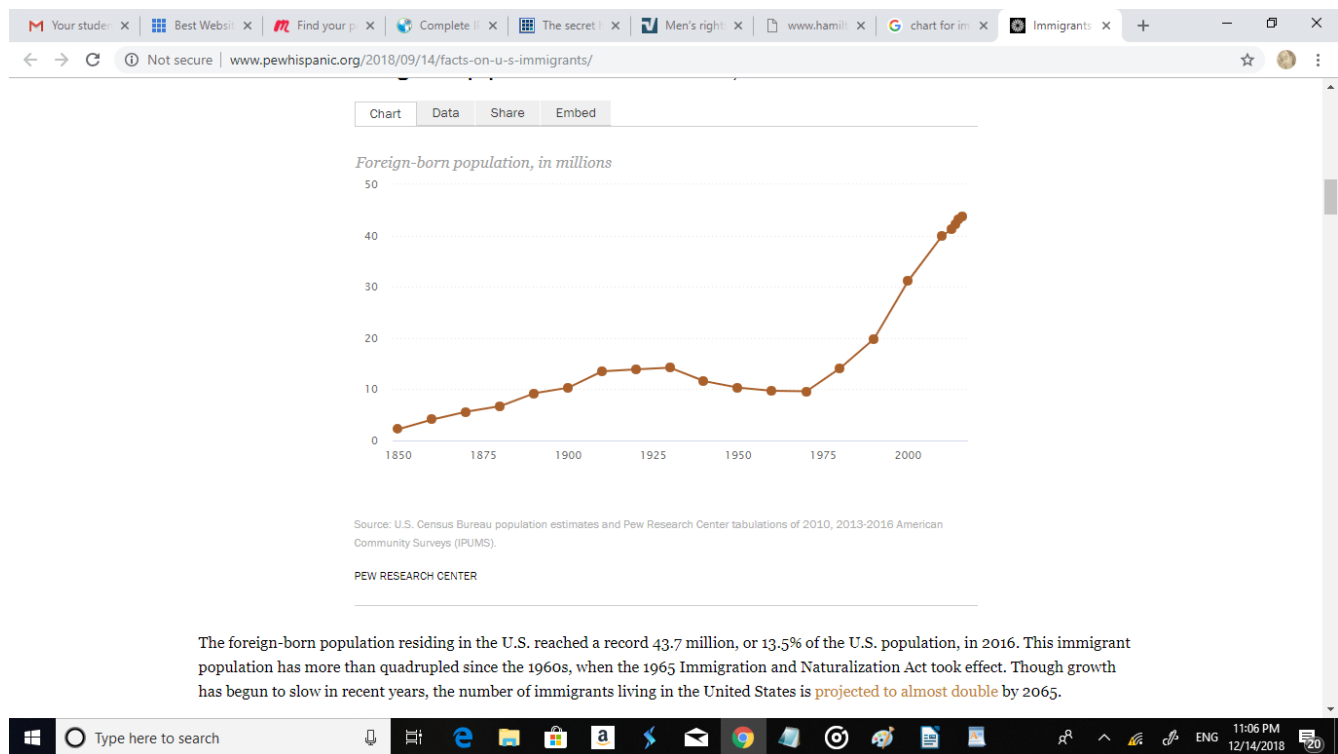
While there is growing awareness (more in Europe than in North America) that liberal progressive politics is the new capitalism's ploy, seeing feminists as the new capitalism's shock-troopers is a very minority view. Nancy Fraser has somewhat noticed the congruence between feminism and neoliberalism, but she has hardly explored the matter in depth. What I have done in addition is to have introduced the rise of Asian economies on the other side of the Pacific as a decisive factor explaining the rise of women and the success of feminist ideologies in American society. While some commentators have occasionally focused on technology and automation as the cause for the shrinkage of traditionally male goods-production and so the increasing insignificance of (white) men in contemporary economy (computers and automation threaten men's jobs far more than women's jobs), they usually overlook the fact that the far more important cause is really just the fact that China, along with other (mostly developing) nations, has absorbed so much of America's manufacturing sector. In the domain of migration, commentators frequently note the role played by foreign nations, e.g. that the United States' attempt to destabilize Assad is the cause for Syrian refugees' fleeing to Germany. But in the case of the social justice revolution sweeping America, nobody seems to have noticed the obvious role played by Asian nations, especially China. If it is thanks to the structural transformation of American economy to a service and consumption economy that women have risen, the feminists have succeeded, and white men have fallen down, then all this is the consequence of the rise of China (and the other Asian tigers). The Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans have (unintentionally) promoted women and feminism in America by taking away America's manufacturing sector. I have said before that American feminists must thank the Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans for their success in transforming American society to its opposite (for their winning the "culture war"), and I now affirm that the new generation of downtrodden white men in America have nobody to blame except the Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans.<sup>12</sup>

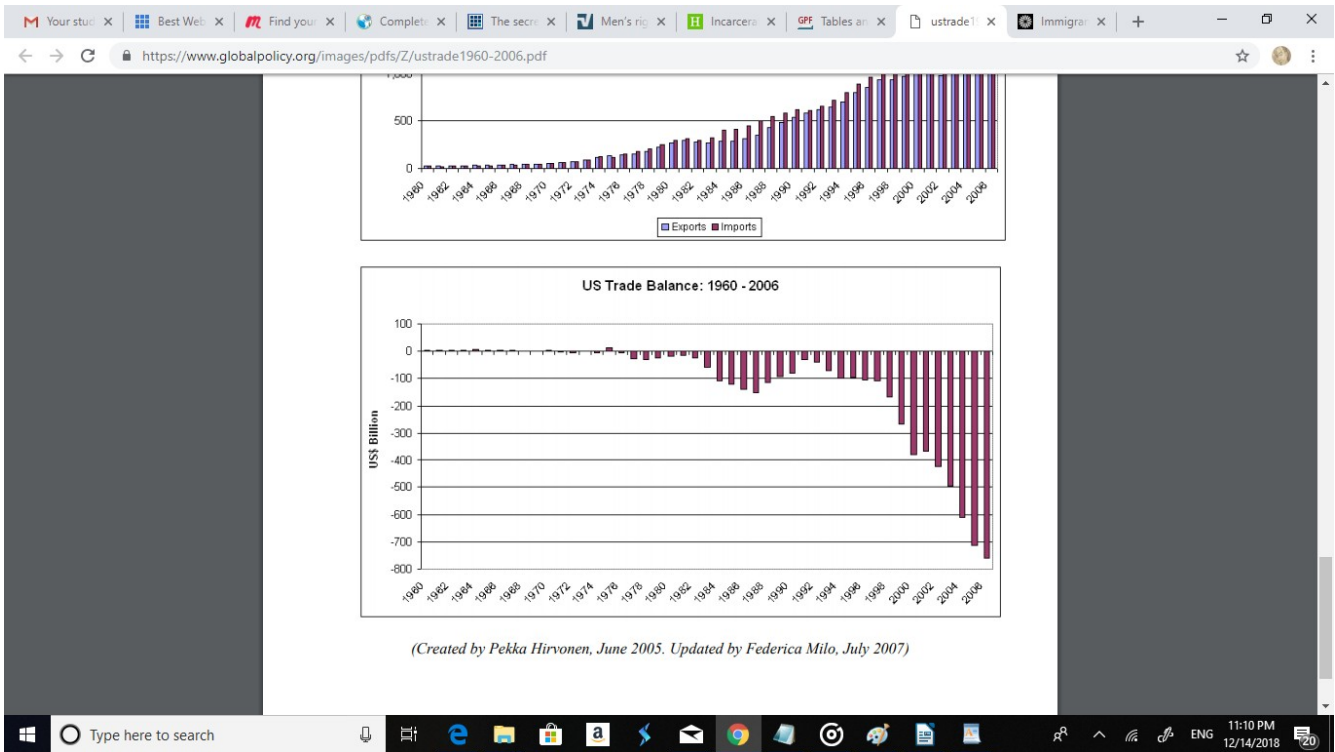
The other novelty in my approach is to see a connection between the success of women's movement and the fall of white men on the one hand and the other sociological phenomena of the time such as mass immigration and prison population explosion. All these things happened at the same time as the relocation of manufacturing overseas and, as I have theorized, were all caused by the latter. American companies first began moving their manufacturing to Latin America in early 1970s, and then massively to Asia from late 1970s onward, and the massive penetration of American home market by Japanese products started in the 1970s as well. The 1970s was the time of the transition out of Fordist-Keynesianism and into flexible accumulation regime. The groundwork for a wholesale transformation of American society was thus laid in the 1970s, and, from 1980s onward, we witness the explosion of women in the workforce, which peaked in 2000. Trade deficit (a measure of de-industrialization) exploded in the 1980s and massively again after 2000 (evidently because of the rise of China, the biggest of the Asian tigers). This indicates the transformation into a service economy which required more female participation and decreased production of goods in the homeland. White men were being

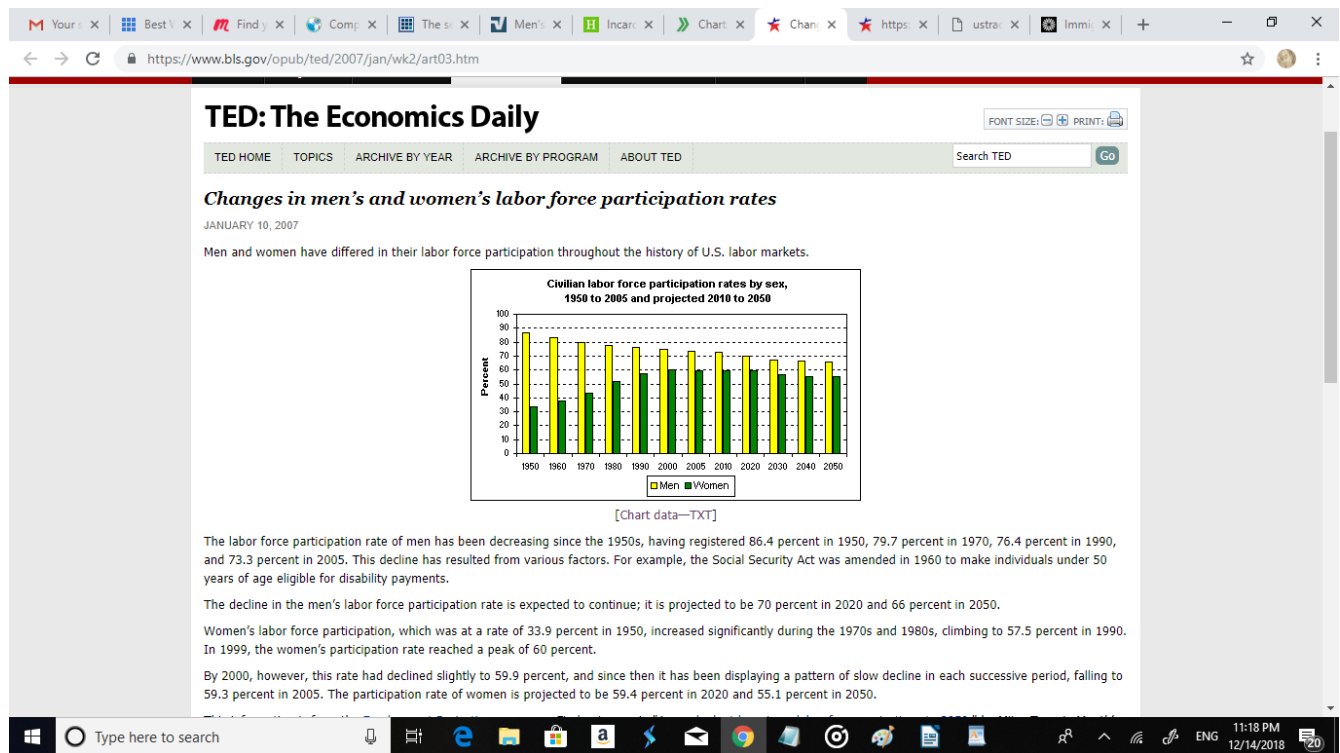
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12 In *Thermodynamic Interpretation of History*, I phrased the matter a little differently: back in the 1970s, when the Asian capitalists have successfully penetrated the American market with their cheap products, the American culture must change in order to successfully absorb them all. This change is brought about by second wave feminism. Firstly, the ideology "going to work is a sign of liberation" has created the two-income family as the norm, thus increasing society's consumption rate. Then, because femininity is more geared to consumption, cultural feminists' promotion of femininity also helps increase society's consumption rate. With increased consumption rate, the extra number of consumer products which Asian capitalism has dumped on the American market are thus successfully absorbed. Thus, the second wave feminism is an Asian capitalist conspiracy.

squeezed out. American prison population also exploded in the 1980s, which indicates that men, especially black men, with shrinking goods-production professions available to them, were being disposed of in prisons as they became increasingly useless to society. Immigration to the US (from Latin America, Asia, and then increasingly the Middle-East and Africa) also exploded from 1975 onward. I have speculated that this, while giving feminists more allies, also worked to the detriment of white men since the Asian elites took away elite positions in the remaining technology sector from them and Latin American migrants took away from them the simpler jobs in the service, agricultural, and janitorial sectors. The new capitalism has benefited tremendously from new women recruits and immigration (more on this below) while white men are becoming increasingly useless. It's then no wonder that capitalism began generating a cultural superstructure to denigrate them. The transition to flexible capitalism is basically a “war on white men”, the former masters during the Fordist era.







In my previous work I have only half-explained why the 68 revolution has become the new norm of North American society: I have focused almost exclusively on why feminism (an offshoot of the counter-culture movement) has become the essence of the new capitalism. I have never adequately explained how the other offshoots of the counter-culture movement, anti-racism, multiculturalism, and gender non-conformism, fit into the new capitalism. I have always regarded the minorities to be “tag-along” whom white women activists champion in their battle to dethrone white men: they need more allies against white men, their main target. This explains the merger of black movements and other sorts of minorities activism with the feminist movement after the third wave, but doesn't explain the feminists' lack of interest in Asian and South Asian men. I have always thought that capitalism has an inherent interest in promoting equality in order to increase consumption (making poor people rich so that they can buy more). In reality this didn't work out as, for example, African American men remain poor after the expansion of capitalism in the postmodern age, and this is probably because they couldn't adapt to the new service economy any more than many white men. I then briefly hint at a new solution in my review of David Harvey's classic on postmodernism. Namely that the entire counter-culture movement is a reactionary movement against the Enlightenment and Newtonian tradition which underlies Fordist-Keynesianism. Feminism, the counter-culture movement, the demand for diversity and inclusion, and postmodernism are all different strands of this reactionary movement. As the turnover time for capital shortens, our experience of space and time becomes fragmented and shortened, and we consequently develop new ideologies celebrating fragmentation and ephemerality in order to adjust ourselves to the new accumulation process. Hence feminism, and postmodernism, and the feminization of society (celebrating the fleeting, the fragmented, the contingent, the irrational in place of the eternal, the universal, the hierarchical, the rational). In the process peoples of color and gender non-conformists have joined white women as the new norm because, within the signification

system of the Fordist era, they all represent femininity or Otherness (irrational, emotional, contingent, fragmented, impermanent) in opposition to the masculinity of white men (the Self: rational, autonomous, universal, hierarchical, permanent). As the original totalizing reality (grand narratives) gets inverted into a fragmented and ephemeral experience of reality in order to conform to the new capitalism, the original “white man” as the standard is also replaced by a variety of “non-standards” (“diversity”). Everyone that was marginalized as “non-standard” during the Fordist era is now rectified as the norm. The most extreme expression of the “non-standard” is certainly the new importance accorded to gender non-conformists, who, in their status or signification as the “undefined” (“Are they men or a women?”), are the farthest away from, the most opposite of, the old standard, well-defined, permanent and totalizing “white man”. This is an ideological turn-around (most explicitly expressed as “intersectionality”) which does not necessarily lead to any material turn-around. Namely, unlike white women, African American men did not see their material well-being improved despite the fact that society has turned against racism with a vengeance. The purpose of the ideological turn-around is solely to convert us to the new experience of reality conducive to the new, flexible capitalism. Later, in the review of Boltanski-Chiapello and Reckwitz, we shall see how the ideologies of “diversity” and “intersectionality” are devised to increase flexibility in our social environment and our experience of reality and deregulate our daily life so that our society can become more competitive in the global marketplace.

While not all immigrants are minorities (e.g. those from Europe) and not all minorities are immigrants (e.g. African Americans), minorities’ rights activism is intimately connected to the promotion of immigration, especially from non-white nations. Here again, when feminists in particular and liberal progressives in general promote immigration, they are obviously acting as the new capitalism’s agents. In North America corporations do not even bother to hide their conviction that immigration is good for their profits (e.g. both Google and Facebook are open about the fact that they want foreign engineers). In Europe however they try to hide their hands in the formulation of governments’ open border policies and use governments as proxies to promote immigration for them. For example, Norbert Häring, a leftist conservative in my vein who is located in Germany, has recently called people’s attention to a representative document, the World Economic Forum’s Global Agenda Council on Migration’s 2013 report, “The Business Case for Migration”, in which the big capitalists lay out their reasons, and plans, for promoting immigration.<sup>13</sup> Immigration (to Western societies, of course) is good for profits because (a) it increases consumption (brings more consumers into Western societies which are otherwise suffering population crunch) and (b) it enables Western corporations to access a greater, more diverse, labor pool – labor market on the global scale – than if they are restricted to recruiting only native born white people. As shall be seen, the purpose here is to provide corporations with greater flexibility in respect to hiring, so that, in this report, they incessantly criticize European governments for being “inflexible” when the latter hesitate to institute open border. In the report, the capitalists state that they need to hide their interest in immigration in order to not arouse indignation from the people and specifically recommend using governments and liberal progressive NGOs as proxies to advance immigration agenda on humanitarian grounds. What they don’t mention is the fact that the indigenous

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13 “Warum Migration gut fürs Geschäft ist: Das Weltwirtschaftsforum und die Willkommenskultur”, 05.03.2018 at norberthaering.de (<http://norberthaering.de/de/27-german/news/958-wef-migration>). The World Economic Forum’s document “The Business Case for Migration” can be accessed at: [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GAC/2013/WEF\\_GAC\\_Migration\\_BusinessCase\\_Report\\_2013.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GAC/2013/WEF_GAC_Migration_BusinessCase_Report_2013.pdf).

white men in destination countries, who used to rule the home economy back in the Fordist era, must cede more of their places to immigrants for the sake of increasing corporations' flexibility.<sup>14</sup>

On this account the new capitalism has purposely cultivated an obsession with victims in our culture besides the fact that this will increase consumption (and beside the other, more usual, explanation that prosperity and a secure life tend to degenerate into an obsession with security and victimization: the Ortegán problem of "spoiled children"). It is in order to feminize Western culture for the sake of a service economy and to increase flexibility of the social environment for the sake of greater competitiveness in the business world that the capitalists want a "victim culture" in which women and minorities who used to be the victims of white men's domination are now celebrated as "victims" in the cultural domain – with or without real benefits in the material domain. All this has resulted in the totalizing character of the new feminism since the third wave, the coalescing of feminism with all other forms of minorities activism: the new dominant leftist paradigm, or what the conservatives and classical liberals would like to call "Cultural Marxism", but what in reality is the enforcement mechanism of the new capitalism.

My view is thus that the whole leftist paradigm – from second wave feminism to anti-racism to intersectionality – is "ideology" (in both the weak and strong sense)<sup>15</sup> which the new capitalism has promoted in order to (a) promote women (replace men with women in the economy and other public institutions) and immigration (diversity means greater flexibility) and (b) socialize us to the ways of the new capitalism. The core of the ideology is feminism, while all the anti-racism and tolerance for immigrants and gender non-conformists and intersectionality are supplements to the new flexible capitalism. While women benefit both materially and ideologically from the capitalism's promotion, the other groups, such as African Americans, might have only benefited ideologically. Nobody dares make racist comments against black men in the public domain, and yet everyone is content with letting them be poor – thanks to the structure of the new service economy.

None of what I have said above of course makes any sense if you are brainwashed by the capitalists (by the feminists and other social justice warriors) to believe that we still live in patriarchy in which white men are privileged and women and minorities very oppressed. Has this racist "heteropatriarchy" really inverted to its opposite? This fact is so obvious for any outsider or conservative and yet is absolutely denied by anyone from the mainstream left. Unless this obvious fact is admitted, there is of course no point in your reading this essay at all. While some feminists have come to term with the fact that

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14 This report from the World Economic Forum is evidently behind the controversial UN Global Compact on Migration, just signed by nations in December 2018. Häring notes that the liberal progressive NGO most entrusted to propagate the immigration ideology in Germany is the Bertelsmann Foundation. Ulrike Bremer has recently made a documentary ("Das Märchen vom Fachkräftemangel") exposing the myth which corporations have been propagating in Germany that Germany does not produce enough skill labors forcing companies to recruit them from overseas. It turns out that Germany *does* produce enough engineers but that corporations nevertheless want the freedom to import engineers from overseas because they can then obtain the best labor at the cheapest price.

15 In the weak sense, "ideology" or "false consciousness" merely means that the connection to the interests of the substructure is hidden: it could be either true or false. The strong sense, as defined by Boltanski and Chiapello in *Le nouvel esprit du capitalisme*, is: "... une idéologie, au sens marxiste, c'est-à-dire au sens d'une illusion servant des intérêts qui inverse la représentation de ce qui se passe, en réalité, et par là dissimule la réalité..." (p. 512).

society has really changed,<sup>16</sup> others, doing the capitalists' betting, continue to spread paranoia about upcoming white men's domination in order to drive us to try harder to replace them with women and minorities.<sup>17</sup> Anyone old enough should have noticed how things have changed: they will remember the bikini women that populated billboards, magazines, and movies in the 1970s but are nowhere to be seen today in the public domain. The entire sex industry has practically disappeared from North America (although this is partly due to the rise of the Internet). I remember how often people called me "Chincker" and "Fu-Manchu" back in the 1980s in California; none of this can happen today. One sees a heroic and arrogant white man showing off his annoying individualism in every movie back then; today such figure has completely disappeared from all the movies. One can count thousands of programs for promoting women and disadvantaged minorities that are ongoing among American institutions (the "diversity bureaucracy"); how many such programs existed in the 1960s? Most of the sexism and racism which used to be regular parts of the social landscape have completely disappeared. The social justice warriors who deny that their revolution has succeeded are simply "delusional" – as Heather MacDonald has rightly called them – and there is simply no point in talking to them. Today there is nothing but hysteria about racism and sexism – as if bigotry and oppression continued to be epidemic in North American society: a hysteria that is as delusional today as the hysteria about witchcraft was back in the 1600s – while only minimal complaint was raised in the era before 1968 when racism and sexism *really were* epidemic. This dramatic turn-around or *inversion* – few complaints precisely when they are most needed and hysteria precisely when it is no longer warranted – is the most striking episode in American history. The new capitalist society of America is doing its best to promote women and immigrants (and underhandedly denigrate white men) in every domain – and yet there are few studies that dare attest to this. The denial that white men are out of power and that American society is no longer sexist and racist is itself the capitalism's mechanism to reinforce itself.

As a leftist conservative I have therefore a negative view about what China is doing (making the whole world use Chinese products) – despite the fact that I do want to see a new power rise to counter-balance the United States' unipolar world-domination. If China wants to rise, it needs to absorb America's productive capacities as a way to accumulate the necessary capital. But when China has done so, this is the consequence in America: people's personality and perception of reality become increasingly distorted, they come to value femininity and passivity and victims and suffering more than masculinity and productivity, they come to see the harm one has suffered as more important than the good one could have done, they are gripped by hysteria and delusional belief that bigotry is still intensely active in every corner of society, social justice warriors run from university to university deleting Western classics from course curriculum and hunting down professors who didn't toe their line,<sup>18</sup> the general population is pathologically obsessed with security, grade inflation is wide-spread in higher education... That's what happens to a people when they do not produce what they consume everyday but have to instead find extraneous things to do to pretend they are still working (the service industry).

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16 For example, Margarete Stokowski has just published a new book, *Die letzten Tage des Patriarchats* (September 2018), in which she collects her columns for TAZ and Spiegel Online from 2011 to 2018. She confesses that, during this period, she witnessed the "disintegration of patriarchy". Even though, she claims, every progress forward is accompanied by backlashes, Kavanaugh's kind, for example, is a "dying species".

17 Hence Christina Dalcher has written a new dystopian novel, *Vox*, and Hulu has remade Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*.

18 As amply documented by Heather MacDonald in her *The Diversity Delusion*.



Part of the proof that the racist and sexist Western society has indeed inverted to its opposite is the manner in which resistance movement against the transformation is beaten down, silenced, discredited, or cornered into the defensive position. The resistance movement occurs on both the gender and racial axis. On the axis of gender, resistance is represented by men's rights movement, whose principal aim is to raise awareness that men, and especially white men, are disadvantaged in the new economy, thus challenging the feminist dogma about the privileged white men, and to complain about how feminists make laws to make men's life even harder and try to silence men's rights activists themselves. There is no coherent ideology here, and the whole movement is rather marginal in the culture war. The more significant is the resistance movement operating on the axis of race. This includes the conservatives, the classical liberals, rightwing populists, the identitarians, and white supremacists.<sup>19</sup> Although the war between the mainstream left and the resistance movements on this axis is framed in terms of race, ethnicity, and national origin (acceptance vs intolerance, love vs hate), the battle according to my theory is really one between the enforcers of the new flexible capitalism on the one hand and, on the other, the conservatives and nostalgics who want society to return to Fordist-Keynesianism. To understand what the war really consists in, it's more revealing to focus on the resisters' (frequently inarticulate) emphasis on masculinity than on their (more frequently articulated) emphasis on white ethnicity. The classical liberals and conservatives are holding fast to the traditional white male masculinity characterized by Newtonian rationality and want to revive it (e.g. Jordan Peterson's masculine "order" vs feminine "chaos"), and the identitarians and white supremacists are even more backward in that they seem to want to revive pure masculine brawn. When it comes to the far right, that is to say, their essence is more manifested in their marching in military formation (*rigid, mechanical, and rational*<sup>20</sup> which used to characterize Fordism) than in their racialist slurs. When the conservatives and classical liberals praise capitalism, they are also really talking about the Fordist model of capitalism with its base in manufacturing and the nuclear family. The rightwing populists are even more explicit about their nostalgia for Fordist-Keynesianism, the social democratic welfare state, when the state took care of its people and the people were monoethnic and when the market completely coincided with national boundaries. For this reason, some commentators have called them "welfare chauvinists", "meaning that they support welfare policies that benefit native-born citizens and virtually no one else".<sup>21</sup> The British UKIP, the German AfD, and the Swedish SD are all Keynesian in this sense, Steve Bannon fits in here perfectly (protecting manufacturing and white ethnic homogeneity), and the French Rassemblement national (formerly National Front) is the most perfect confirmation of my view since Marine Le Pen is explicit about (a) returning France to Gaullism, the most perfect expression of the welfare state and (b) rejecting globalization in order to keep manufacturing within national boundaries.<sup>22</sup> The rightwing populists want ethnic homogeneity not because they are "racist" (whatever

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19 All these strands in the resistance movement are quite different from one another, even though the mainstream left would like to confound them all by indiscriminately calling them "white supremacists" – the new capitalism's way to beat down resistance through negative stereotyping.

20 One recalls from Foucault's *Discipline et punir* that marching like robots was part of the discipline of the body which the European princes began implementing in their armies in the 1600s and 1700s, i.e. part of the beginning rationalization process.

21 Ned Resnikoff, "What Nationalism is a Powerful Political Force", in *Identity Politics*, ed. Elizabeth Shmermund, Greenhaven, 2018, p. 51.

22 I must say that, contra Nancy Fraser, Donald Trump is *not* a real "rightwing populist". In order to mobilize his base and get himself elected, he has talked like a rightwing populist, i.e., Steve Bannon's influence in his rhetoric. Once he is elected, he adopts the traditional Republican stance in order to court favor with the Establishment. He is really a

that means) but because they aspire to the rigidity, homogeneity, permanence, rationality, and hierarchy that characterize the previous era and detest the fluidity, fleetingness, multivalence, plurality, emotivism, and horizontalness that characterize the current era of flexible accumulation. In other words, they are “modernists” resisting postmodernism, Keynesians resisting neoliberalism, or Fordists resisting flexible capitalism. This is the best way to characterize all the different strands in the resistance movement – not to mention that the resistance movements are unanimous in opposing immigration in order to protect native born population on the labor market from the cheap and flexible labor which immigrants represent. It is for this reason that the new capitalism employs “Cultural Marxists” to beat down the resistance: the rational, egoist, and hierarchically thinking white man is antithetical to the new service economy; pure masculine brawn, while useful in the manufacturing sector in Fordist economy, is completely useless, and even harmful, in the new service economy; and the unionized white male labor, while suitable for the former Fordist production regime, is too inflexible for flexible capitalism. This is how the structural transformation of the economy explains perfectly the current shape of the culture war that has been going on in Western societies: the enforcers of the new capitalism on the one hand and the resisters who are utterly uncomfortable in the new economy and have no interests in the new values it promotes on the other. On this account, Jordan Peterson simply doesn’t know what he is talking about when he praises capitalism: he doesn’t know he is fighting against capitalism when he speaks in favor of it just as the social justice warriors don’t know they are fighting for capitalism when they speak against it. (This is the Great Paradox of my own which I shall attempt to resolve at the end of this review.) On this account, only somebody like Marine Le Pen knows what she is talking about – has the rare gift of really knowing herself.

According to my theory, it’s inevitable that the “Cultural Marxists” are winning the culture war – that capitalism has an upperhand in its struggle with resistance. The “culture war” is the battle between the progressive and the retarding forces of capitalism. Going along with history, i.e., with the development of capitalism (“progressivism”), is like going downhill while going backward in history, i.e. opposing the development of capitalism, is like going uphill. It’s no wonder that mainstream media are decidedly on the side of the “Cultural Marxists”, that the resistance has no place in most of society’s institutions, that more and more of them are being banned from Patreon, Facebook, Twitter, and that they have absolutely no place on university campuses.<sup>23</sup> None of this happens to the enforcers, who have the blessing of the “system”. The resisters feel so oppressed that they have to complain, in a revealing way, that everyone has the right for free speech in today’s society except for the heterosexual white male, the former ruler of Western society.

The last novelty in my position consists in identifying McDonaldization (in my own sense) as the necessary consequence of the new flexible capitalism. As David Harvey has repeatedly emphasized, the continual accumulation of capital necessarily implies increasingly shortened turnover time and so increasingly fast-paced life. Flexibility in the new economy, and so the feminine service economy, necessarily mean McDonaldization. Recall my political ideals: sustainable economy, intelligence and communication. Although liberal progressives, in their love-affair with capitalism, have good ideas about achieving sustainable economy by working within the framework capitalism – this may or may

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mixture of neoliberalism and the resistance against neoliberalism.

23 Not simply the more radical ones like Brittany Pettibone, Laura Southern, and Richard Spencer, but even a conservative like Dennis Prager has complained about this.

not work<sup>24</sup> – doing so always contradicts my other leftist conservative goal in that, even if capitalism can achieve sustainability, human life will remain ever fast-paced and be forever geared toward a market-oriented life-style, which makes the life of the mind nearly impossible.

My viewpoint differs from that of many classical liberals and conservatives, and concurs with the feminists', in that I do not deny that Western societies used to be "patriarchal", namely, that white men indeed dominated Western societies and subjugated women and peoples of color during the Fordist-Keynesian era and before – although I assert that this is because white men's way of being and perceiving (rationalization, autonomy, and hierarchy) was better suited to the accumulation regime at the time. My viewpoint concurs with that of the classical liberals and conservatives, and differs from that of the feminists, in that I do agree that Western societies are today no longer "patriarchal", namely, that women's way today dominates Western societies and feminists' constant cry about the continual existence of patriarchy is just so much fear-mongering about nothing serving the interests of the new accumulation regime. (The case about minorities and immigrants is, as you have seen, more complicated.) In my view the fall of white men in North America and increasingly throughout the Western world during the transition to the postmodern age or flexible accumulation (the consumption phase of capitalism) is one of the most interesting sociological questions of all time. Namely, how did it happen that what was formerly regarded as the norm and the most desirable is now suddenly taken to be (to exaggerate the matter a little) "shameful"? The last time when something like this happened in Western history is the rise of Protestant ethics and capitalism itself, when profit-oriented professions which were formerly regarded as shameful suddenly became respected. Why do value-systems invert themselves completely from time to time? Because of the evolution of capitalism! And the classics on postmodernism are supposed to provide details about how the evolution of capitalism causes the inversion in question.

In regard to the sociological question of why Western society has inverted to its opposite – why the pendulum has swung to the other extreme – there have been, as far as I'm aware of, four types of explanation. The first is that offered by the conservatives and classical liberals, that the feminists and social justice warriors want power and have succeeded in acquiring it by somehow successfully persuading the rest of society to their view (by creating a "victim culture", i.e. pretending to be victims). This is true to the extent that social justice warriors do want power but is ultimately an unsatisfactory explanation because it fails to explain why the rest of the society would be convinced by them. The second explanation is one which one can for example glean from Habermas' theory about communicative actions, namely that Western society has after 1960s reached the post-conventional stage of moral development (stage 5 and 6 on Kohlberg's moral development scale) so that society as a

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24 The most well-known example is probably Amy Larkin (*Environmental Debt* (2013) and her website of the same name). She has proposed the "Nature Means Business Framework" which consists in persuading enterprises to forgo short-term perspective on profits (such as engaging in environmentally unfriendly practices as long as this means profits in the short term) and adopt a long-term perspective (such as factoring the cost which environmental degradation shall have on business profits in the future into the current cost-profit balance sheet). Profits which are long term – without incurring environmental debt at the moment and then paying for it in the future – are "true profits". Corporations are in the process of adopting such long-term perspective aligning profits (long-term, "true" profits) with environmental protection, and Larkin is currently the Vice Chair of the World Economic Forum's Global Agenda Council on Climate Change. Here is another example of capitalism incorporating the dominant leftist paradigm for the sake of profits: the principal theme in Boltanski and Chiapello's classic to be reviewed next.

whole has reached a consensus that it must now work hard to help, and include, those groups of people whom it has formerly disadvantaged and marginalized. Associated with this view is the prevailing fashion to explain the excess of the help by appealing to over-enthusiasm (i.e., what is happening right now is that society is feeling so guilty about having neglected women and minorities that it is scrambling to take good care of them and, in this enthusiasm, has incurred excess and abuse). This explanation is partially correct, i.e. correct for the beginning stages of the social justice revolution in certain institutions such as higher education and for some segments of the population, but is ultimately unsatisfactory because, as shall be pointed out later, most of the people in the mainstream left are not particularly intellectually or morally developed. The third type of explanation asserts that all this is simply the gradual fulfillment of the original promises of Enlightenment, “equality” and “rights”: that Enlightenment had discovered the universal truth that all human beings are equal and endowed with the same inalienable rights, but that white men with property were, out of self-interests and prejudice, inconsistent and applied the universal truth to themselves but not to their women and slaves. It is then thanks to women and civil rights activists who are prescient enough that white men’s errors are gradually corrected. (It is within this perspective that the social justice revolution is commonly regarded as “progress” while, in my view, it is “progress” only in the sense of capitalism progressing on its evolutionary path.) I do not think such explanation holds water. What has really been happening is not so much the extension of universal rights to ever larger segments of the population who were formerly overlooked (this is only superficially true) as the transformation of one system of domination into another. In my view only the fourth kind of explanation – such as mine which seeks to explain the social change by appealing to the transformation of society’s economic structure – is ultimately satisfactory.

This historical materialist approach to explaining feminism and the rise of women in America will certainly be called “misogynist” because it affirms that patriarchy is already passé, but to say that feminism is a *dispositif* of the new capitalism is simply in agreement with the prevalent consensus. Have not feminists persistently pointed out the strong correlation observed between gender and racial equality and nation-building/ economic development in advanced capitalist countries (e.g. how promoting gender and racial equality contributes to economic development and the building of a strong nation)? Have not the feminists persistently tried to sell women’s rights to developing nations by telling them this will develop their economies better? Have not corporations concluded one after another that hiring more women results in greater profit? Another example: four researchers have recently even published a seminal study demonstrating that LGBT rights are strongly correlated with GDP growth in developing nations.<sup>25</sup> Selling LGBT rights to developing nations by showing them how this will develop their economy! Only those completely ignorant of what is happening in the corporate world (e.g. many liberal progressive activists themselves) could possibly deny that the entire “social justice revolution” is nothing but a mechanism for the reinforcement of the new capitalism. What is not so obvious is that “social justice” is a capitalist *dispositif* specifically in the case of the new service economy anchored in a globalized world.

I’m now going to review the two monumental classic studies on the postmodern economy and conditions, Boltanski and Chiapello’s *Le nouvel esprit du capitalisme* and Andreas Reckwitz’s *Die*

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25 M. V. Lee Badgett, Sheila Nezhad, Kees Waaldijk, and Yana van der Meulen Rodgers, “The Relationship between LGBT Inclusion and Economic Development”, USAID and The Williams Institute (UCLA), November, 2014.

*Gesellschaft der Singularitäten*, to see how they corroborate the view I have stated above while enriching it with details, historical and theoretical, which I have passed over. Then, toward the end, I shall also deal briefly with Arlie Russell Hochschild's new book, *Strangers in Their Own Land*, in order to fix the over-simplification in the picture that there is but one capitalist system determining the mainstream left as the progressive force and those on the right as the retarding force.

### 3. Boltanski and Chiapello on the spirit of flexible capitalism

Boltanski-Chiapello's aim in their 1999 classic is to provide a detail description of how Fordist-Keynesian capitalism transformed itself into flexible capitalism during the crucial period from 1968 to 1990. It is therefore an immensely important complement to Harvey's *The Condition of Postmodernity*. My main interest in this work regards how it might help answer my fundamental question of how the new capitalism has created the dominant leftist paradigm as its superstructure to invert Western society. In my Thermodynamic Interpretation of History I have briefly discussed how cultural feminism arose as an ideological support for the new capitalism as the latter attempted to replace the traditional hierarchical structure with a more flexible, horizontal network as a way to increase competitiveness – namely, how cultural feminism was an ideology to make society more flexible and more competitive on the global market. I should have at the time read, and incorporated, Boltanski-Chiapello's classic since the new capitalism's search for flexibility and network is precisely their theme. I would have been able to offer a more comprehensive account then and extend the conclusion reached about feminism to the rest of the social justice revolution. I intend to correct the mistake here.<sup>26</sup>

This is how Boltanski-Chiapello define the three key concepts of any *Kapitalismuskritik*: “capitalism”, “ideology”, and the “spirit of capitalism”. Their minimal definition of capitalism is “the exigency of unlimited accumulation of capital by formally peaceful means” (“... une exigence d'accumulation illimitée du capital par des moyens formellement pacifiques...”).<sup>27</sup> They then use the word “ideology” in Louis Dumont's sense: “the collection of shared beliefs that are inscribed in institutions, engaged in actions, and thereby anchored in the real”:

... à condition de donner au terme d'idéologie non le sens réducteur – auquel l'a souvent ramené la vulgate marxiste – d'un discours moralisateur visant à voiler des intérêts matériels et sans cesse démenti par les pratiques, mais celui – développé par exemple dans l'œuvre de Louis Dumont – d'un ensemble de croyances partagées,

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26 In composing this review, I have not only utilized Boltanski-Chiapello's book itself, but also three reviews: Christian Schultz's „Der neue Geist des Kapitalismus“ (SPSH-Fortbildung Sommer 2009), Françoise Piotet's excellent review in *L'Année sociologique* (2001/1, Vol. 51), and Karl Reitter's “Bemerkungen zum Buch ‘Der neue Geist des Kapitalismus’ von Luc Boltanski und Ève Chiapello” (www.grundrisse.net). Both Schultz and Piotet provide excellent summaries of Boltanski-Chiapello's difficult theoretical framework and arguments, but Piotet also criticizes them for not having selected a truly representative sample of managerial literature from which they construct their arguments. Karl Reitter, on the other hand, criticizes, from his Marxist perspective, the way Boltanski-Chiapello have made criticisms of capitalism look like reinforcement of capitalism – precisely why I, along with many other commentators, have found this classic so enlightening. I have also consulted Tanja Bogusz's *Zur Aktualität von Luc Boltanski: Einleitung in sein Werk* (VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2010) to understand Boltanski's background.

27 *Le nouvel esprit du capitalisme*, p. 35.

inscrites dans des institutions, engagées dans des actions et par là ancrées dans le réel....<sup>28</sup>

And the “spirit of capitalism” means the “ideology which justifies the engagement in capitalism” (“Nous appelons esprit du capitalisme l’idéologie qui justifie l’engagement dans le capitalisme....”).<sup>29</sup>

Boltanski-Chiapello thus immediately reveal that their orientation is not Marxist but Weberian. They would certainly regard my hitherto simple way of describing how substructure (*Basis, infrastructure*) determines superstructure (*Überbau, superstructure*) as “vulgar”.<sup>30</sup> The aim of their work is to identify “the ideological changes which have accompanied the recent transformations of capitalism” (“... les changements idéologiques qui ont accompagné les transformations récentes du capitalisme...”).<sup>31</sup> That is to say, to identify the latest change of the spirit of capitalism which has occurred during the transition from Fordist-Keynesianism to flexible accumulation (from modernity to postmodernity).

The spirit of capitalism is a Weberian concept. Because capitalism is fundamentally irrational and entirely abstract (endless accumulation of capital even if all human needs have already been satisfied) it needs an “ideology” to brainwash people and make them *want* to engage in the accumulation process. Economists have since the very beginning been proposing theories to persuade people to choose capitalism over other forms of system, e.g. that capitalism satisfies human wants in the most efficient manner, that the avarice of the individual is good for the well-being of the social collective, and so on. This sort of macro-economic arguments however do not make the individual salaried worker *want* to be part of the accumulation process. What they need are reasons which are grounded in their everyday life and in line with their values and concerns (“... des raisons pour participer au processus d’accumulation ancrées dans la réalité quotidienne et en prise avec les valeurs et les préoccupations de ceux qu’il convient d’engager...”).<sup>32</sup>

Weber has identified the spirit of capitalism when capitalism first took shape in the Protestant belief that doing well in one’s profession is accomplishing the tasks which God has assigned and a sign of one’s eternal salvation. We may call this the “original spirit of capitalism”. As capitalism evolved and its accumulation regime was transformed, its spirit would have to change as well in order to persuade

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28 Ibid., p. 33.

29 Ibid., p. 41.

30 It should be noted on the side that even Marx and Engels themselves were never “vulgar” in this way. The editors note in Vol. 39 of the Dietz Verlag: “Sehr bedeutungsvoll sind die Briefe, in denen so grundlegende Fragen des historischen Materialismus dargelegt und konkretisiert werden wie das dialektische Verhältnis von Ursache und Wirkung in der gesellschaftlichen Entwicklung, das Verhältnis von gesellschaftlichem Sein und gesellschaftlichem Bewußtsein und von Basis und Überbau. Wie schon in den vorangegangenen Jahren wandte sich Engels gegen die Verflachung und Verfälschung des Marxismus. Er trat gegen die Behauptung auf, daß für die materialistische Geschichtsauffassung nur das ökonomische Moment, der Entwicklungsstand der Produktivkräfte, das einzige bestimmende Moment der gesellschaftlichen Entwicklung wäre, eine Behauptung, die auch heute noch zum Arsenal der Marxverfälscher gehört. Engels zeigte, daß der gesellschaftliche Überbau, einmal von der ökonomischen Basis hervorgebracht, selbst aktiv zu wirken beginnt. ‘Es ist nicht, daß die ökonomische Lage Ursache, allein aktiv ist und alles andere nur passive Wirkung. Sondern es ist Wechselwirkung auf Grundlage der *in letzter Instanz* stets sich durchsetzenden ökonomischen Notwendigkeit’...” (Vorwort, p. viii.)

31 *Le nouvel esprit*, p. 33.

32 Ibid., p. 61.

its salaried workers to want to participate in, and sacrifice themselves for, the new system. The theme however is always the same. At each new epoch, capitalism would pose itself as an agent of liberation and propose a heroic figure for ordinary people to emulate. Then, in order to persuade salaried workers to abandon the outdated accumulation regime and participate in the new one, it would select, and incorporate, a belief system which has lately become popular but which has originated from sources unrelated to the accumulation of capital, turn it into an ideology which supports and justifies the new accumulation regime, and sell it to salaried workers to excite them. The newly invented heroic figure would be the embodiment of the new spirit of capitalism. The salaried workers, excited by the new spirit and believing that, by participating in it, they are liberating themselves from an outdated and oppressive system, would then feel ever more motivated to emulate the new heroic figure and participate in the new accumulation regime. We can see how well my original “feminist ethic and the spirit of consumerism” fits into Boltanski-Chiapello’s framework: women are ever more motivated to emulate the ideal of the “working woman” or “woman entrepreneur” and participate in the accumulation regime when they believe this is their liberation.<sup>33</sup>

Boltanski-Chiapello have posited two previous spirits of capitalism before the third spirit of capitalism is installed during the transition to flexible accumulation. During the era of the first spirit of capitalism (late nineteenth century), the heroic figure is the bourgeois entrepreneur and the liberation promised is the liberation from the traditional peasant rural life – to correspond to the accumulation regime of the time when enterprises and factories were mostly family-owned.

La première description, entreprise à la fin du XIXe siècle – aussi bien dans le roman que dans les sciences sociales proprement dites –, est centrée sur la personne du bourgeois entrepreneur et sur la description des valeurs bourgeoises. La figure de l’entrepreneur, du chevalier d’industrie, du conquérant..., concentre les éléments héroïques du tableau, avec l’accent mis sur le jeu, la spéculation, le risque, l’innovation. Sur une échelle plus large, pour des catégories plus nombreuses, l’aventure capitaliste s’incarne dans la libération, avant tout spatiale ou géographique, rendue possible par le développement des moyens de communication et par le développement du travail salarié, qui permettent aux jeunes de s’émanciper des communautés locales, de l’asservissement à la terre et de l’enracinement familial, de fuir le village, le ghetto, et les formes traditionnelles de dépendance personnelle.<sup>34</sup>

The first description, undertaken at the end of the nineteenth century – in novels as well as in social sciences properly speaking –, is centered on the person of the bourgeois entrepreneur and on the description of bourgeois values. The figure of the entrepreneur, the knight of the industry, the conqueror... concentrates the heroic elements of the portrait, with the accent placed on the game, the speculation, the risk,

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33 I’m tremendously simplifying Boltanski-Chiapello’s argument here. At each epoch capitalism persuades people to participate in it by promising three things: the common good (*bien commun*), security, and self-realization (*autoréalisation*). Namely, that the accumulation process is good for all, brings economic security to the participant, and enables the participant to realize himself or herself (*liberation*). I have only touched upon the promise of self-realization here.

34 Ibid., p. 54 – 55.

innovation. On the greater scale, for the more numerous categories, the capitalist adventure is incarnated in the liberation, before everything spatial and geographic, made possible by the development of means of communication and salaried work, which enables the young to emancipate themselves from local communities, the enslavement to the earth, and familial rootedness, and to escape the village, the ghetto, and traditional forms of personal dependence.

The second spirit of capitalism corresponds to the era of the Fordist-Keynesian regime of accumulation when enterprises are becoming bureaucratized and anonymous. The heroic figure is the “director” and the liberation promised is liberation from wants altogether through mass-production and mass-consumption:

Une deuxième caractérisation de l’esprit du capitalisme trouve son plein développement entre les années 1930 et les années 1960. L’accent y est mis moins sur l’entrepreneur individuel que sur l’organisation. Axée sur le développement, au début du XXe siècle, de la grande entreprise industrielle centralisée et bureaucratisée, fascinée par le gigantisme, elle a pour figure héroïque le directeur qui, à la différence de l’actionnaire cherchant à augmenter sa richesse personnelle, est habité par la volonté de faire croître sans limite la taille de la firme dont il a la charge, de façon à développer une production de masse, reposant sur des économies d’échelle, sur la standardisation des produits, sur l’organisation rationnelle du travail et sur des techniques nouvelles d’extension des marchés (marketing). Sont particulièrement ‘excitantes’ pour les jeunes diplômés les opportunités qu’offrent les organisations d’accéder à des positions de pouvoir d’où l’on puisse changer le monde et, pour le grand nombre, la libération du besoin, la réalisation des désirs grâce à la production de masse et son corollaire la consommation de masse...<sup>35</sup>

A second characterization of the spirit of capitalism finds its full development between the 1930s and the 1960s. The accent is placed here less on the individual entrepreneur than on the organization. Geared toward the development, in the beginning of the twentieth century, of the large, centralized and bureaucratized, industrial enterprise, and fascinated by the gigantic, this characterization has as its heroic figure the director who, different from the share holder trying to augment his personal wealth, is dominated by the desire to increase, without limits, the size of the firm of which he is in charge, of such fashion as to develop mass production resting on the economies of scale, the standardization of products, the rational organization of work, and the new techniques for the extension of the markets (marketing). What are particularly ‘exciting’ for the young graduates are the opportunities which the organizations offer for accessing positions of power where one could change the world, and, for the greater number, the liberation from needs and the realization of desires thanks to mass production and its corollary mass consumption....

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35 Ibid., p. 56.



The third spirit of capitalism is installed gradually since 1970s and Boltanski-Chiapello devote the bulk of their work to the description of the process. The heroic figure here is the flexible, spiritual guru who moves adroitly from project to project and is versed in human relationships and the liberation promised here is liberation from the outdated and oppressive hierarchical structure that characterizes the second capitalism. Françoise Piotet has proposed the following diagram to help us better comprehend the three stages of the development of the spirit of capitalism.

Périodes	Traits dominants	Morale dominante	Justification	Libération
1 <sup>er</sup> esprit (fin XIX <sup>e</sup> )	Bourgeois entrepreneur (Sombart). Esprit bourgeois	L'épargne	Cité domestique et cité marchande	Choix de son état social
2 <sup>e</sup> esprit 1930-1960	Capitalisme de grande entreprise. Importance de l'organisation. Figure héroïque du directeur	Travail et compétence	Cité industrielle et cité civique	État-providence
3 <sup>e</sup> esprit 1990...	Isomorphe à un capitalisme mondialisé et aux nouvelles technologies	Connexionniste. Entrepreneur de soi	Cité par projets	Statut Limitation de la sphère marchande

### Une théorie du changement social

Note that the first and the second spirit of capitalism correspond to the production phase of capitalism in my schema while the third spirit of capitalism corresponds to my consumption phase of capitalism.

The most original part of Boltanski-Chiapello's analysis is their description of the dynamic relationship between capitalism and the criticisms leveled against it. They show that, frequently, the outside ideology from which capitalism draws inspirations to transform itself is precisely the criticisms which the radical revolutionaries (especially from the left but sometimes from the right as well) have leveled against it. Since the very beginning, capitalism has posed itself as the liberator, and, when critics criticize capitalism for failing to deliver its promise of liberation or for constituting a new form of oppression worse than the original oppression from which it has liberated the masses, capitalism will incorporate the criticism and transform itself in order to neutralize it, increase capital accumulation, and continue to pose as the liberator. A "new spirit of capitalism" is thereby constituted.

Boltanski-Chiapello classify all the criticisms which have historically been leveled against capitalism into two types, "social criticism" and "artist criticism". Of the four kinds of complaints:

a) le capitalisme source de *désenchantement* et d'*inauthenticité* des objets, des personnes, des sentiments et, plus généralement, du genre de vie qui lui est associé;

a) capitalism as the source of *disenchantment* and *inauthenticity* of objects, persons, sentiments, and, more generally, the type of life that is associated with it;

b) le capitalisme source d'*oppression*, en tant qu'il s'oppose à la liberté, à l'autonomie et à la créativité des êtres humains soumis, sous son empire, d'une part à la domination du marché..., d'autre part aux formes de subordination de la condition salariale (discipline d'entreprise, surveillance rapprochée des chefs et encadrement par des règlements et des procédures);

b) capitalism as the source of *oppression*, in the sense that it is opposed to the freedom, the autonomy, and the creativity of the human beings subject, under its empire, to the domination of the market on the one hand..., and on the other to the forms of subordination of the salaried condition (the enterprise's discipline, the surveillance exercised by the boss, and the constraints from rules and procedures);

c) le capitalisme source de *misère* chez les travailleurs et d'*inégalités* d'une ampleur inconnue dans le passé;

c) capitalism as the source of *misery* among the workers and *inequality* of such amplitude as was unknown in the past;

d) le capitalisme source d'*opportunisme* et d'*égoïsme* qui, en favorisant les seuls intérêts particuliers, se révèle destructeur des liens sociaux et des solidarités communautaires, particulièrement des solidarités minimales entre riches et pauvres....<sup>36</sup>

d) capitalism as the source of *opportunism* and *egoism* which, by favoring only the particular interests, reveals itself to be the destroyer of social links and community solidarity, particularly the minimal solidarity between the rich and the poor....

the first two kinds constitute the “artist critique” and the latter two the “social critique”. For the constitution of the third spirit of capitalism (Boltanski-Chiapello's main focus) it is the artist critique which is the more important even though the social critique was more prevalent during the previous developmental stages of capitalism. Whenever we hear complaints – especially during the end of the second stage of capitalism, namely around 1968 – that capitalism has suppressed the possibility of individuals' development as “authentic”, has suppressed our self-realization, our creativity, our potentials, through the uniformity, the disciplinary measures, and the rigid hierarchy it has imposed on human life, we are hearing the artist critique.

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36 Ibid., p. 86 – 87.

Since the artist critique will also be an important concept later in understanding Reckwitz, we should take care here to understand what Boltanski-Chiapello mean by “authenticity”:

“... Pour cette critique, la perte d’authenticité désigne alors essentiellement une uniformisation ou, si l’on veut, une déperdition de différence entre les êtres – objets ou êtres humains...”<sup>37</sup>

“... For this critique, the loss of authenticity designates then essentially a uniformisation or, if one will, a leveling of differences between beings – objects or human beings...”

And how they have defined the “artist” after whom this sort of critique is named:

“Une vie d’artiste, au XIXe siècle, pouvait être jugée ‘authentique’, notamment parce qu’elle n’était pas cloisonnée mais réussissait au contraire à unir toutes les facettes d’une même existence et à l’orienter vers l’accomplissement d’une œuvre et vers la singularité de son créateur...”

“The life of artist, in the nineteenth century, can be judged ‘authentic’, especially because it was no longer closeted but succeeded on the contrary in unifying all the facets of the same existence and orienting it toward the accomplishment of a single work and the singularity of its creator...”

The artist demand for authenticity and autonomy – basically, self-realization – is essentially a protest against the rationalization regime in Weber’s sense which has reached its most extreme expression during the Fordist-Keynesian era. It is this rationalization regime which has prevented any working individual (and consumers as well) from developing his or her particular difference from every other person and properly unfolding his or her human potentials.

Here we must recall that the early Marx, when he talked so much about “alienation”, was uttering an artist critique and that the later Marx, when he talked so much about “exploitation”, was uttering a social critique. When Lukács later talked about “reification” (*Verdinglichung*), it was also an artist critique. In the more comprehensive scheme which Rahel Jaeggi has recently developed (“Drei Wege der Kapitalismuskritik”), we can see that the social critique corresponds to her “moral criticism” and the artist critique to her “ethical criticism”.

Boltanski-Chiapello only briefly summarize how the artist and the social critique have helped form the first and the second spirit of capitalism when capitalists took pain to incorporate them. As we have seen, the first capitalism prided itself for liberating individuals from their imprisonment in their families and villages (feudalism) through a market place based on contract. Gradually criticisms emerged that capitalism had merely introduced a new form of oppression while liberating people from their original oppression. That was late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and, at that time, it was really the social critique to which the capitalists attempted to respond. The critics charged, first of all,

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 587.

that capitalism with its disciplinary measures in the factories was just as oppressive as the old feudal oppression and had, instead of liberating people, merely torn them away from their roots (the artist critique) and that the market place had forced individuals to sell their labor at such minimum price that they weren't able to sustain a genuine human life (the social critique). The critics then charged that the egoism which the free market promoted (each man pursuing rationally his own interests) had undermined social solidarity to the point that society would disintegrate (the social critique). By 1930s capitalism had incorporated, and squelched, the social critique by merging corporations with the state and introducing state intervention (Keynesianism) so as to guarantee security to workers and by implementing totalizing planning so as to ensure social integration (*État-providence*). The second spirit of capitalism was thus constituted and, here, the artist critique was largely forgotten. The exact opposite would be the case in the formation of the third spirit of capitalism. Boltanski-Chiapello then devote most of their pages to a detailed description of how the third spirit of capitalism formed by incorporating the criticisms which the 68 revolutionaries uttered against the second capitalism. Although they are specifically describing how this has happened in France, their analysis applies to the rest of the Western world in an approximate fashion (especially to the United States, insofar as the new managerial practices in France were largely introduced from the United States).

To understand the nature of the difference between the second and the third spirit of capitalism (and thus to gauge the transformation), Boltanski-Chiapello conduct a detailed comparison between the managerial literature from the 1960s (right at the end of the second spirit of capitalism) and that from the 1990s (when the third spirit of capitalism was being formulated). They emphasize that managerial literature is especially suited for discovering the spirit of capitalism at a certain epoch since the authors do not simply propose a way for enterprises to increase profits but also explain why the new way is more *just* (especially in the sense of allowing people to better develop themselves) in comparison to the old way: they are not simply advising the capitalists but are also motivating the new generation to participate in the capitalist process. From my point of view, it is always curious that the way to more profits is always identical with the way to justice and liberation – just as the feminists and social justice warriors always end up discovering that the justice and liberation they promote will always also help corporations bring in more profits. To me, this is verification of historical materialism while for Boltanski-Chiapello this is how the spirit of capitalism works.

The managerial literature from the 1960s describes a world at the final stage of the rationalization process which has characterized Western civilization since Reformation and Enlightenment. At this time the emphasis was on how the enterprise must continue to free itself from the family which owned it – how the interests of the business were not the same as the interests of the owners, how nepotism must be eradicated, how the enterprise must further bureaucratize and be directed by a cadre of directors who were salaried professionals and in no way took personal possession of the capital accumulated. The emphasis was on the eradication of everything that was not rational and the further development of instrumentality (*traitement rationnel des objets et des chiffres*).<sup>38</sup> The result was an enterprise that was an entity for its own sake – considered from its own perspective rather than from the perspective of any of its participants – just like *raison d'État* in the case of nation-state. Boltanski-Chiapello take pain to emphasize that this – the strict differentiation between the ownership of the

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38 Ibid., p. 130.

enterprise and the running of it as part of the rationalization process – was precisely what distinguished the second spirit of capitalism from the first:

Il importe également pour notre sujet de rappeler que la naissance du management a accompagné au début du siècle l'émergence de ce nouveau corps social de directeurs et d'administrateurs salariés... auquel est progressivement transférée la gestion opérationnelle des grandes entreprises, les propriétaires se retirant dans le rôle d'actionnaires sauf à devenir eux-mêmes également des cadres dirigeants salariés..... C'est ainsi que le management a été dès l'origine destiné à ceux qui deviendraient, après la crise des années 30, les nouveaux héros de l'économie et les destinataires principaux du deuxième esprit du capitalisme. Le management, qui se présente comme la systématisation et comme l'inscription dans des règles de conduite à caractère général de pratiques forgées au sein des entreprises, a permis peu à peu la professionnalisation de l'encadrement.<sup>39</sup>

It imports equally for our subject to recall that the birth of management has accompanied in the beginning of the century the emergence of this new social corps of salaried directors and administrators... to whom the operational administration of the large enterprises is progressively transferred, the business owners retiring into the role of share holders except when they become themselves salaried managers and directors.... It is thus that the management has been, since the beginning, destined to become, after the crisis of 1930s, the new heroes of economy and the principal figures of the second spirit of capitalism. The management, which presents itself as the systematization and inscription in the general rules of conduct of practices forged in the center of enterprises, has permitted little by little the professionalization of the directing class.

Certain seeds of the third spirit of capitalism were however already present. The capitalists were already heeding the workers' complaints about hierarchy and authoritarianism and demand for greater autonomy, but they answered the demand by way of increased rationalization. The worker shall be granted greater autonomy and allowed to participate in the decision-making process, but the hierarchy of the bureaucratic structure shall never be called into question. The result is a perfect meritocracy, each worker evaluated solely according to his performance and accomplishments, without consideration for (for example) his "connections". In this way, continual rationalization had resulted in a more *just* world. This is how the capitalists justified capitalism and motivated people to participate in it. The social critique was squelched by the promise of a "career", i.e., life time employment in the same enterprise and gradual promotion up the hierarchy given good performance. "Career" was the guarantee of security. The capitalists focused on assuring security through "career" on the side of the enterprise and social protection on the side of the "providential state" (Keynesianism). Altogether, capitalism promised liberty, economic progress, and the well-being of all, in contrast with the unfree regimes of the communist world.

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39 Ibid., p. 102.

Then, in the managerial literature from the 1990s, everything that was valued or taken for granted in the literature from the 1960s was suddenly denounced and rejected: foremost hierarchy, authority, and planning. The generation of the 90s rejected the structure of the 60s as too rigid, too quantitative, too rational, and too inhumane – as if they had all agreed with the artist critique and were determined to comply with the demand. What they were doing was launching a war against the rationalization process which had hitherto dominated Western societies. What were constantly on their mouth were “competition”, “adaptation”, and “permanent change”.

“... on trouve pratiquement dans tous les textes des conseils pour mettre en place cette organisation flexible et inventive qui saura ‘surfer’ sur toutes les ‘vagues’, s’adapter à toutes les transformations, avoir constamment un personnel au fait des connaissances les plus récentes et obtenir une avance technologique permanente sur les concurrents...”<sup>40</sup>

... one finds practically in all the texts advices for putting in place this flexible and inventive organization which will know how to ‘surf’ on all the ‘waves’, adapt to all the transformations, constantly have a personnel in possession of the latest knowledge and obtain a permanent technological edge against competitors....

The generation of the 90s were talking about a new environment in which a new sort of organization, the complete opposite of the rigid, Fordist hierarchy, was the norm:

... des entreprises *maigres* travaillant en *réseau* avec une multitude d’intervenants, une organisation du travail en équipe, ou par projets, orientée vers la satisfaction du client, et une mobilisation générale des travailleurs grâce aux visions de leurs leaders....<sup>41</sup>

... the *slender* enterprises working in *network* with a multitude of mediators, an organization of working-in-team, or by projects, oriented toward the satisfaction of the client, and a general mobilization of workers thanks to the visions of their leaders....

... si bien que l’image type de l’entreprise moderne est aujourd’hui un cœur svelte entouré d’une nébuleuse de fournisseurs, de sous-traitants, de prestataires de services, de personnels intérimaires permettant de variabiliser les effectifs selon l’activité, d’entreprises amies. On dira alors qu’elle travaille en réseau....<sup>42</sup>

... so much so that the type image of a modern enterprise is today a thin core surrounded by a nebulous of suppliers, sub-contractors, providers of services, intermediate personnel permitting the variability of effects according to activity, and allied enterprises. One thus says that it works in network....

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40 Ibid., p. 121.

41 Ibid., p. 124.

42 Ibid., p. 125.

The generation of the 90s were talking about a new world that was characterized by “project” and “network”: the new buzzwords of neomanagement. It is a world dominated by human relationships on the horizontal level rather than mechanization and rationalization and hierarchy. It will be called the “connexionist world”. As can be seen, Boltanski-Chiapello are producing another description of what Harvey has called “flexible accumulation”.

Whereas the managerial literature from the 1960s was addressed to the *cadre*, the literature from the 1990s was addressed to the *managers*. By the 1990s, the traditional term *cadre* with its connotations of hierarchy, rigidity, and instrumentality was universally denounced and disowned by all authors. Starting from the 1980s, the English term “manager” came into circulation in the French circle and was intentionally used with connotations opposite of the old term *cadre*. The new term refers to those who are best able to motivate team (project) members and bring them to life (*tous ceux qui manifestent leur excellence dans l’animation d’une équipe*), who do not deal with people in an instrumental fashion and authoritarian style, but, through communication and listening, adroitly bring out their human potentials (*la mise en œuvre efficace des capacités déposées dans les êtres humains*). The “manager” inspired *trust (confiance)*: this is the new currency in the connexionist world in contrast to *contract* in the previous era. Correspondingly, it is no longer the promise of security through a career which is supposed to motivate the workers, but the possibility of self-realization. If the worker is supposed to *realize* himself or herself in a project, the project manager is the expert to help him or her do it.

Les auteurs des années 90 utilisent ainsi le terme de manager, par opposition à celui de cadre, pour cerner les qualités des hommes les mieux ajustés à l’état actuel du capitalisme et à l’environnement fait d’ ‘incertitude’ et de ‘complexité’ dans lequel sont plongées les entreprises....<sup>43</sup>

The authors of the 90s thus use the term ‘manager’, in contrast to the use of the term *cadre*, to capture the qualities of those best adjusted to the current state of capitalism and to the environment made up of ‘uncertainties’ and ‘complexities’ in which the enterprises are plunged....

Les managers se distinguent en fait des cadres selon une opposition qui est celle de l’intuition créatrice versus la froide rationalité calculatrice et gestionnaire, réinvestissant ainsi une thématique engagée, sous des formes multiples, depuis le milieu du XIXe siècle environ, dans un grand nombre d’oppositions taxinomiques, qu’il s’agisse, par exemple, des formes de l’intelligence (cerveau gauche/ cerveau droit), de l’opposition entre les sexes, entre groupes sociaux (artistes/ ingénieurs ou financiers...) voire entre pays (la France opposée à l’Allemagne au XIXe siècle...), les pays latins opposés aux pays anglo-saxons aujourd’hui, etc. Les managers sont ‘intuitifs’, ‘humanistes’, ‘inspirés’, ‘visionnaires’, ‘généralistes’ (par opposition à la spécialisation étroite), ‘créatifs’. Le monde du manager s’oppose au monde du cadre, comme le réticulaire au catégoriel. Le manager est l’homme des réseaux, il a pour qualité première sa mobilité, sa capacité à se déplacer sans se laisser arrêter par les

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43 Ibid., p. 130.

frontières – qu’elles soient géographiques ou qu’elles dérivent des appartenances professionnelles ou culturelles –, par les écarts hiérarchiques, par les différences de statut, de rôle, d’origine, de groupe, et à établir un contact personnel avec d’autres acteurs, souvent très éloignés socialement ou spatialement...<sup>44</sup>

The managers distinguish themselves in fact from *cadres* according to an opposition that is that of creative intuition versus cold, calculative and administrative rationality, reinvesting thus a theme that was engaged, under multiple forms, since around the middle of the nineteenth century, in a great number of taxonomic oppositions, whether it is about, for example, forms of intelligence (left brain/ right brain), the opposition between the sexes, between social groups (artists/ engineers or financiers), or between countries (France as opposed to Germany in the nineteenth century...), Latin countries as opposed Anglo-Saxon countries today, etc. The managers are ‘intuitive’, ‘humanist’, ‘inspired’, ‘visionary’, ‘generalist’ (as opposed to narrow specialization), ‘creative’. The world of the manager is opposed to the world of the *cadre*, just as the network is opposed to the categorical. The manager is the man of network, he has as his premier quality mobility, the capacity for moving about without letting himself be hindered by frontiers – whether they be geographic or whether they derive from the professional or the cultural realms –, by hierarchical distances, by differences in status, role, origin, group, and for establishing personal contact with other actors, often socially and spatially far away....

It can easily be seen here that, whereas the *cadre* from the 1960s with his instrumental way of dealing with people and things is obviously a man, the “manager” from the 1990s looks more like a woman. (When contrasting “manager” with *cadre* the French authors of management are clearly opposing feminine to masculine qualities.) The feminization process has thus started in the business world and would from there on permeate every inch of society. But Boltanski-Chiapello stop here and never explore the matter further. This will however be my principal concern in this review.

The tone of the 90s’ generation is one of “liberation” and “revolution”: the new business world is supposed to liberate all workers from the stifling oppression of the hierarchy of the second capitalism which, with its total planning and rationalization, has suppressed the development of their human potentials, in particular the expression of their affective side.

La lutte menée dans les années 90 a donc pour objet *d’éliminer en grande partie le modèle d’entreprise forgé à la période antérieure*, d’une part en délégitimant la hiérarchie, la planification, l’autorité formelle, le taylorisme, le statut de cadre et les carrières à vie dans une même firme a et, d’autre part, en réintroduisant des critères de personnalité et l’usage des relations personnelles qui en avaient été évacuées. Il ne s’agit pas pour autant d’une tentative de retour au premier esprit du capitalisme car les entreprises sont plus grandes que jamais, les managers des professionnels et non des

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44 Ibid., p. 132.



petits propriétaires, et la vie au travail s’inscrit dans des réseaux et non dans un cadre domestique....<sup>45</sup>

The fight that is carried out in the 1990s has therefore as its objective *the elimination, in large part, of the model of enterprise that was forged in the previous period*, on the one hand by delegitimizing hierarchy, planning, formal authority, Taylorism, the status of *cadre*, and the career for life within the same firm, and, on the other hand, by reintroducing the criteria of personality and the usage of personal relations which had [earlier] been rejected from the firm. It is however not about an attempt to return to the first spirit of capitalism, because the enterprises are larger than ever before, the managers are professionals and not small owners, and the life at work is inscribed in networks and not in a domestic framework....

As noted, the promise of self-realization (*épanouissement personnel*) has replaced the old promise of security, which the generation of the 90s hardly mention anymore. (As will be seen below, the third spirit of capitalism is characterized by the incorporation of the artist critique to the neglect of the social critique.) Because the new world is about emotions, creativity, and relationships, it is a more *humane* world – as is emphasized in neomanagement literature. This is how the capitalists, according to Boltanski-Chiapello, attempt to sell capitalism to people in the new era and motivate them to sacrifice themselves for the accumulation process: “It’s a new world, you are free! The dark age of hierarchy, authoritarianism, and oppression is gone!” In my Thermodynamic Interpretation of History I have focused on how they have especially attempted to sell the new capitalism to women, whom they desperately need as workers and managers in their new, more slender and more feminine, enterprises, and how the feminists and social justice warriors have attempted to make the world more suitable for capitalism by repeating the same sale pitch, “It’s a new world, you are free! Let your feminine side come out! The dark age of patriarchy and oppression is over!” It’s all about dismantling the old Fordist-Keynesian structure which is no longer suitable for capital accumulation and installing the new flexible, connexionist world which is more suitable.

#### **4. How capitalism transformed itself into its third form**

Boltanski-Chiapello then go into an historical account of how the transformation has happened. The starting point is the 1968 revolution. Both the social critique and the artist critique were pronounced during the revolution, the former by workers backed by the French communist party and the latter by students and intellectuals. Now, the capitalism’s response to them would result in its transformation into its third phase. This occurred in phases. Between 1968 and 1975, capitalism’s focus was on responding to the workers’ cry about exploitation (the social critique). The capitalists responded by negotiating with the syndicates about salaries and job security. They didn’t do anything novel in comparison to the previous crises and generally stayed within the established framework of the second spirit of capitalism. They refused to budge on the question of authority (were adamant about maintaining the old hierarchical structure) but were willing to grant the workers an increase in salary and greater security, resulting in the *grande politique contractuelle* 1968 – 1973. From 1975 onward however the protest against capitalism resurfaced, this time in the form of artist critique, and it is

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45 Ibid., p. 143.

capitalism's response to the students' and intellectuals' artist critique from this time on which would be decisive in the constitution of its third spirit. Boltanski-Chiapello summarize the 68 revolutionaries' artist critique in such manner:

.... Les étudiants (et les jeunes salariés récemment sortis des universités ou des grandes écoles), qui ont vu leur nombre augmenter dans des proportions considérables au cours de la décennie précédente marquée par l'explosion universitaire.... et, dans le même temps, leur condition se dégrader et leurs espoirs d'accéder à des emplois autonomes et créatifs diminuer... vont plutôt développer une critique de l'aliénation qui reprend les principaux thèmes de la critique artiste (déjà présents aux États-Unis, dans le mouvement hippie): d'une part, le désenchantement, l'inauthenticité, la 'misère de la vie quotidienne', la déshumanisation du monde sous l'emprise de la technicisation et de la technocratisation, et, d'autre part, la perte d'autonomie, l'absence de créativité, et les différentes formes d'oppression du monde moderne. En témoigne, dans le domaine de la famille, l'importance des revendications qui ont pour objectif l'affranchissement par rapport aux formes traditionnelles de contrôle domestique (à 'l'organisation patriarcale'), c'est-à-dire d'abord la libération des femmes et l'émancipation des jeunes. Dans le domaine du travail et de la production qui nous intéresse plus directement ici, domine la dénonciation du 'pouvoir hiérarchisé', du paternalisme, de l'autoritarisme, des horaires imposés, des tâches prescrites, de la séparation taylorienne entre conception et exécution et, plus généralement, de la division du travail, avec pour contrepoint positif les exigences d'autonomie et d'autogestion, et la promesse d'une libération sans limites de la créativité humaine...<sup>46</sup>

.... The students (and the young salaried workers who recently came out of the universities and renowned schools), who have seen their numbers increase in considerable proportion in the course of the last decade that was marked by an explosion of university education... and, at the same time, their condition deteriorate and their hope of finding autonomous and creative jobs diminish, are going to soon develop a critique of alienation which will take up again the principal themes of the artist critique (already present in the United States among the hippie movement): on the one hand, disenchantment, inauthenticity, the 'misery of everyday life', the dehumanization of the world under technicization and technocratization, and, on the other hand, the loss of autonomy, the absence of creativity, and different forms of oppression in the modern world. Thus bears witness, in the domain of the family, the importance of those complaints which have as their objective emancipation in relation to the traditional forms of domestic control (the 'patriarchal organization'), that is to say, first of all, the liberation of women and the emancipation of youth. In the domain of work and production which interests us here more directly, reigns the denunciation of 'hierarchical power [structure]', paternalism, authoritarianism, imposed schedules, prescribed tasks, the Taylorian separation between conception and execution, and, more generally, the division of labor, with, as positive counterpoint, the exigency of

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46 Ibid., p. 263 – 264.

autonomy and self-administration, and the promise of unlimited liberation of human creativity....

Although this artist critique – at bottom a revolt against the rationalization regime in Weber’s sense – had been heard more or less in the same form since the early 1800s, it was now far better formulated thanks to recent philosophical inputs such as French existentialism or Herbert Marcuse’s *One Dimensional Man*.<sup>47</sup> By 1975, the capitalists were truly in a crisis. Throughout the 60s, enterprises were already experiencing slower growth while salaries were increasing at the normal pace. Now the capitalists were faced with both the increasing cost of production in consequence of settling with the workers in the past few years and the increasingly competitive global environment.<sup>48</sup> They discovered that they needed to be more *flexible* in order to make profits in the new environment: outsourcing, subcontractors, joint-ventures, becoming “lean”, “flexible”, and more “adaptive” to the new, fast-changing, market conditions. Boltanski-Chiapello are echoing Harvey’s account of the capitalism’s transition to flexible accumulation. They differ from Harvey by adding that capitalism acquired greater flexibility precisely *by recuperating the artist critique*. (At this point, notably the demand for autonomy from authority but not so much the demand for authenticity.) Openly talking about the 68 revolutionaries’ demand for autonomy and the need to satisfy it, the capitalists began granting their workers greater autonomy, letting them form work groups to control their own performance, removing the authoritative boss standing above them, and encouraging them to be creative. From now on it was the result that counted, not the blind following of orders. The old rigid hierarchy and command structure disintegrated in favor of a flattened, ever-changing “network”. This is how the formerly giant and hierarchical enterprises cut themselves down to a flat, slender core swimming in the midst of a (again) “network” of subcontractors, allied businesses, intermediate services – the new shape they needed to assume in order to be more flexible and adaptive. The capitalists had at last learned that they needed to budge on the question of authority. Now, instead of the employee staying in the same position doing the same tasks and gradually moving up the hierarchy through promotion (the life-long “career” in the same company characteristic of the second spirit of capitalism), the work place was reconstituted as a series of “projects”. A project was a short-term cooperation between workers to accomplish a particular task and dissolved as soon as the task was accomplished. The worker was expected to participate in one project and, when it came to an end, to be flexible enough as to participate in the next project aimed at accomplishing something completely different. Even working

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47 “La thèse affirmant que les êtres humains se trouvent uniformisés et perdent toute singularité, toute différence, quand ils sont rassemblés dans une foule, qui culmine, des années 30 aux années 60, dans l’idée selon laquelle on assisterait à l’avènement d’une ère des masses et de la massification de la pensée, constitue sans doute l’une des thématiques les plus souvent reprises, depuis des horizons très divers, du dernier tiers du XIXe siècle jusqu’aux années 60 du siècle suivant. D’abord associée à la critique des régimes démocratiques, accusés de donner le pouvoir à la foule et de favoriser par là l’apparition de démagogues, cette thématique sera reprise par la critique des totalitarismes et, particulièrement, du nazisme, pour essayer d’expliquer pourquoi les Allemands se sont livrés au pouvoir du ‘Führer’ comme s’ils avaient abandonné tout esprit critique et même toute individualité. Elle réapparaîtra, dans les années 50-60, sous la forme d’une critique de la massification opérée par les médias, accusés de conditionner et d’uniformiser les consommateurs de ces produits culturels de masse en les transformant en récepteurs passifs d’un message standard, prédisposés par là à adopter sans aucun esprit critique les idéologies qui leur sont imposées d’en haut....” Ibid., p. 589.

48 Boltanski-Chiapello mention the OPEC oil crisis, the relocation of manufacturing to developing nations, and the emergence of new players on the global market (presumably Japan and the other Asian tigers) as factors making the business environment more competitive. They are basically talking about the same “turning point” which Harvey has referred to as the “overaccumulation crisis 1968 – 1973”.

hours were no longer constant but always changing in response to business demands, and the strict separation between professional life (work time) and private life (free/ family time) that was essential during the second capitalism began to crumble. In this fashion, the top-down Fordist structure characterized by rigidity, permanence, hierarchy, and authoritarianism was flattened into a horizontal “connexionist” world characterized by fluidity, constant change, and absence of authority.

Le projet est l’occasion et le prétexte de la connexion. Celui-ci rassemble temporairement des personnes très disparates, et se présente comme un bout de réseau fortement activé pendant une période relativement courte, mais qui permet de forger des liens plus durables qui seront ensuite mis en sommeil tout en restant disponibles. Les projets permettent la production et l’accumulation dans un monde qui, s’il était purement connexionniste, ne connaîtrait que des flux sans que rien ne puisse se stabiliser, s’accumuler ou prendre forme....

The project is the occasion and pretext of connection. The connection collects temporarily together disparate persons, and presents itself as a point in the network strongly activated during a relatively short period, but which permits the forging of more durable links which will then remain dormant while remaining available. The project enables production and accumulation in a world which, if it were purely connexionist, would see nothing except flux without the possibility that something might stabilize, accumulate, or assume form....<sup>49</sup>

Here Boltanski-Chiapello completely agree with Harvey’s description of the new, fleeting and dynamic, business environment under flexible accumulation regime or Thomas Friedman’s description of the new “flat” world. While capitalism was able to acquire in this way the flexibility needed to respond to the new, increasingly competitive environment (where demands were no longer stable but fast-changing), it also satisfied the artist critique: the protesting students who had recently entered the work force had greater autonomy, were more able to express their creativity, felt liberated from the stifling “straitjacket” and authoritarian structure, and were in general more able to realize themselves as unique individuals.

The new connexionist world took off especially during the 1980s, when the 68 revolutionaries moved into positions of power both in the government and in the business world and made an effort to heed the capitalists’ demand for greater flexibility. (Once they got into power, they changed side and wanted to promote capitalism rather than dismantling it.) We recall from Harvey that this is the era when Thatcher and Reagan led the way for deregulation in order to grant capitalists greater flexibility. In France, although the socialists were in power, the result was the same: tremendous leeway for enterprises. The result was tremendous growth and sudden increase of profits for capitalists after capitalism had suffered stagnation and negative growth throughout the 1960s and the 1970s. The artist critique of 68 revolutionaries coincided perfectly with Neoliberalism: Boltanski-Chiapello *seem* to have corroborated my Foucauldian thesis that the purpose of resistance against capitalism is really just the reinforcement of capitalism, but they show that this has occurred through an entirely different mechanism: namely that the capitalists have long been in the habit of appropriating the criticisms

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49 Ibid., p. 170.

against them as a way to *both* increase profit and silence complaints – that capitalism has always depended on criticisms for growth and transformation. Boltanski-Chiapello are weary of the simplistic explanatory mode which I *seem* to have advocated, that changing production and market conditions lead to capitalists' new response, which then leads to new ideological formation that is manifested, for example, in the leftist criticisms of capitalism, only in order to help capitalism.<sup>50</sup> By the 1990s, we thus see the revolution in managerial literature which Boltanski-Chiapello have observed in the beginning of their work: it was now full of denunciation of the old hierarchies and the robotic workers who merely follow orders and of praises for the horizontal networks which promoted autonomy and permitted self-realization of the workers. As the artist critique was satisfied, the social critique pretty much disintegrated in the 1980s. The satisfaction of the artist critique was disastrous for the social critique partly because the collapse of the communist bloc had completely discredited the French communist party which had hitherto monopolized the social critique, and partly because of the decline of syndicalism. The syndicate activities were tremendously weakened from 1980 onward partly due to internal disorganization and partly due to the weakening of social classes as the proper categorization with which to understand society in the mind of the public and social scientists.

Although the worker had now greater autonomy and could be more creative, the sort of job security which was formerly guaranteed in the Fordist-Keneyesian hierarchical world was no longer possible in the new dynamic, connexionist world of flexible accumulation. (This is again reflected in the silence about job security in the managerial literature from the 1990s.) The new connexionist world was characterized by increased competition and high skill labor. Boltanski-Chiapello have much emphasized that only those who were flexible, “multivalent”, mobile, active, autonomous, and possessed of good people skills (in order to form more relationships) were able to succeed in the new world<sup>51</sup> but have completely neglected to dwell on the fact that the connexionist world was also characterized by the relocation of manufacturing to the developing world and the transformation into a service and knowledge economy. In this new world, one must be able to form new links fast to acquire the latest information and have a college diploma as the minimum requirement. In any case, the point is that it is a much harsher world demanding greater abilities, so that more and more people found themselves unable to make it. The result is an increasing number of homeless and permanently unemployed people roaming the streets. This is the other observation with which Boltanski-Chiapello have begun their work: the disappearance of criticisms of capitalism just at a time when capitalism re-flourished and miseries multiplied in society throughout the 1980s and the early 1990s. By mid-1990s, however, the social critique re-appeared in a diminutive form to address the increasing miseries in society. Because the old conception of capitalists exploiting their workers was permanently gone along with the disappearance of the Taylorist and Fordist factories, the new social critique had to change its

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50 “La transformation du capitalisme et l'émergence d'un nouvel ensemble de valeurs destiné à le justifier peuvent donc être éclairées autrement que par un discours sur une adaptation inexorable aux nouvelles conditions de la concurrence”, *ibid.*, p. 312. In another place: “L'histoire des années post-68 fait une fois de plus la preuve que les relations de l'économique et du social – pour reprendre des catégories consacrées – ne se réduisent pas à la domination du premier sur le second, mais qu'à l'inverse le capitalisme est tenu de proposer des formes d'engagement compatibles avec l'état du monde social dans lequel il est incorporé et avec les aspirations de ceux de ses membres qui parviennent à s'exprimer avec le plus de force...” *Ibid.*, p, 261 – 262. This is where Boltanski-Chiapello most manifest their Weberian spirit and opposition to any historical materialist approach.

51 In the framework of Boltanski and Chiapello, such a person is called *le grand* in the “City by Projects” (*la cité par projets*).

term to that of “exclusion”, that the new capitalism had excluded such and such segments of the population.

The new social critique was embodied by humanitarian actions rather than by syndicalism, the charity groups which sprang up all over France (and of course in the US as well) since the 1990s to help homeless people and the unemployed. You would think that Boltanski-Chiapello would then study the feminist and minorities rights activism whose standard complaint since the commencement of Neoliberalism (flexible capitalism) was precisely social critique in terms of “exclusion” (“discrimination”). But no. Instead, Boltanski-Chiapello divert their effort to an analysis of the new form of “exploitation” proper to the new connexionist world and how capitalism proceeded to settle this matter. Success in the connexionist world is all about mobility or the ability to form more, and more strategic, connections in a shorter time. Those that can do so gain more profits, and the more mobile are only able to form more connections on the basis that the less mobile have to stay in their place. In other words, the more mobile are “exploiting” the less mobile through the differential of mobility between them. This is different from “exploitation” during the first and the second stage of capitalism, where the enabling factors were differentials in terms of, respectively, property (ownership of the means of production) and the power to make decisions (the director of an enterprise vs the workers he commanded). For example, the financial services, fast moving with their capital, can easily exploit the nation-states which are immobile and industrial companies which can’t easily move around with their factories. (For this reason, financial companies are frequently called “parasites”, having merely to move money around whereas those exploited have to actually stay in place and produce something.) Boltanski-Chiapello then proceed to narrate how capitalism eventually institutes new laws to curb over-exploitation by financial agents. In this way, the new flexible capitalism has taken care of the new sort of social critique articulated in the traditional term of “exploitation”.

The new round of artist critique also soon appeared in view of the new conditions of oppression which the connexionist world had created. Firstly, there was a new demand for freedom. Boltanski-Chiapello have named the 68 revolutionaries’ ethical critique the “artist critique” precisely because it is the exact same demand which the Parisian artists expressed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century – the wish to be liberated from society’s oppressive conventions, norms, and laws and to become whatever they wanted to become whenever they wanted it. (More on this below.) However, as soon as the connexionist world with the life of jumping from project to project seems to have guaranteed liberation from rigid constraints, the workers find the cost of such autonomy, mobility, creativity, and multivalence unbearable. As noted, it is a far more demanding world with tremendous increase in stress, where the brain is over-worked and the work a lot more intensified. (I should mention here my own McDonaldization thesis: stress is tremendously increased because every worker has to get more done within a shorter time.) Without command and surveillance from above, the worker also paradoxically experiences more control: the control and surveillance from one’s teammates, even more

intimate, have replaced those from bosses, a greater distance away.<sup>52</sup> And the job insecurity associated with the connexionist world has already been mentioned.

The new forms of oppression which the connexionist world has engendered are manifested in the old indicators of *anomie*. Because the connexionist world is dominated by short-term perspectives (McDonaldization or the faster pace of life), divorce rate increases and suicide becomes more frequent for people of professional age as young people experience increasing difficulty in projecting themselves into the future. Also increase in depression and consumption of psychotropic drugs. All these are the paradoxical effects of liberation, autonomy, and self-realization. The purpose of the new artist critique is to raise awareness about the increasingly demanding, stressful, and fast-paced world. Although it is heard from time to time, it is – this Boltanski-Chiapello did not mention – far rarer than it used to be in the 1960s.

Although the new capitalism has difficulty in satisfactorily satisfying the artist's demand in the domain of production – it is in the nature of production according to whatever regime, Fordist or flexible, to demand discipline from workers: if they shall not be controlled by bosses, then they need to learn to control themselves – it is quite able to do it in the domain of consumption. Boltanski-Chiapello note that, here, capitalism has completely succeeded in posing itself as the “liberator”. From the early Walkman to the latest video-streaming on Internet, the consumer is able to listen to whatever music and watch whatever movie s/he wants whenever s/he wants it. The vast expansion of the travel industry (airlines and so on) has also made it possible for the consumer to go wherever s/he wants whenever s/he wants it. The entire new service economy is geared toward instant gratification of our desires and has been quite successful in this. (We need only the feminist and LGBT movements to free us for becoming whatever we want to become whenever we want it.)

Secondly, the artist demand for authenticity soon reared its head again. Here Boltanski-Chiapello trace out the development (or distortion) of the very concept of “authenticity” as the new capitalism continues to try to incorporate it never with total success. Recall that the 68 revolutionaries raised the objection to the second capitalism on ground of authenticity, that the Fordist production had created a world full of inauthenticity because of mass production and mass consumption: products were produced every one the same as every other, and when people were socialized to consume them everyone ended up being just like every other. It's a complaint about standardization that constituted the essence of the Fordist era. (Reckwitz will have much to say about this.) It is in reaction against the Fordist model of mass production and mass consumption that Heidegger and Sartre developed their philosophy of authenticity (escaping from the comfortable world of uniformity and conformity and, facing up anxiety, becoming true to oneself, i.e. different from everyone else).

Boltanski-Chiapello trace out capitalism's unsuccessful attempt to incorporate “authenticity” in the domain of consumption throughout the 1980s and the 1990s. True to its nature, whenever a certain

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52 I have not mentioned the other revolution which Boltanski-Chiapello have observed in the neomanagement literature, the revolution in the control of workers. Workers should come under greater control through *auto-control* in the new project environment and *control from the client side*. By being directly exposed to the client in the new network environment, the workers learn to comply with the client's demands of their own accord rather than being told by their boss as to what to do.

criticism about capitalism is raised, the latter attempts to offer a new work environment or a new product incorporating what is missing in order to squelch complaint and increase profits. From 1980s onward the capitalists tried to offer products on the market that were “authentic” in the sense of not being mass-produced: products in many small batches that were dissimilar to each other and more in the form of cultural events and items that happened one time or were one of a kind (concerts, festivals, arts). Then the commercialization (*marchandisation*) of what was previously not commercialized: human beings, landscape, rhythms, “adventure tourism”. Consumption became increasingly about intangible things. What Harvey has described as capitalism’s attempt to shorten turnover time and what Reckwitz will later describe as “culturalization of the economy” Boltanski-Chiapello have described here as the capitalists’ striving to answer the demand for “authenticity” in their products.

Boltanski-Chiapello use the example of eco-products to illustrate capitalism’s ultimate failure to match up to “authenticity”. At first consumers wanted “authentic” food that didn’t hurt the environment and didn’t contain chemicals threatening health. Capitalists thus put forward “green food” on the market. But the consumers were still skeptical because the very fact that this kind of food was produced to be sold implied that it couldn’t be “genuine”.<sup>53</sup> “Authenticity” came to mean the very fact that something was not produced for exchange (that it consisted purely in use-value). It was now the *intention* behind the production which counted. Making it for the sake of making it, or simply because one likes it.

Plutôt qu’avec la problématique de la massification, qui avait dominé la première moitié du XXe siècle, la forme prise actuellement par la critique de l’inauthenticité renoue avec une autre tradition dans laquelle s’enracine la dénonciation de l’artifice par opposition au spontané, du mécanique par opposition au vivant, du sincère par opposition au stratégique et, par voie de conséquence, de l’émotion véritable, qui surgit de façon non intentionnelle, par opposition à son imitation simulée....<sup>54</sup>

Rather than with the problematic of massification, which had dominated the first half of the twentieth century, the form currently assumed by the critique of inauthenticity is tied up with another tradition in which is rooted the denunciation of artificiality as opposed to spontaneity, of the mechanic as opposed to the living, of sincerity as opposed to the strategic, and, by way of consequence, of true emotion, which surges up in an unintentional manner, as opposed to simulated imitation of feelings....

If authenticity ultimately means what is natural, spontaneous, not produced for the sake of exchange on the market but for one’s own use – the condition before the complex division of labor in modern society where everything one uses is made by people one does not know and in factories far away – then capitalism simply cannot satisfy this demand by its very nature. Here capitalism has reached its limit in recuperating the critique against itself. We may imagine a hippie colony outside society where there is no money and where everyone lives in communion with nature and produces only for use – that’s what “authenticity” ultimately means and here something of the critique has at last escaped capitalism.

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53 “La marchandisation suffisait à jeter le doute sur la réalité et sur la valeur des éco-produits...”, *ibid.*, p. 603

54 *Ibid.*, p. 605.



In the domain of production, Boltanski-Chiapello trace out a similar development of the concept of “authenticity” toward the spontaneous and non-artificial. First of all, they note that the traditional, Existentialist notion of authenticity (a “true self”) is no longer possible in the new connexionist world.

Dans un monde connexionniste, la fidélité à soi apparaît en effet comme rigidité; la résistance aux autres, comme refus de se connecter; la vérité définie par l’identité d’une représentation à un original, comme méconnaissance de la variabilité infinie des êtres qui circulent dans le réseau et se modifient chaque fois qu’ils entrent en relation avec des êtres différents, en sorte qu’aucun de leurs avatars ne peut être pris comme point d’origine auquel d’autres manifestations seraient confrontées. Dans un monde en réseau, la question de l’authenticité ne peut plus, formellement, se poser....<sup>55</sup>

In a connexionist world, the fidelity to a self appears in effect as rigidity; the resistance to others, as refusal to connect with them; the true defined by the identity of a representation to an original, as misunderstanding of an infinite variability of beings which circulate in a network and modify themselves each time they enter into relations with different beings, in such a way that none of their avatars can ever be taken to be point of origin with which other manifestations would be confronted. In the world of network, the question of inauthenticity can no longer be formally posed....

Mieux vaut en effet, dans l’optique de l’accumulation illimitée, que la question soit supprimée, que les personnes soient convaincues que tout n’est ou ne peut plus être que simulacre, que la ‘véritable’ authenticité est désormais exclue du monde, ou que l’aspiration à l’ ‘authentique’ n’était qu’illusion....<sup>56</sup>

It is better, in effect, in the optic of unlimited accumulation, that the question be suppressed, that people be convinced that everything can only be, or can no longer but be, simulacra, that ‘veritable’ authenticity is henceforth excluded from the world, that the aspiration toward the ‘authentic’ was but illusion....

Boltanski-Chiapello provide three examples of the new philosophy of “network” which have dismantled Existentialism and are more proper to the new age than, say, Marcuse: Bourdieu, Derrida, and Deleuze. All but simulacra, spectacle, illusion, and the truth all but abolished... The Existentialist philosophy of “authenticity” belonged to the Fordist era, not to the era of flexible capitalism.

In the connexionist world, the entrepreneur is a person achieving authenticity by jumping from project to project, from situation to situation, and engaging in authentic relationships. A relationship is “authentic” when it is characterized by spontaneity, love, empathy, sensitivity to other people’s feelings, rather than by strategic calculation and ulterior motive in profit-making. Although this is obviously impossible in the capitalist world insofar as it is in the nature of capitalism to accumulate

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55 Ibid., p. 607 – 608.

56 Ibid., p. 609.

capital (profits), the entrepreneur, while making connections in business, should try to maximize authenticity in this sense as much as possible:

On trouve des exemples du premier type dans les écrits de Bob Aubrey qui, dans une sorte d'apologue, relate l'histoire d'un 'client' devenu un 'ami' au cours d'une discussion qualifiée à la fois de 'franche' et d' 'efficace': 'Dès l'instant où notre relation s'est transformée en une entente mutuelle, j'ai eu l'impression que je me trouvais au cœur de ce qu'il y a de plus vrai et de plus noble dans les affaires, la décision de 'faire le chemin ensemble', de se faire confiance et de s'occuper de l'autre [ ... ]. Depuis [ ... ] je privilégie intuitivement lors de ma décision la possibilité de créer une relation d'accompagnement avec mon client' .... Mais, le même auteur est aussi l'un des promoteurs les plus enthousiastes de l'exigence de mobilité qu'il désigne notamment sous l'expression d' 'entreprise de soi'. De même, R. Moss Kanter prône en même temps l'empathie' ('la conclusion d'accords satisfaisants dépend de l'empathie, c'est-à-dire de la capacité à se mettre à la place d'autrui et à apprécier ses objectifs') et l'adoption d'un 'système flexible d'affectation des tâches' sur la base de 'projets à la fois successifs et parallèles, de durée et d'importance variables entre lesquels circuleront des équipes dont l'importance sera variable selon les tâches, les défis et les opportunités' .... Enfin, dernier exemple, H. Landier met l'accent, à quelques pages de distance, sur la nécessité de 's'adapter rapidement' et de développer les 'relations informelles' dans une 'coopération librement consentie fondée sur la confiance' ....<sup>57</sup>

One finds examples of the first type in the narratives of Bob Aubrey who, in a sort of apology, relates the story of a 'client' who became a 'friend' in the course of a discussion that was qualified at the same time as 'frank' and 'effective': 'Since the moment where our relationship was transformed into a mutual understanding, I have had the impression that that I found myself in the heart of what is more true and more noble in business, the decision to 'make the journey together', to trust each other and to take care of each other.... Since then... I privilege intuitively, during my decision, the possibility of creating a relationship of accompaniment with my client' ... But the same author is also one of the most enthusiastic promoters of the exigency of mobility which he designates notably as 'enterprise of the self'. In the same way, R. Moss Kanter praises at the same time 'empathy' ('the conclusion of a satisfying deal depends on empathy, that is to say the capacity for putting oneself in the place of another and appreciating his objectives') and the adoption of a 'flexible system of task assignment' on the basis of 'projects that are successive as well as parallel and of variable duration and importance between which the teams circulate, the importance of which will be variable according to the tasks, the challenges, and the opportunities' .... Finally, a last example, H. Landier places the accent, a few pages later, on the necessity of rapidly adapting and developing 'informal relationships' in a 'cooperation that is freely consented to and founded on trust' ....

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57 Ibid., p. 617 – 618.

Here one sees that “authentic relationship” is but the other side of “flexibility”. It is also about not using command and force but letting the other person develop himself or herself (autonomy):

Or, les vingt dernières années ont plutôt été marquées par l’affaiblissement des ordres conventionnels et des relations hiérarchiques, qu’elles relèvent d’un monde industriel ou d’un monde domestique, dénoncées comme autoritaires, et par la multiplication des revendications touchant à l’autonomie. Dans un tel contexte, on est amené à substituer au commandement hiérarchique dans le plus grand nombre de cas possible des pratiques visant à amener les gens à faire d’eux-mêmes, et comme sous l’effet d’une décision volontaire et autonome, ce qu’on désire leur voir faire.... La développement de techniques propres à entraîner des personnes à faire de façon apparemment volontaire ce qu’on souhaite leur voir faire a donc été particulièrement stimulé....<sup>58</sup>

Now, the last twenty years have rather been marked by the weakening of conventional orders and hierarchical relations, whether they related to the industrial world or to the domestic world, denounced as authoritarian, and by the multiplication of claims touching on autonomy. In such a context, one is led to substitute for the hierarchical command in the most possible cases practices aiming at leading people to do of their own accord, and as if under the effect of a voluntary and autonomous decision, what one wants to see them do.... The development of techniques proper to causing people to do in an apparently voluntary manner what one wishes to see them do has therefore been particularly stimulated....

When the entrepreneur practices “authenticity” with others and flexibly maneuvers through projects, s/he becomes “authentic” himself or herself. But this is not about returning to a “true self” by withdrawing from people and the world, but just the opposite. It is some sort of permanent self which however is flexible enough to change according to the occasion, like translating an original text into different languages – this is the maximum permanence which flexible capitalism can afford to provide. Ultimately, flexible capitalism’s enormous concern with authenticity – when capitalism has never taken up this issue during its previous two stages – completes its concern with autonomy: both are integral parts of being “flexible”. The connexionist world is about self-realization, i.e. the development of an authentic self, an updated version of the artist,

Le bonheur promis au grand est l’épanouissement de soi au sens de la découverte des potentialités qu’il recelait en lui-même. La succession des projets est conçue comme l’occasion de lui révéler à chaque étape un peu plus de son essence, de l’identité la plus profonde qui le constitue et le singularise (un peu à la manière dont la succession des avant-gardes dans l’art était censée avoir pour mission de révéler progressivement l’essence de l’art)....<sup>59</sup>

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58 Ibid., p. 619. See the comment about Dale Carnegie later.

59 Ibid., p. 624.

The happiness promised to the *grand* is the realization of the self in the sense of discovering the potentials which he harbors in himself. The succession of projects is conceived as the occasion where a little more of his essence is revealed to himself at each stage, a little more of the identity at the most profound level which constitutes his self and singularizes him (somewhat in the way in which the succession of the avant-gardes in art was supposed to have for its mission the progressive revelation of the essence of art)....

In America, the most complete picture of the entrepreneur according to flexible capitalism is provided by the 1996 movie “Jerry Maguire” (with Tom Cruise): authentic, autonomous, and flexible. Jerry Maguire engages in an authentic relationship with his client, the secret to success is being spontaneous (the “Kwan”) without concern for money – money will come of its own accord. Something like the incorporation of Eastern religiosity (Daoism, Buddhism, Yoga) by Western capitalism. The entrepreneur is a “guru”. Flexible capitalism has tried its best to make an artist out of the entrepreneur. While the Parisian artist on the basis of which the artist critique is constructed rejects money and comfort and any sort of commercialization (*marchandisation*), this is clearly impossible for capitalism. What capitalism *is* able to do is however to incorporate the underlying spirituality and commercialize it. In the process, as Boltanski-Chiapello emphasize, flexible capitalism has tremendously expanded the domain of commercialization, including the commercialization of human beings. This is seen on the production side in the fact that, while the personality traits of a worker or a manager were, during the Fordist era, ignored as irrelevant for production, they are of utmost importance in the current age of flexible capitalism and therefore factored into managerial decisions about who to hire.

Such is Boltanski-Chiapello’s account of how the third spirit of capitalism is constituted – born from incorporating anti-capitalist movements into itself. The account is about France and what happened in the United States was somewhat different: here the 68 revolutionaries caused the government to budge on the issue of Vietnam War but left capitalism largely unaffected. It is however the same spirit of capitalism which had conquered American capitalism by the 1990s. But in the United States it was capitalism’s shock over the success of Japan and Asian tigers in penetrating the domestic market *and the feminists’ social and artist critique* which had caused its transformation into the third spirit.

It’s a pity that Boltanski-Chiapello never get into feminism, anti-racism activism, and LGBT movements. The new connexionist world, whether in France or in the United States, is clearly a feminine world – in contrast to the masculine world of the second spirit of capitalism marked by rationalization, hierarchy, and rigidity. Within this perspective, it is easy to understand feminism, and the whole social justice revolution which has swept North America since the inception of the third spirit of capitalism, as the new capitalism’s mechanism to enforce flexibility on the level of the whole society.

## **5. Boltanski-Chiapello’s answer to my fundamental question**

At the end of my review of Boltanski-Chiapello’s classic, I want to discuss three particular issues: how their views imply the congruence between femininity and the new capitalism (hence women’s greater importance in the new society), how this congruence explains the inversion of Western (especially

North American) society to its opposite, and whether they have discredited my historical materialist approach with their Weberian narrative.

As Nancy Fraser has pointed out, Boltanski-Chiapello's account suffers from the particular fault of being gender-blind. For this reason, despite its enormous similarity to my account, they could not but be silent about the obvious connection between the new connexionist world (flexible capitalism) on the one hand and feminism from the second wave onward and the rise of women in Western societies on the other. Fraser has noticed the connection but is ultimately deficient in her view. She summarizes her view in this way:

In their important book *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, they contend that capitalism periodically remakes itself in moments of historical rupture, in part by recuperating strands of critique directed against it. In such moments, elements of anti-capitalist critique are resignified to legitimate an emergent new form of capitalism, which thereby becomes endowed with the higher, moral significance needed to motivate new generations to shoulder the inherently meaningless work of endless accumulation. For Boltanski and Chiapello, the "new spirit" that has served to legitimate the flexible neoliberal capitalism of our time was fashioned from the New Left's "artistic" critique of state-organized capitalism, which denounced the grey conformism of corporate culture. It was in the accents of May 68, they claim, that neoliberal management theorists propounded a new "connexionist," "project" capitalism, in which rigid organizational hierarchies would give way to horizontal teams and flexible networks, thereby liberating individual creativity. The result was a new romance of capitalism with real-world effects – a romance that enveloped the tech start-ups of Silicon Valley and that today finds its purest expression in the ethos of Google.

Boltanski and Chiapello's argument is original and profound. Yet, because it is gender-blind, it fails to grasp the full character of the spirit of neoliberal capitalism. To be sure, that spirit includes (what I would call) a masculinist romance of the free, unencumbered, self-fashioning individual, which they aptly describe. [*The standard white man from the bourgeois and Fordist era.*] But neoliberal capitalism has as much to do with Walmart, maquiladoras, and micro-credit as with Silicon Valley and Google. And its indispensable workers are disproportionately women, not only young single women, but also married women and women with children; not only racialized women, but women of virtually all nationalities and ethnicities. As such women have poured into labor markets around the globe, the effect has been to undercut once and for all state-organized capitalism's ideal of the family wage [*the nuclear family*]. In disorganized neoliberal capitalism, that ideal has been replaced by the newer, more modern norm of the two-earner family. Never mind that the reality that underlies the new ideal is depressed wage levels, decreased job security, declining living standards, a steep rise in the number of hours worked for wages per household, exacerbation of the double shift – now often a triple or quadruple shift – and a rise in female-headed households. Disorganized capitalism turns a sow's ear into a silk purse by elaborating

a new romance of female advancement and gender justice. Disturbing as it may sound, I am suggesting that second-wave feminism has unwittingly provided a key ingredient of the new spirit of neoliberalism. Our critique of the family wage now supplies a good part of the romance that invests flexible capitalism with a higher meaning and a moral point. Endowing their daily struggles with an ethical meaning, the feminist romance attracts women at both ends of the social spectrum: at one end, the female cadres of the professional middle classes, determined to crack the glass ceiling; at the other end, the female temps, part-timers, low-wage service workers, domestics, sex workers, migrants, EPZ workers, and micro-credit borrowers, seeking not only income and material security, but also dignity, self-betterment, and liberation from traditional authority. At both ends, the dream of women's emancipation is harnessed to the engine of capitalist accumulation.<sup>60</sup>

Fraser's argument about capitalism's incorporation of feminism in order to constitute a new spirit is more complex than this, but this excerpt suffices to give you the gist. I find her view fundamentally deficient. Although she has grasped the fact that capitalism has duped women into contributing to the accumulation process by making them believe this is their liberation (this was my point in "Feminist Work Ethic and the Spirit of Consumerism"), she has not grasped the other fact that capitalism doesn't simply want women's labor but also, more importantly, their feminine quality. She operates on the new social critique, but not the new artist critique. American women and feminists have been, in the past thirty years, obsessed with the "exclusion" theme, how women are excluded from the capitalist system. They demand "inclusion", namely, parity with men in the higher echelons in business and politics and in specialized professions like STEM where men still make up the majority. In the domain of business, the capitalists have certainly heeded, responded to, and *incorporated* the new feminist social critique, hired a lot of women, increased women's representation in the higher echelons, *and discovered that this has increased their profits!* In other words, in the United States, it is the feminists who have played the role which the 68 intellectuals and students have played in France. Fraser is referring to *this* when she laments that feminism has become an indispensable ingredient of the new neoliberalism.

Fraser has not touched on the other aspect on which I have focused. Namely, enterprises have also incorporated cultural feminist ideals (most notably horizontal cooperation or "network" in place of vertical hierarchy and command) in order to become more flexible and competitive, and want women to join the new business world because feminine qualities are more suited to the new service economy. On this account, the relationship between feminism and capitalism is that, when the second wave feminists launched their *artist critique* and rambled against the Newtonian embodied by Fordism, the capitalists proceeded to incorporate their critique and transform the structure of their empires as a way to increase profits under an increasingly difficult environment. While Fraser has neglected this issue and Boltanski-Chiapello are silent about it, I want to try to summarize this process within the framework which Boltanski-Chiapello have laid out. (Note that this is a development peculiar to the United States.) This is how I shall incorporate their classic on the new spirit of capitalism in the postmodern age into my own framework.

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60 "Feminism, Capitalism, and the Cunning of History", in *Fortunes of Feminism*, p. 219 – 220. Note that the article was originally published in *New Left Review* in 2009.

When one pays attention to historical details, one sees that it is not so much that feminism has emerged to anticipate capitalism (my principal thesis in my *Thermodynamic Interpretation of History*) as that the leftist paradigm, originally a male enterprise, has been taken over by the feminists. This probably explains why Boltanski-Chiapello are gender-blind. In the 1960s, Western civilization was clearly ready for a “paradigm shift” (in Kuhn’s sense). A new way of looking at reality was emerging independently in diverse domains to *invert* the epistème that was conditioned by, and part and parcel of, the Fordist accumulation regime. First of all, Postmodernism started in 1960s in architecture inverting the modernist “Less is more” and “Form follows function” into “Less is bore” and “Form follows fantasies”. Then, a new paradigm of “network” emerged around the same time in philosophy and social sciences. This includes studies on complexity, chaos, and self-organization, the critique of centralization and hierarchy, the emphasis on communication and language game, along with the aforementioned philosophies emphasizing networks and simulacra within the French circle.<sup>61</sup> The new trend embodied, and rectified, those qualities which were formerly devalued and marginalized during the Enlightenment and the Fordist era. It is these formerly devalued and marginalized qualities which would now constitute the “manager” under flexible capitalism.

Sans sacrifier au simplisme marxisant de l’infrastructure versus superstructure, on ne peut pourtant ignorer l’analogie évidente entre ces deux formes de dualisme: la critique, dans le management, des organisations hiérarchiques et planifiées au nom de la fluidité des réseaux, et la critique, dans l’ordre épistémologique, du système au nom de la multiplicité et du chaos dont parle J. Bouveresse: ‘Le secret du succès semble résider dans l’application conséquente de procédés du type suivant: d’un côté, une série de notions connotées négativement, comme la raison, le système, l’ordre, l’unité, l’uniformité, la loi, le déterminisme, la nécessité, la répétition, etc.; de l’autre, leurs opposés connotés positivement, l’intuition (poétique), la fragmentation, le chaos, la multiplicité, le polymorphisme, l’anomalie, le hasard, l’accident, l’invention, etc. On considérera comme acquis que les concepts de la première catégorie, qui ont, de toute évidence, fait leur temps, ont toujours été dominants et que ceux de la deuxième ont été scandaleusement dévalorisés, négligés, ignorés, réprimés, occultés, refoulés, etc. Heureusement, l’heure de la revanche et de la réparation, qui ouvre des perspectives illimitées à la science, à la pensée et à l’humanité, est enfin arrivée’ ....<sup>62</sup>

Without sacrificing to the simplistic Marxian notion of a substructure versus superstructure, one cannot however ignore the evident analogy between these two forms of dualism: the critique, in management, of hierarchical and planned

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61 For the French case, Boltanski-Chiapello cite as examples A. Bressand and C. Distler’s *La Planète relationnelle* and D. Parmechia’s *Philosophie des réseaux*: “On pourrait aussi prendre pour exemple le livre de D. Parmechia (1993), *Philosophie des réseaux*, qui, avec de larges intersections par rapport aux auteurs cités dans *La Planète relationnelle* (Prigogine, Varela, Bateson, etc.) permet de compléter la liste des références standard associées à la constitution de ce paradigme en le prolongeant soit du côté de la philosophie (Wittgenstein, Deleuze, Lyotard), soit du côté des disciplines de la communication et des sciences cognitives (Weaver et Shannon, Wiener, Turner, etc.), soit du côté de la modélisation mathématique (Benzécri, Mandelbrot, Thom) soit enfin vers la géographie et l’étude des systèmes de communication.” Recall that I have partly covered the issue in my *Thermodynamic Interpretation of History*.

62 Bouveresse, “La vengeance de Spengler”, *Le temps de la réflexion*, N, Gallimard, 1983, p. 387 – 388, cited by Boltanski-Chiapello, *ibid.*, p. 773 – 774.

organizations in the name of the fluidity of the network, and the critique, in the epistemological order, of the system in the name of multiplicity and chaos of which J. Bouveresse speaks: ‘The secret of success seems to lie in the consequent application of procedures of the following type: on the one hand, a series of notions negatively connoted, such as reason, system, order, unity, uniformity, law, determinism, necessity, repetition, etc.; on the other hand, their opposites positively connoted, intuition (poetic), fragmentation, chaos, multiplicity, polymorphism, anomaly, hazard, accident, invention, etc. One will consider as given that the concepts of the first category, which have, evidently, had their time, have always been dominant, and that those of the second have been scandalously devalued, neglected, ignored, repressed, hidden, suppressed, etc. Luckily, the hour of revenge and reparation, which will open up unlimited perspective for science, thinking, and humanity, has finally arrived’....

We have already seen how the artist critique of the 68 revolutionaries consisted roughly in advocating the same formerly marginalized qualities. The demand of the Parisian artist of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century – their demand for liberation from society’s conventions, norms, and laws which was more or less repeated by the 68 revolutionaries – consisted also essentially in a desire for “uncertainty”:

Les demandes d’autonomie et d’autoréalisation prennent ici la forme que lui ont donnée les artistes parisiens de la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle, qui ont fait de l’*incertitude* un style de vie et une valeur...: celle de pouvoir disposer de plusieurs vies et, corrélativement, d’une pluralité d’identités.... Dans cette optique, la libération se conçoit avant tout comme la délivrance du désir opprimé d’être quelqu’un d’autre; de ne pas être celui dont d’autres (parents, maîtres, etc.) ont conçu le projet; d’être celui que l’on désire être, au moment où on le désire, ce qui laisse ouverte la possibilité d’une pluralité d’identifications adoptées à la façon dont on adopte un style (un *look*) et, par conséquent, d’échapper aux appartenances identitaires de la nation, de la région, de l’ethnie et surtout, au moins du milieu du XIXe siècle jusqu’au milieu du XXe siècle, de la famille, entendue, le plus souvent, comme ‘bourgeoise’ ou ‘petite bourgeoise’....<sup>63</sup>

The demand for autonomy and self-realization assumes here the form which the Parisian artists of the second half of the nineteenth century have given to it, who have made *uncertainty* into a life-style and value....: that of being able to have many lives and, correlatively, a plurality of identities.... In this optic, liberation is conceived of above all as the deliverance of the oppressed desire to be someone else; to not be that of which others (parents, masters, etc.) have conceived the project; to be that which one desires to be, at the moment one desires it, which leaves open the possibility of a plurality of identifications adopted in the way in which one adopts a style (a look); and, consequently, to escape the necessary belonging to a nation, a region, an ethnicity, and especially, at least from the middle of nineteenth to the middle of

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63 Ibid., p. 579.



twentieth century, to a family, understood, most often, as ‘bourgeois’ or ‘petite bourgeois’....

We see the same expressions among the American hippies. The second wave (cultural) feminist critique of Newtonian masculinity arose shortly afterward, promoting the same formerly marginalized qualities. We have here ideas emerging in diverse domains that, although different, were highly congruent with each other. The “network”, postmodernism, women’s care ethic and respect for the contingent, and the artist’s demand for freedom from convention and self-realization and desire for a plurality of identities – what underlies them all is flexibility, mobility, and fleetingness which invert the rigidity, permanence, and hierarchy of the modernist era. Taken together, they were thus consistent enough as to constitute a new paradigm. This paradigm was the exact opposite of the paradigm of the Fordist era, and yet had always been there in some form or other on the margin throughout the bourgeois and Fordist era. As can be seen, the first series of qualities constitute white man’s way during the Fordist era just as much as the *cadre*, while the second series is increasingly identified with the way of white women along with minorities in contemporary age. The “artist way” of uncertainty and becoming what one wants to become whenever one wants it constitutes the core of the contemporary feminist/ leftist paradigm, hence the model that gender is but a social construct, Judith Butler’s *Gender Troubles*, and the demand for tolerance for gender non-conformists. But the originators of the new paradigm were all white men too. What has happened is that, since Enlightenment, while the majority of men opted for certainty and rationalism and materialism and uniformity and domination of nature and dominated society with their values – because these values were congruent with the newly emergent industrial production regime – a minority of them had remained dormant, marginalized but resisting. They were “men with feminine qualities”, so to speak, opting for uncertainty, chaos, multiplicity, intuition, emotions, spirituality, creativity, spontaneity, communion with nature. Their concern was with the full expression of human potentials and self-realization, which, under the prevalent climate of rationalization, tended to amount to freeing up the feminine side of human nature which was repressed. They include the Romanticists, certain strands of socialism like Saint-Simonism and Fourierism, American Transcendentalists, certain strands of anarchism, and many individual mystic philosophers such as Swedenborg or Kierkegaard or Martin Buber or Carl Jung – and the Parisian artists were part of this long tradition.<sup>64</sup> What constituted

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64 For American Transcendentalism, see Philip F. Gura’s *American Transcendentalism* (Hill and Wang, New York, 2007). Gura notes that Fourier was especially popular with the Transcendentalists and on George Ripley’s Brook Farm (the nineteenth century equivalent of the 68 hippie colony). Transcendentalism, as a feminine tradition, branched out into the abolitionist movement and women’s rights movement (Margaret Fuller). I have noted in my *Thermodynamic Interpretation of History* that Buber’s I-It characterizes perfectly the modus operandi of the production, i.e. the bourgeois and Fordist, phase of capitalism and that his I-Thou bears great resemblance to its consumption phase, i.e., flexible capitalism. Kierkegaard with his concentration on being authentic perhaps fits less well into the tradition of “male femininity” (since “authenticity” requires withdrawing from relationships with other people). However, his opposing the avant-garde artist existence to the bourgeois decorum (aesthetics vs ethics) and identifying truth with sincerity rather than with any correct representation of an objective state of affairs (in *Either/ Or*) certainly fits in here. I hesitate to mention Madam Blavatsky because she was a woman, but she really was part of the male feminine tradition that had set itself against the dominant trend of rationalization. (She is also an example illustrating that the feminine tradition sometimes did issue into hypermasculine fascism (i.e. the case of Nazism).) The French feminist Benoît Groult is especially full of praises for Saint-Simonism (*Le féminisme au masculin* and *Pauline Roland ou comment la liberté vint aux femmes*). What’s most enlightening is the parallel she has drawn between Saint-Simonism and the 68 revolutionaries: “C’est sur le socialisme utopique que s’est bâtie pour une grande part la sensibilité moderne, au point qu’en 1968, cent trente ans après, cette philosophie du bonheur (Saint-Simonisme) aura encore une charge émotive

the essence of this tradition was the combination of communion, emotions, intuitions, and spontaneity with self-realization and the liberation of human potentials, and its proponents demanded incessantly liberation from the (bourgeois and Fordist) industrial world which championed the opposite, masculine, values.<sup>65</sup> They built utopian communities on the margins of society that were fundamentally feminine worlds characterized by communion with nature and network of relationships rather than by domination of nature and hierarchy.<sup>66</sup> Yet, because they were (as yet) incompatible with the market economy of the time and the individualism on which it was founded, they never got anywhere. Then, in late 1960s, their time suddenly came. Even the scientists and philosophers began to echo their views.<sup>67</sup> More importantly, capitalism was in search of flexibility, a mode opposite to Fordism, and suddenly discovered that these men of feminine qualities actually made better entrepreneurs in the new business environment. Under capitalists' sponsorship, the feminine tradition was no longer marginal but was fast becoming the norm. The new entrepreneur thus became congruent with the new emergent paradigm. The artist has become the entrepreneur of whom:

... il est dit qu'il est possible désormais de changer d'activité aussi souvent que de projet, que tous les liens et les appartenances locales peuvent être rompus car source

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suffisante pour mobiliser les espérances de la jeunesse. 'Faites l'amour, pas la guerre... Volez, planez, jouissez... Prenez vos désirs pour des réalités... L'imagination au pouvoir... Soyez réalistes, demandez l'impossible...', ces slogans, parmi les plus célèbres de ceux qui fleurirent sur les murs de Paris en Mai 68, auraient pu figurer au fronton du Temple que rêvait de construire Enfantin, le père suprême de la religion saint-simonienne...." (*Pauline Roland*, p. 19 – 20).

- 65 One recalls that Dale Carnegie's *How To Win Friends and Influence People* was published in the 1930s. It contains the germ of the new managerial literature published after the constitution of flexible capitalism. The ability to form relationships rather than the possession of formal qualifications, Carnegie notes, is the essence of success, and he proceeds to advise us on how to form relationships and keep them intact. Many of his advices in fact re-appeared in the managerial literature in the 1990s, such as the famous one that the boss should not directly teach his employees what to do but should clandestinely lead them to reach the same conclusions of their own effort. (Sort of like Rousseau's tutor in *Emile*.) In this Carnegie was promoting feminine virtues during a masculine time – a time when capitalists directed all their focus on the masculine virtue of formal qualifications and the effectiveness of a command structure. Carnegie was an oppositional voice back then; today he is the norm.
- 66 While all traditions of radicalism were about self-realization, only a small portions of them championed the specific feminine qualities. Marxism and Leninism, for example, were decidedly masculine and hierarchical.
- 67 By the time of the hippies, the feminine oppositional movement was looking East and using Eastern mystic traditions to express the feminine qualities that were opposite of the dominant trend of rationalization. Thus the Zen master Suzuki was particularly popular among the hippies. Consider also Erich Fromm's feminine expressions (Being vs Having) which were greatly influenced by Zen Buddhism. As I have argued in *Thermodynamic Interpretation of History*, Eastern cultures are more "feminine" and so more congruent with the 68 revolutionaries' anti-rationalist counter-culture and the subsequent American feminist culture. Since spiritual enlightenment often results in communion with nature (pantheism), it is very feminine, and it's no wonder that male philosophers in the tradition of spiritual enlightenment, in both East and West, have become so popular among American women since the New Age movement. One recalls Frijof Capra, Rupert Sheldrake, and Francisco Varela, the forerunners of the New Age movement. The New Age movement grew out of this Western feminine tradition's attempt to express femininity using Eastern religiosity. From this comes the popularity of Kabbalah, Yoga, Pilate, and alternative medicine among American women today. More on this in the upcoming review of Reckwitz. I also recommend Bhagavan Das' *It's Here Now (Are You?)* (1997), in which a 68 hippie relates his trip to India in search of spirituality and how he later upset his female partner with his womanizing, which goes to show that the male feminine tradition, even during the 68 generation, can very well be male chauvinist. I want to emphasize here that flexible capitalism has a particular interest in promoting these philosophies of feminine qualities: to render society more flexible. (Hence the character "Jerry Maguire".) Namely, even the New Age movement is part of the superstructure of flexible capitalism.

de rigidité; semble enfin reconnu le droit formel de pouvoir devenir qui l'on veut quand on veut...<sup>68</sup>

... it is said that it is from now on possible to change activity as frequently as project, that all local links and belongings can be broken because they are sources of rigidity; the formal right seems at last to be recognized of being able to become what one wants when one wants....

The business world was thus feminized. The feminization of American society (and Western societies in general) had begun in earnest. Then the capitalists heeded feminists' demand for "inclusion" (social critique), hired a lot of women, and discovered in the process that women made even better "artist entrepreneur". The management literature was now not only denouncing hierarchy and rationalism which used to be praised, but also full of encouragement to hire more women. The process was certainly accelerated when the capitalists heeded feminists' artist critique as well. Women, everyone says, clearly make better project managers: with superior intuition, empathy, and communication skill, they are better able to bring out the potentials dormant inside each project member. The world is now completely inverted. As women become the majority in one (service) profession after another, the feminized world is actually becoming women's world. Women with their propensity for uncertainties, contingencies, empathy, and connections demonstrate greater flexibility and mobility than men, are more adept at the project environment and forming connections, and more adroit in "talking to people" in which much of the service sector consists. Women are more the "artist" who can succeed in the new order (*le grand*): the mobile, multivalent, flexible, and "people person". Women are better able to accumulate social capital that can then be translated into material capital.

Feminine qualities, and women themselves, are now praised all over society – they have become the new norm. Psychologists write books about "emotional intelligence", and men's rights activists such as Warren Farrell advise men to be more feminine. The domains wherein white men used to express their feminine side – psychology, art history, social work – are now dominated by women with men being a tiny minority in them. As society scrambles to become more feminine – because femininity works so well in the globalized, more competitive environment – it demands even the most masculine, i.e. "Newtonian", domains (STEM) to not only feminize but also recruit more women.<sup>69</sup> "Women's perspective, their particular 'non-linear logic', will accelerate scientific discoveries" just as it has done so in business.<sup>70</sup> Social justice warriors are particularly charged with the mission of imbuing the

68 Boltanski-Chiapello, *ibid.*, p. 583.

69 The latest controversy over Alessandro Strumia points up the matter. He asserts there has never been discrimination against women physicists in high energy physics (that there are simply fewer women interested in quantitative sciences) and believes he is speaking out against preferential hiring of women, but the physicists who have signed the open letter against him (<https://www.particlesforjustice.org>) all claim there is discrimination and have cited studies confirming so, which thus contradict the classic study on this matter by Stephen Ceci, Wendy Williams, and Susan Barnett ("Women's underrepresentation in Science: Sociocultural and Biological Considerations", *Psychological Bulletin*, 2009). See also Eileen Pollack's piece in *The New York Times Magazine*, "Why Are Still So Few Women in Science?", 03.10.2013: <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/06/magazine/why-are-there-still-so-few-women-in-science.html>.

70 The latest case implying that the inclusion of women's perspective might bring quantitative sciences out of their impasse is Sabine Hossenfelder's *Lost In Math: How Beauty Leads Physics Astray* (Basic Books, 2018). Perhaps nature might not have decided to be symmetric and minimal ("beautiful" and "rational") just in order to please male scientists. See Gerrit Stratmann's review "Gegen die schöne Wissenschaft" on Deutschlandfunk Kultur, 12.10.2018

feminine, i.e. artist, spirit into the whole society. Everyone must be granted the flexibility to become whatever s/he wants to become whenever s/he wants it. This artist spirit underlies not only women's liberation (the freedom to not be constrained to be a housewife) but also contemporary young people's demand for tolerance for gender non-conformists. On this account, the demand for ending inequality and discrimination – society's scramble to root out all racism and sexism – is at bottom about dismantling all permanence, rigidity, certainty, definiteness, and hierarchy. On this account, the purpose of the demand for equality, plurality, and diversity – the neutral way of demanding that society become more feminine – is at bottom to create a culture marked by flexibility and mobility in order to turn us into the sort of workers which the capitalists want and make society more competitive on the global market. (To speak in the language of the regulation school, to socialize us to habits of behavior and thoughts which support the new accumulation regime.) On this account, the social justice warriors are “regulation guards” whom the capitalists have sent out to feminize society when they engage in ideological denunciation of masculinity with new terminology like “toxic masculinity”, “microaggression”, or “mascupathy”.<sup>71</sup> To help make society more competitive in the global market, not only sexism and racism, but also masculinity itself must be rooted out. In the process, white men suffer the most since they were identified as the standard embodiment of masculinity – brawn and rationality – during the Fordist era. On this account, the capitalists have motivated us to become more feminine and flexible to better adapt to the new flexible accumulation regime by convincing us that this is “liberation”, that this is how we become “tolerant”, that “racism” and “sexism” are bad, that it is only right to liberate the “marginalized peoples” from “white men's yoke”, from “heteropatriarchy”. On this account it is simplistic on the part of the mainstream leftists to think that “society has simply progressed” (universal human rights at last accorded to the other human beings who were previously denied them). What has happened is that Western society, since Enlightenment, has been debating whether femininity or masculinity should rule. From the inception of the industrial revolution to the end of the Fordist-Keynesian era, it has decided to marginalize its feminine side because femininity is incompatible with an economy based on industrial mass (Fordist) production. Today it has decided to marginalize its masculine side because masculinity is now incompatible with flexible capitalism.

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([https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/sabine-hossenfelder-das-haessliche-universum-gegen-die-950.de.html?dram:article\\_id=430308](https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/sabine-hossenfelder-das-haessliche-universum-gegen-die-950.de.html?dram:article_id=430308)). Hossenfelder holds a conservative, reasonable position (<http://backreaction.blogspot.com>): there might very well be differences in interests between women and men, but the present female to male ratio in physics doesn't represent where the natural ratio would be.

- 71 On the website of the Institute for Prevention and Treatment of Mascupathy (<https://mascupathy.org/>), it is stated: “Men often behave badly. Some are grandiose and aggressive; many others are worthy and admirable, but often emotionally absent and relationally disappointing. Virtually all men struggle to some degree with mascupathy – a pathology of masculinity – which erodes balanced and healthy humanity. The Institute for the Prevention and Treatment of Mascupathy provides education to help boys avoid mascupathy, therapy for men to recover, and advocacy for a more egalitarian society...” It is thus basically another mechanism of flexible capitalism to feminize society and root out masculinity. Then: “Males are often socialized into a *conventional* masculinity that is frequently pathological (diseased), hence mascupathy, and virtually every man, to one degree or another, is a risk of suffering from this disorder...” By “conventional” the author really refers to “Fordist”: mascupathy is a Fordist remnant which flexible capitalism, in an attempt to reverse Fordism, must root out. Then: “Mascupathy is responsible not only for social ills such as violence and sexual assault, but also poverty-stricken relationships, poor parenting, and *an inability to retrain for a new economy...*” Here the author openly admits that men must shed their (Fordist) masculinity in order to adapt to the new flexible capitalism or service economy. (Hanna Rosin has of course made the same point.) Naturally, National Organization of Women is partner with IPTM: they are all part of flexible capitalism's enforcement mechanism.

When capitalism decides to impose flexibility on the whole society to make it more competitive on the global market, it does so in every corner indiscriminately. At time this will seem like nonsense or excess. Hence Professor Fiamengo questions how astronomy will be improved when there are more women astronomers and Heather MacDonald wonders what diversity has to do with progress in sciences. Does what works in the business world really also work in STEM? Recall also the recent Asian American discrimination case against Harvard.<sup>72</sup> What the Harvard administrators were fearing was obviously the fact that, without affirmative action, the student body would be half Asian and half white without people from any other groups – which ran counter to the imperative of diversity. But why is diversity so important? The administrators believe it is about morals and fairness, but the reality is that capitalism wants us to be “diverse” in order to become more flexible. In this case, again, it simply isn’t evident that, when the student body is more diverse than Asians and whites only, it will be more innovative and competitive. My point is that we must realize that capitalism is aiming at the *overall* flexibility of the society *as a whole* without specifically calculating the effects of its imperatives in individual domains.

I want to also recall the Nordic Paradox, of which Jordan Peterson has made so much (the greater the freedom for women to choose, the more likely they will choose professions involving caring about people leaving men doing the engineering and so on).<sup>73</sup> The controversy then arises as to whether women and men are biologically determined to be predisposed to gender roles or whether it is all socially conditioned, with the liberal left being adamant that the latter is the case. According to my framework here, this is really a nonsensical issue. Capitalism in fact acts on the assumption that there *is* this basic difference between women and men. The belief, defended by the liberal left in this case, that women and men are fundamentally the same is a *diversion* enforced only in order to increase the representation of women in male elite fields – for the sake of making society more diverse and flexible. Capitalism has had no interest in making garbage disposal business or construction industry more diverse because that’s not where the center of flexible capitalism lies, and so the feminists never complain that these fields are still male-dominated. In fact, nobody *really* believes that there is no difference in interests and aptitudes between women and men; it’s just that, under capitalism’s pressure, no one dares say so *in certain circumstances*. The feminist psychologists who have emphasized gender differences in the conventional way (such as Carol Gilligan and Louann Brizendine) are demonstration that, when it suits their agenda, the mainstream left *will* accept gender differences as obviously true. In fact, it is on this basis that they believe that women’s participation in the public sphere will save the earth. When it comes to women’s underrepresentation in STEM professions, they will on the one hand insist that women’s particular perspective will enrich sciences but then deny on the other hand that

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72 See Jaweed Kaleem, “Affirmative action case splits Asian Americans”, *The Los Angeles Times*, 04.08.2017. Also “Harvard Asian-American discrimination case opens with packed courtroom”, NBC News, 15.10.2018, at <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/harvard-asian-american-discrimination-case-opens-packed-courtroom-n920376>.

73 Different sides present the Nordic Paradox differently. The conservative side emphasizes that, the greater the acceptance of gender equality among the population, the fewer the women in leading positions in the business world. The mainstream left emphasizes that, despite greater gender equality in Nordic countries, there is more domestic violence against women over there than elsewhere in Europe. (In my view, there is probably no paradox at all on the left side. Namely, when one hears that, back in 1960s, 1 out of 6 students at Harvard earned B and above whereas, today, half of them do, does one really believe it’s because young people today are so much smarter than the generation of the 60s?) I follow here the Norwegian comedian Harald Eia in his documentary series “Brainwash” from 2010.

there are gender differences – really because they fear that admitting conventional gender differences might lead to old-fashioned exclusion of women from these professions: it thus suddenly feels like an “existential threat”.

Now the most interesting sociological question. When society decides to root out masculinity in order to gain flexibility and mobility, the white man is he who should fall from grace. When Taylorism (Frederick Winslow Taylor) was first propounded during the height of Fordism, it was deemed the crown jewel of scientific management. As I have noted in my review of Harvey’s classic, that was white men’s world and Taylorism and Fordism were white men’s way. But, by 1990s, the hierarchy and scientific rationalism Taylor had advocated were universally denounced in management literature. The material conditions have changed: domination, hierarchy, and instrumental treatment of people worked well for Fordist production, but the opposites are required if society wants to prosper in today’s more competitive global economy. The turn-around in the cultural domain is merely a reflection of this. (Again, the “regulation school” in contrast to Boltanski-Chiapello’s Weberian approach.) Western society has inverted itself because vertical hierarchy and rationalism, better suited to the national economy of the Fordist era, must now be transformed into their opposites to suit the new global market. Instead of the permanence which hierarchy and rationalism guarantee, we need flexibility, mobility, and the capability for ever-changing. This means that, culturally, we must not see the same white man everywhere, but must project a more flexible, changeable picture in which the white man quickly changes into white women, people of colors, indefinite genders, and eventually the myriad of nonsensical identities which intersectionality has generated. Because the white man was ubiquitous in the former age, they must now give way. In the same way, we must not believe that there is but one absolute truth, but must give in to the “feminist standpoint theory” that all knowledge is situated and located. Because the white man was the embodiment of absolute truth in the previous age, he must now be denounced. We must want a pluralistic democracy in place of the monoethnic democratic socialism of the previous Keynesian era. “Intolerance” is the principal signal of “rigidity” and the hallmark of Fordist-Keynesianism, whereas “tolerance” is the principal signal of “flexibility” and the hallmark of the new flexible capitalism. If you only want white men and don’t like women, minorities, and other newly emergent complex identities, you are “rigid” and unfit for the present age.<sup>74</sup> In sum, because of *the way the white man was set up* during the constitution of the first capitalism (i.e. as the norm), he has, during the third capitalism, become the hindrance that must be denounced and removed if we want flexibility.

Flexible capitalism not only demands that we have a more flexible culture (be, and see, more flexibly) but also that we have a more flexible environment. Namely, diversity. If societies that grant LGBT people more rights have a better economy, it’s probably because such societies have a more flexible environment. When corporations say that immigration gives them access to a larger (global rather than

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74 When Boltanski-Chiapello describe the grammar of the City by Project and present the *grand* as the flexible social butterfly who accepts all kinds of people with the same openness of the heart and makes connections fast and the *petit* as the rigid person who is picky with people and can’t make connections, you can clearly see that the tolerant person who respects women and minorities and any other identities is the *grand* and the intolerant sexist and racist who disdains working with women and minorities and other identities the *petit*. Who is more likely to succeed in today’s business world? Racism and sexism are signs of rigidity and are bad for business in today’s global environment. Only the tolerant person can travel from place to place in the world successfully brokering deals and collaborating with people from diverse cultural backgrounds on a diversity of projects.

local) labor market and increases their competitiveness, this is also because immigration creates a more flexible environment and gives capitalism greater flexibility. The social justice warriors, by fighting to promote femininity and denounce white men, to integrate more women into the capitalist world and defend immigration, are clearly the capitalists' "red guards". (*The social justice revolution is a capitalist revolution to install the third spirit of capitalism.*) From Boltanski-Chiapello's account to my own elaboration, it should have become clear that leftwing activists and ideologues are really the neoliberals' conspirators rather than constituting any sort of genuine resistance movement (against whom? The white men?): from sharing the same vision of flexibility to imposing the same flexibility on society to increase its economic competitiveness. The congruence of liberal progressives with Neoliberalism is a conclusion that not only follows from a review of Boltanski-Chiapello's account but will also be explicitly stated by Reckwitz later. That many on the liberal left somehow believe Neoliberalism is their enemy is a "paradox" which shall be solved at the end of this review essay. While an increasingly common observation in Europe (among both the leftist conservatives and the populist right), the congruence between the liberal left and Neoliberalism is affirmed in the United States chiefly by Nancy Fraser:

Nevertheless, Trump's victory is not solely a revolt against global finance. What his voters rejected was not neoliberalism *tout court*, but progressive neoliberalism. This may sound to some like an oxymoron, but it is a real, if perverse, political alignment that holds the key to understanding the U.S. election results and perhaps some developments elsewhere too. In its U.S. form, progressive neoliberalism is an alliance of mainstream currents of new social movements (feminism, anti-racism, multiculturalism, and LGBTQ rights), on the one side, and high-end "symbolic" and service-based business sectors (Wall Street, Silicon Valley, and Hollywood), on the other. In this alliance, progressive forces are effectively joined with the forces of cognitive capitalism, especially financialization. However unwittingly, the former lend their charisma to the latter. Ideals like diversity and empowerment, which could in principle serve different ends, now gloss policies that have devastated manufacturing and what were once middle-class lives.<sup>75</sup>

The implication of Boltanski-Chiapello's account is that it is the capitalists who have, piecemeal, initiated a silent revolution to *invert* the former patriarchy into a matriarchy in the Western world. The transformation of the second spirit of capitalism into the third is thus far more profound than the transformation of the first into the second or the very constitution of the first after the rise of Protestantism (which Weber has described). It is only during the transformation into the third spirit that "the pendulum has swung to the other extreme" in Western societies: from male-dominated to women-favoring, from rationalism and individualism to empathy and relationships, from racism and sexism to a hysterical attempt to root them out – from white men's world to the world of women, minorities, and gender non-conformists.

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75 Nancy Fraser, "The End of Progressive Neoliberalism". Dissent, 2 January 2017 ([https://www.dissentmagazine.org/online\\_articles/progressive-neoliberalism-reactionary-populism-nancy-fraser](https://www.dissentmagazine.org/online_articles/progressive-neoliberalism-reactionary-populism-nancy-fraser)). In the rest of the article Fraser offers a short account of how neoliberal capitalism has recuperated feminism and other social movements – in the spirit of Boltanski-Chiapello but different from mine.

To summarize: Boltanski and Chiapello have corroborated my view but, in the process, elaborated it. But they have never gone beyond the business world – they have never ventured out of the economic into the cultural. If they had, they *would have* answered my fundamental question – why has Western society inverted to its opposite and why are white men out of fashion? – by appealing to the same change in economic substructure: the change in the mode of production has required a cultural revolution to invert people’s habits of thoughts and behavior and transform their social environment. They have focused on the fact that the market is becoming more competitive due to globalization and demands greater flexibility from enterprises. Harvey has focused on the fact that the more competitive market environment has required the capitalists to shorten the turnover time for their capital. All of them are more or less saying the same thing: Boltanski-Chiapello could certainly have argued that the *grand* with his or her *grandeur* (lightness, mobility, adaptability, fast-moving from one world to another completely different world, disavowal of any absolute as too rigid, tolerance and respect of differences) leads straight to postmodernism such as Harvey has defined it. But Boltanski-Chiapello and Harvey have argued from different standpoints: Boltanski-Chiapello have focused on how capitalists have adapted to the resistance movements while Harvey has stuck to the “regulation school”. Moreover, the two sides complement each other: while Harvey has gone into cultural formations more than Boltanski-Chiapello have done, the latter have gone into details about management practices, revolutionary movements against capitalism, and capitalism’s response – all of which Harvey has neglected. Both Boltanski-Chiapello and Harvey *would have said* that white men used to rule Western society because their masculinity – brawn and rationality, domination and the instrumental treatment of people and things – was required for Fordist production – when capitalism, that is, wasn’t so developed but was confined within the national boundaries – and that, today, they must make way for women and minorities and all the other identities because their masculinity is now detrimental to, while femininity – intuition and communion, communication and horizontal networks – is required for, flexible capitalism – when capitalism, that is, has so matured that it has now coincided with the whole globe.

But Boltanski and Chiapello *could not have* completely answered my fundamental question because they have left out many factors from their description. While providing a superb description of neomanagement under flexible capitalism, they have forgotten to emphasize that the “manager” with all his or her feminine qualities is only especially fitted to the service sector. This is true even though production centers, such as in Japan, have by 1980s largely done away with Taylorism. Flexible capitalism and the feminized world in which it inhabits describe principally the service economy to which Western societies have been reduced one after another. Boltanski and Chiapello have also neglected to study the new consumption habits (especially images and sounds) which are prominent in the new economy of Western societies requiring in turn a new, more flexible, way of being consisting in the fleeting, the ephemeral, the indefinite, the mobile, the passive, to which women – along with minorities and gender non-conformists – bear greater resemblance than white men. Boltanski and Chiapello have also forgotten about the rise of “financial capitalism” (Fraser’s favorite subject matter and Harvey’s “paper entrepreneurship”) which has also helped create the new, feminine, culture in which we are trapped. Their brief discussion of how financial services exploit other actors in the economic system could have been expanded into a narrative about the Western, especially American, companies’ increasing dominance of world’s financial market. In other words, Boltanski and Chiapello have simply not focused on de-manufacturing (de-industrialization) as the principal factor which has determined Western societies’ (France’s or America’s) turn to flexible capitalism. For this reason,



they could not have speculated on the rise of Asian economies as the cause for the transformation to flexible capitalism in the Western world – and the rise of the leftist paradigm in North America – even though they have briefly mentioned how the transformation of managerial practices in the United States during the 1990s was prompted by the shock over the success of Asian capitalism. White men are out of fashion today because Fordist factories are gone and this is because they are relocated to overseas (even if, in overseas environment, they are less and less “Fordist”). Western society is increasingly feminine not only because its capitalism has changed to the flexible mode, but also because it is dominated by the service sector and new habits of consumption and is becoming increasingly a parasite upon world economy.

The analytical tool “city” which Boltanski has originally developed with Laurent Thévenot (*De justification*) and which he and Chiapello employ to describe the justification mechanism of the third capitalism can be extremely useful for a description of the cultural inversion which this third capitalism has brought into being. The “city” refers to an order of values accepted at large in a society and to which people appeal to justify their point of view and, because people justify their argument differently in different contexts – by appealing to different orders of values – there are always multiple “cities” in a society at any given time. By the time the third spirit of capitalism is constituted, Boltanski-Chiapello count seven “cities” in Western society. Although they didn’t make this point, it is evident, from the growing or declining prominence of each city from 1960s to 1990s as seen in managerial literature, that new cities are constantly coming into being while old cities are disappearing – all in accordance with the changes in the underlying accumulation regime. The legacy of all this feminism and intersectionality in academia and the wider public is certainly a new city in which the superior common principle is “victimization” or “marginalization” and the *grand* the most victimized or marginalized in the previous era (or the most sympathetic toward the most victimized and marginalized).<sup>76</sup> The story of how the pendulum has swung to the other extreme – how Western society has inverted to its opposite – can best be told by describing the emergence of an *eighth city* to accompany the new (third) spirit of capitalism (with some of the old cities in the process of becoming defunct).

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<sup>76</sup> The “test” (*épreuve*) in one case would simply be the possession of the right skin color and sexual organs, and in the other making a stand with the marginalized peoples against anything which does not degrade heterosexual white men.

The image shows a PDF document titled 'Tableau 1: La présence des sept mondes dans chaque corpus'. The table compares the presence of seven logics in two periods: 'Années 60' and 'Années 90'. The logics listed are: Logique industrielle, Logique domestique, Logique marchande, Logique civique, Logique de réseau, Logique inspirée, and Logique du renom. The counts for each logic in the 1960s and 1990s are as follows:

	Années 60	Années 90
Logique industrielle	6 764	4 972
Logique domestique	2 033	3 996
Logique marchande	1 841	2 207
Logique civique	1 216	1 404
Logique de réseau	1 114	1 366
Logique inspirée	774	793
Logique du renom	479	768

I will also pick issue with the fact that Boltanski-Chiapello have focused exclusively on the critique of capitalism from the left. This is certainly because, in 1960s and 1970s, the left made up the bulk of (what seemed to be) the resistance movement against capitalism. What would they say about the recent resistance against capitalism from rightwing populists? If we accept the premise that resistance against capitalism is really reinforcement of capitalism in disguise – as this has happened with the 68 revolutionaries and the social justice warriors who are descended from them – then we must ask whether this applies to the conservatives and the whole spectrum of rightwing activists as well who have captured so much of our attention today (when, that is, those on the right do make anti-capitalist (or anti-globalist) utterances, such as Marine Le Pen or Viktor Orbán). Now my view is that only the leftwing resistance against capitalism is reinforcement of capitalism in disguise, but that the rightwing activists constitute *genuine* resistance against capitalism. The rightwing activists, in that they wish ultimately to return to the previous era of rigidity, hierarchy, uniformity, and permanence are incompatible with neoliberalism and their critique can never be incorporated by the capitalists.<sup>77</sup> This is in accordance with my thermodynamic interpretation according to which those that help expand the dissipative capacity of human economy are enforcers of the power structure and those that wish to retard it constitute the resistance movement – so that even Marx, insofar as his argument was that, while the production system had reached a new level of productivity, relations of production were still geared to the previous level and that a new system of relations, communism with planned economy,

<sup>77</sup> This even includes the conservatives’ attempt to promote traditional masculinity as having values against the cultural backlash against it. For example, Harvey Mansfield wrote a “modest defense” of manliness more than 10 years ago (*Manliness*, 2006) and Jordan Peterson is complaining today about society’s devaluation of masculinity thanks to the social justice warriors. As the preceding has demonstrated, I’m in complete disagreement with Mansfield’s assessment that the devaluation of manliness today is about enforcing a gender-neutral society.

would correspond to the new potentials of the productive system and unleash them, was not really resisting against capitalism but trying to reinforce it. According to my thermodynamic interpretation, it was the conservatives, the aristocrats who wanted to return to the *ancien régime*, who made up the resistance movement against bourgeois capitalism in the nineteenth century. This means that real resistance against capitalism is possible even though, as I have repeatedly emphasized, it is most unlikely to succeed. At the end of their classic, Boltanski-Chiapello themselves propose, as a way out of the all-encompassing new capitalism, a possible new variant of artist critique part of which quite resembles the Zeitwohlstand, Degrowth, and convivialist movements for which I have expressed high regard. When you advocate de-globalization, decreased economic growth, and decreased work-time and consumption (i.e. going against progress) you can be sure that you are resisting against capitalism in a genuine way. It's just that, according to my theory, the social justice warriors, because they are fighting for the new capitalism, i.e., *are going along with history*, can never be defeated – just as Tocqueville has argued in his time that democracy was here to stay, a providential fact, the goal of the movement of history, and that one cannot but accept the fact.

Lastly, I must try to defend my historical materialist approach against Boltanski-Chiapello's eschewing of it. The historical materialist approach is justified by the extraordinary congruence between leftist paradigm (from the New Left through second wave feminism to contemporary intersectionality discourse) and the new paradigm of flexible capitalism – something which Harvey *would* have to confirm. As Boltanski-Chiapello have emphasized, capitalist ideology always has a way of infiltrating into other domains of society and colonizing them.<sup>78</sup> But they have traced out a different historical course to explain how such congruence or infiltration could ever have taken place. Boltanski-Chiapello's principal argument is that capitalism, because it needs to mobilize people to participate in its irrational project of unlimited capital accumulation, must promote an ideology that is liberating or just while effective for profit-making at the same time. The capitalists do not simply say "network" is more profit-making, but also that it liberates the worker from domination and hierarchy; they do not simply say hiring more women and minorities promises more profit, but also that this will liberate women and all the (formerly) marginalized people. Capitalism must accord with the prevalent social justice ideologies in order to mobilize people. Liberation ideologies are thus not a superstructure invented to support the substructure; the substructure has merely made use of them to further develop itself. But why are liberation ideologies always also effective for profit-making? It's just too much a coincidence that new ideas about the "network" and "autonomy" and so on could somehow appear in different spheres just at the right time to save capitalism from imminent collapse (the time of the student movements just happened to coincide with capitalism's latest crisis in overaccumulation). While, as noted, the feminine tradition was always there, there was, in 1960s, a sudden explosion of anti-rationalism discourse in many unrelated domains. Clearly, the spirit of the (upcoming) age was speaking through them all. The new generation of social scientists and philosophers, the 68 revolutionaries, the feminists – they were all "artists" in the Heideggerian sense. (Do not confuse this with the "Parisian artist" that is the basis of the "artist critique".) This is what I mean by historical materialism. Instead of seeing, as I do, the new trend as the (presaging) superstructure of the

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78 "En tant qu'idéologie dominante, l'esprit du capitalisme a en principe la capacité de pénétrer l'ensemble des représentations mentales propres à une époque donnée, d'infiltrer les discours politiques et syndicaux, de fournir des représentations légitimes et des schèmes de pensée aux journalistes et aux chercheurs, si bien que sa présence est à la fois diffuse et générale...." Boltanski and Chiapello, *ibid.*, p. 100

(upcoming) economic substructure, Boltanski-Chiapello see capitalism as merely appropriating the new culture. It is then a mystery as to why the new ways of seeing and valuing reality should emerge simultaneously and independently in all the disparate domains and why they should prove so valuable to capitalists' profit-making such that the flexibility, mobility, and shortened temporality which underlie the new capitalism and characterize the new *grand* could be so congruent with feminism, multiculturalism, pluralistic democracy, intersectionality, and leftist identity politics in general.<sup>79</sup>

Any idea, or meme, in order to become popular (go viral), must help the society which embodies it survive better in some way. The leftist paradigm dominates Western society today – sexism and racism are out of fashion – because this helps the society do well in the new environment. (In this case, by making the society more flexible.) *This is what historical materialism boils down to.* However, the new environment I'm referring to here is merely the global market place. Feminism and tolerance for minorities and gender nonconformists have enabled enterprises and society to do *well* without really compelling them to do any *good*. The expectation of cultural feminists from 1970s and 1980s are simply dashed (just as Hanna Rosin has affirmed that, when women go into the work force *en masse*, they have not made the whole world into a utopia full of tenderness and compassion).<sup>80</sup> Most importantly, the leftist paradigm has not helped society better survive in the biosphere in which it resides. The meme has helped enterprises and society better compete in the global market place but, insofar as modern economy is harmful to the earth, has only further eroded the biosphere and endangered the society's future chance of survival. (Thus, correlated with women's rise and increasing tolerance for minorities in the Western world is the continual increase in CO2 omission on the global scale in the past decades.)<sup>81</sup>

Recall that my political ideals are sustainable economy and intelligence and communication. The social justice revolution, in making society more flexible, has also incidentally decreased people's intelligence and eroded communicative action. This is because a more flexible society is fast-paced and fast-changing – the very reason why it needs to be more flexible – which means it must McDonaldize (process larger quantity in shorter time), making it hard for people to stop and reflect deeply (like the way people jump from item to item on the Internet). Flexibility (Boltanski-Chiapello) and short turnover time (Harvey) are bad news for the development of intelligence. Thus, paradoxically, the more

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79 Quite often the leftist activists are explicit about saving capitalism while attempting to institute social justice and justice for nature. E.g. those feminists who try to sell feminism to developing nations and corporations on the ground of developing the former's economy and increasing the latter's profits. The aforementioned Amy Larkin enumerates, in her *Environmental Debt*, successful cases where corporations heed the leftist critique (from Greenpeace and so on), incorporate it, and learn to make more profits by protecting the environment and respecting human rights: McDonald's, Tiffany, Walmart, Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, and Unilever. It's not of course always possible to align environmental protection with profit-making. In opposition to Larkin, Naomi Klein, for example, expresses the opposite opinion in *This Changes Everything*, e.g. how Virgin owner Richard Branson is never able to fulfill his pledge for reducing CO2 emission.

80 *The Rise of Women*, Introduction.

81 In the West thinkers have been proposing rights for women since the 1600s. Simone de Beauvoir wrote *The Second Sex* in 1949. But these ideas have no effect until, between 1968 and 1973, capitalism suffered crisis and discovered that these ideas might save itself. In the same way, Mises and Hayek have been proposing their "market fundamentalism" since the 1930s and have had no effect on anyone – until the same crisis 1968 – 1973 convinced capitalism that it must resort to this fundamentalist idea to save itself. There is thus quite a parallel between feminism and Neoliberalism in this respect.

flexible social environment actually translates into greater rigidity of people's thought-processes. Intelligence is marked by flexibility of thought-process and stupidity by rigidity, namely, inability to "think outside the box". Only in a rigid, and therefore slow-paced, and yet liberal, environment do people have the time, and the freedom, to explore all different directions in their thoughts and achieve flexibility of the mind.

The conclusion which we have reached thus far – that Fordist-Keynesianism has inverted to its opposite, flexible capitalism, in the process (as substructure determines superstructure or as superstructure presages substructure) causing people to shed their racism and sexism and adopt the opposite orientation in order to increase society's flexibility – has not, however, reached the most fundamental level. At the most fundamental level, the transformation is about the inversion of rationalization (in Weber's sense) which has characterized Western civilization from Reformation and Enlightenment to 1968 into "culturalization" which is the most fundamental characteristic of the postmodern period. The 1968 revolution is about dismantling the rationalization regime and replacing it with "culturalization". This final conclusion has been hinted at by Boltanski and Chiapello but is only developed explicitly by Andreas Reckwitz in his latest classic on postmodernity. The failure to recognize that the rationalization process has largely given way to culturalization in postmodern time is the gravest flaw in my Thermodynamic Interpretation of History and new McDonaldization thesis, both of which remain "modernist" (describing postmodern society solely in terms of rationalization) even though they have posited a change in substructure from production to consumption. I intend to correct this fundamental flaw with my review of Reckwitz. We will also see how Reckwitz corroborates many of the other conclusions which we have derived from reading Harvey and Boltanski-Chiapello, such as the congruence between the mainstream leftist paradigm and Neoliberalism or how the dominant paradigm of flexibility in contemporary time has always remained dormant on the margins of society throughout modernity as an oppositional movement against the norm of rationalization. Finally, Reckwitz will produce a more elaborate portrait of the flexible guru (the *grand* in the City by Projects) who graces flexible capitalism as the new middle-class phenomenon with a new set of life-style and habits, and similarly of the rigid *petit* as the new under-class phenomenon – with the struggle between the two types or classes constituting the principal internal dynamic of flexible capitalism (enforcement and resistance).

## 6. "Modernity" vs "late modernity": a question of "social logic"

Reckwitz has read both Harvey's and Boltanski-Chiapello's classic, but, while the former exerts little influence on him, he is highly indebted to the latter in many of his descriptions of the "late modern" period. In fact, "culturalization" is Reckwitz's specific way of characterizing flexible capitalism: it is a deeper, more up-to-date, and certainly more comprehensive characterization than "network" and "City by Projects".<sup>82</sup>

Reckwitz's terminology for the developmental phases since modernity is slightly different. He sees "modernity" as lasting from late eighteenth century until 1970s. He calls this phase "classical modern"

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82 I have read every page of *Die Gesellschaft*. In addition, I have heard two Deutschlandfunk Kultur broadcasts in which Reckwitz's arguments are succinctly summarized: Simone Miller's review on 23.10.2017, "Das Besondere wird zum Maßstab", and Thorsten Jantschek's interview with Andreas Reckwitz on 10.03.2018.

(*die Gesellschaft der klassischen Moderne*) or “industrial modern” (*die Gesellschaft der industriellen Moderne*). In my terminology this is the formative period of capitalism or its production phase. For Reckwitz, this phase itself consists of two subphases, the bourgeois phase (*bürgerliche Moderne*) which displaced the traditional feudal system and lasted from late eighteenth century until the beginning of the twentieth century, and the proper phase of “industrial modern” which started at the beginning of the twentieth century and displaced the bourgeois culture. You can see that the bourgeois phase corresponds to the first spirit of capitalism in Boltanski-Chiapello’s schema while the “industrial modern” corresponds to the second spirit of capitalism in their schema and Fordist-Keynesianism in Harvey’s schema. The transition from the production to the consumption phase of capitalism – or from Fordist-Keynesianism to flexible accumulation in Harvey’s scheme – is described in Reckwitz’s schema as a structural change from “classical” to “late modernity” (*Strukturwandel von der klassischen zur spätmodernen Gesellschaft*). The most striking character of the “sea-change” is the switch from a homogeneous mass society (where everyone is the same and consumes the same thing) to a “society of singularity” (where everyone tries to emphasize his or her differences and consumes products and services that are singular and one of a kind and especially tailored to him or her). While Reckwitz is basically talking about the same development as I, Harvey, and Boltanski-Chiapello have done, it might create confusion when we use the term “capitalism”. For Reckwitz sees modernism (or “classical modernity”) as having been fully actualized in both the US and the USSR in the 1960s. Namely, he agrees with my view that communism is just a different facet of the same development of which capitalism is another facet, although the communist version of the *Vernunft* has never evolved beyond Fordist-Keynesianism, i.e. the era, in Reckwitz’s words, of *standardization* and *generalization*.

Like Boltanski-Chiapello, Reckwitz is also continuing the Weberian tradition, but he is going deeper. He wishes to get to the essence of “classical modernity” and “late modernity”, and this essence he terms the “social logic” of the age in question. “Classical modernity” is characterized by the social logic of the General (*soziale Logik des Allgemeinen*) whereas “late modernity”, by the social logic of the Particular (*soziale Logik des Besonderen*). Classical modernity is the age of Generalization (*die Zeitalter der Allgemeinung*) whereas late modernity, the age of Singularization (*die Zeitalter der Singularisierung*). To say that the socialist states are *in essence* no different from capitalist states is to say that both sides are characterized by the logic of Generalization – just as I have said that both sides are characterized by industrial mass production and mass consumption or Fordist-Keynesianism – even though in the one case the mass production is publicly owned while in the other it is privately owned.

Reckwitz has developed Weber’s notion of modernity further by first re-qualifying Weber’s notion of “rationalization” as the essence of modernity and secondly by tracing out the further development of modernity into the postmodern (or late modern) age of Singularization. Reckwitz re-qualifies “rationalization” by pointing out that the term means at bottom “standardization” and “generalization”, i.e., the purpose of rationalization is to standardize the particulars into a general type.

Die klassische Moderne der Industriegesellschaft ist im Grunde ein Prozess der tiefgreifenden formalen Rationalisierung. Und alle Ausprägungen dieser formalen Rationalisierung – ob in Wissenschaft und Technik, in der ökonomisch-industriellen Produktion, im Staat oder im Recht – fördern und stützen, wie ich hinzufügen möchte, eine Herrschaft des Allgemeinen. Überall ging es um Standardisierung und Formalisierung, um

eine Verfertigung der Elemente der Welt als gleiche, gleichartige, auch gleichberechtigte: auf den Fließbändern der industriellen Produktion und in den Gebäuden in Serie des International Style, im Rechts- wie im Sozialstaat, im Militär, bei der ‘Verschulung’ der Kinder und Jugendlichen, in den Ideologien und der Technik.<sup>83</sup>

The classical modern of industrial societies is in essence a process of deep-reaching formal rationalization. And all the determinations of this formal rationalization – whether in science or technology, in economic-industrial production, in state or in laws – promote or support, as I would like to add, a domination of the General. Everywhere it was about standardization and formalization, the production of the elements of the world as the same, of the same kind, and of the same value: in the assembly lines of industrial production and in the serial buildings of the International Style, in laws as in the welfare state, in military, in the schooling of children and youth, in ideologies and technology.

To say that communism is in essence no different from capitalism is to say that the USSR and the other socialist states are also characterized by “rationalization” or this project of standardizing every particular into a general type.

Thus, rationalization is but a means to an end, and the end is standardization. The ultimate end of standardization is maximization of production and consumption in the face of limited amount of time, capital, and resources (*Knappheit*) by creating order out of chaos (*Ordnung*).

Die Moderne ist zunächst als ein Prozess der formalen Rationalisierung zu verstehen. Formale Rationalisierung heißt: Die Moderne transformiert die Gesellschaft so, dass sich jenseits der traditionellen Gepflogenheiten großflächige Komplexe von berechenbaren Regeln bilden, denen technisch oder normativ regulierte Handlungsweisen folgen. Die formale Rationalisierung lässt sich vom Telos der Optimierung leiten, deren Fluchtpunkte eine effiziente Bearbeitung der Natur und eine transparente Ordnung des Sozialen sind....<sup>84</sup>

The modern is to be understood foremost as a process of formal rationalization. Formal rationalization means: the modern transforms society, so that, beyond traditional habits and customs, an extensive complex of predictable rules are created, which govern technically or normatively regulated ways of action. The formal rationalization is guided by the Telos of optimization, whose essence consists in the efficient reworking of nature and the transparent ordering of the social...

Hinter der Rationalisierung verbirgt sich nämlich ebenjene soziale Logik des Allgemeinen: Indem moderne Praktiken die soziale Welt rationalisieren, versuchen

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83 *Die Gesellschaft*, p. 15. Reckwitz takes great care to distinguish “rationalization” in the sense of “generalization” from the sort of “typologizing” (*Typisierung*) which pre-modern peoples practice.

84 *Ibid.*, p. 28.

sie, ihr allgemeine Formen aufzupressen und sie in die Richtung allgemeiner Formen zu gestalten....<sup>85</sup>

Behind rationalization lies namely this social logic of the General: insofar as modern practices rationalize the social world, they seek to impress generalized forms upon the world and remake it in the direction of these generalized forms....

Thus, grasping modernity as the process of generalization and standardization is deeper than defining it as rationalization, just as defining it as rationalization is deeper than defining it as differentiation (Luhmann) or capital accumulation (Marxist). And, according to my framework, the project to generalize and standardize is thus the deepest characterization of white men's masculinity. Reckwitz then goes into more details. A society characterized by Generalization is one where it extracts the general schema (the norm) from the particular things during observation (*Beobachtung*), judges any particular as conforming to or deviating from the norm during valuing (*Bewertung*), produces products that are standardized and raises children that conform to a general norm (*Hervorbringung*), and approaches objects according to their functionality and people according to the roles they play in social organization (*Aneignung*). It is a society characterized by *technical* (e.g. the production of standardized goods), *cognitive* (e.g. the rise of natural sciences), and *normative* rationalization (e.g. the rise of *Rechtsstaat*).<sup>86</sup> That a society is characterized by formal rationality or Generalization means that it pursues generality or standardization in all five domains: when it comes to object, subject, space, time, and the collective. Namely, things are produced as standardized, people are socialized to have the same competence and behave in the same, standardized way, space is standardized such as in the serial building of modernist architecture, time is standardized so that work is routinized and future-oriented and planning is everything,<sup>87</sup> and traditional *Gemeinschaft* is discarded in favor of *Organisation* (e.g. the modern bureaucracy).<sup>88</sup>

It is because the modernist society is characterized by generalization and standardization that it strives on the one hand to enforce "equality" – namely, every person must be the same as every other, so that all have "equal rights" – and on the other hand "normality" – for example the rise of psychiatry to identify, define, and eliminate "abnormal" individuals (including homosexuals and other gender non-conformists). This is the meaning of "individualism" during the modernist era.<sup>89</sup> Such society of

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85 Ibid., p. 29.

86 Ibid., p. 34.

87 "Die Gegenwart interessiert lediglich instrumentell als Beitrag zur Erreichung eines zukünftigen Ziels, während die Vergangenheit abgeschlossen und überholt erscheint. Zeit wird damit zum zentralen Gegenstand von Zukunftsplanung, die im Sinne eines Fortschrittspfads der Verbesserung oder Steigerung gedacht wird", *ibid.*, p. 40. Thus, when masculinity is being rooted out and femininity is becoming the norm, everyone praises the enlightened spiritual masters' way to "stay in the present".

88 "... die traditionellen Gemeinschaften, die auf persönlichen Bindungen beruhen. An deren Stelle tritt nun die Organisation, das heißt ein Kollektiv, das sich als sachlicher, unpersönlicher Zweckverband präsentiert, als Ausdruck der allgemeinen Prinzipien formaler Rationalität...", *ibid.*

89 "Die organisierte Moderne ist im Kern eine Gesellschaft der Gleichen, der rechtlichen Egalität und sozialen Gleichförmigkeit. Eine solche Kultur der Egalität korreliert mit einer Gleichförmigkeit der Subjekte: Das Individuum ist bemüht, sein eigenes Leben gemäß der 'Normalbiografie' zu gestalten, mit klaren Stationen und als erstrebenswert vorgegebenen Zielen. Die Subjekte formen sich in der organisierten Moderne also – mit Simmel gesprochen – in einem 'Individualismus der Gleichheit'...." *Ibid.*, p. 45.



generalization and standardization is characterized by the de-singularization of the social (*Entsingularisierung des Sozialen*). Such is the deepest way to characterize the masculine world of Fordism which the cultural feminists have criticized as “Newtonian”.

However, while during the modern age (the Fordist-Keynesian era), the attempt to maximize production and consumption resulted in the standardization of everything, the continual development of the same regime during the late modern age (during the era of flexible accumulation) leads to the opposite of standardization, i.e. “singularization” (*Singularisierung*). When it comes to the description of singularization, Reckwitz carefully distinguishes the “singularity” in question from “general-particular” (*Allgemein-Besonderes*, namely, how the individual is a manifestation of the genus) and idiosyncrasies (*Idiosynkrasien*, namely, when the individual couldn’t fit into any genus at all).<sup>90</sup> In a society characterized by the social logic of singularization:

.... werden Objekte, Subjekte, Räumlichkeiten, Zeidichkeiten und Kollektive in Praktiken der Beobachtung, der Bewertung, der Hervorbringung und der Aneignung zu Singularitäten gemacht....<sup>91</sup>

... objects, subjects, space, time, and the collective are, through the practices of observation, valuing, production, and appropriation, made into singulars....

While society in the previous era is dominated by interchangeable objects, people, space, events, and collectivities, the society of singularization is full of objects and people and so on which are not interchangeable. The objects, people, places, events, and collectivities of the new era are characterized by “one-of-a-kind complexity” (*Eigenkomplexitäten*) and “inner depth” (*innerer Dichte*). This is in sharp contrast to the previous era of rationalization where complexities were reduced in order to create order. When society evolves into its opposite, the meaning of words changes as well. In the late modern era, “individualism” no longer means people with the same rights (*Gleichheit*), but people who have actualized themselves to reveal their distinctness from others. (More on this below.) When everything has become singular, particular, and uninterchangeable, we have what is referred to as “culturalization”:

Kultur setzt sich in ihrem Zentrum aus Singularitäten zusammen. Jene Einheiten des Sozialen, die als einzigartig anerkannt werden – die singulären Objekte und Subjekte, die singulären Orte, Ereignisse und Kollektive –, bilden gemeinsam mit den zugehörigen Praktiken des Beobachtens und Bewertens, des Hervorbringens und Aneignens die Kultursphäre einer Gesellschaft. Die Logik des Besonderen gehört zur Kultur wie die Logik des Allgemeinen zur formalen Rationalität. Wenn die soziale Logik des Allgemeinen ihren Ausdruck in einem gesellschaftlichen Prozess der Rationalisierung findet, dann die soziale Logik der Singularitäten in einem

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90 “Wenn das Allgemein-Besondere die Variationen des Gleichen bezeichnet und die Idiosynkrasie die vorsoziale Eigentümlichkeit, dann ist die Singularität sozialkulturell fabrizierte Einzigartigkeit....” *ibid.*, p. 51.

91 *Ibid.*

gesellschaftlichen Prozess der Kulturalisierung. Rationalisierung und Kulturalisierung sind die beiden konträren Formen von Vergesellschaftung.<sup>92</sup>

Culture forms itself in its center out of singularities. Those individual units of the social which are recognized as one-of-a-kind – the singular objects and subjects, the singular places, events, and collectives – make up the cultural sphere of a society together with the accompanying practices of observation and valuation, of production and appropriation. The logic of the Particular belongs to culture just as the logic of the General belongs to formal rationality. If the social logic of the General finds its expression in the social process of rationalization, then the social logic of Singularities, in the social process of culturalization. Rationalization and culturalization are contrary forms of ‘making-social’.

Whereas rationalization is about rendering things useful and considering things solely according to their functionality and usefulness (instrumentality), culturalization is about considering things solely according to their valorization and their ability to arouse affects (*Valorisierungs- und Affizierungsstruktur*). While standardization or generalization is part and parcel of the rationalization process, singularization is an expression of “culturalization” (*Kulturalisierung*).<sup>93</sup> Whereas rationalization is all about maximization and efficiency and is based on production and domination of nature, culturalization is all about emotional arousal without consideration of production and efficiency. Culturalization is a deeper characterization of the feminization of society I have been talking about. Western society has evolved from rationalization to culturalization while communist states have never evolved beyond rationalization.

Kultur erscheint aus einer solchen Perspektive nicht als die Gesamtheit der menschlichen Lebensformen oder als die Welt der Bedeutungen, sondern als Gegenspieler zum Rationalismus, und zwar von den archaischen Gesellschaften bis zur Gesellschaft der Gegenwart. Der Rationalismus ist immer auf Produktion und Akkumulation, auf eine Bewahrung und Reinvestition gesellschaftlicher Energien ausgerichtet, auf Effizienz und Regulierung. Die Kultur hingegen ist gewissermaßen unproduktiv. Ihre Praktiken sind bedingungslos, das heißt ohne Zweck oder Funktion, sie haben einen Wert, sind stark affektiv besetzte Praktiken der Verausgabung. Während der Rationalismus auf Arbeit und Naturbeherrschung basiert, gründet die Kultur in Souveränität, in einer Überschreitung der instrumentellen Praxis durch Distanzierung von den Notwendigkeiten....<sup>94</sup>

Culture appears from such perspective not as the sum-total of human life-forms or as the world of meanings, but as the opposite tendency to rationalism, and rightly so from archaic societies until contemporary society. Rationalism is always directed toward production and accumulation, toward preservation and reinvestment of social energies, toward efficiency and regulation. Culture is on the contrary somewhat

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92 Ibid., p. 75.

93 Ibid., p. 27.

94 Ibid., p. 84.

unproductive. Its practices are meaningless, that is, without goal or function, they have a value, are expenditure practices loaded with affects. While rationalism is based on work and domination of nature, culture is grounded in sovereignty, in a transcendence of instrumental practices through distancing away from necessities....

Overall, Reckwitz summarizes “modern” vs “postmodern” in the oppositions: standardization vs singularization (*Standardisierung / Singularisierung*), rationalization vs culturalization (*Rationalisierung/ Kulturalisierung*), objectification vs affect-intensification (*Versachlichung/ Affektintensivierung*). Reckwitz emphasizes, much in the manner of Harvey’s use of Baudelaire, that the affective pole with singularization and culturalization has always coexisted with the rationalization pole in modernist consciousness – e.g. how the Romantic tradition has always functioned as a minority view and an oppositional movement against the dominant trend of increasing rationalization in Western societies during the modernist era – and that what has happened in the transition to postmodernity is merely a change in the relationship between the two poles. This is my earlier thesis about how the feminine tradition dormant in Western modernity has become the norm during the postmodern age. Reckwitz asserts additionally that, during the postmodern era, the rationalization pole has never really disappeared, but now functions as the background for the affective pole. (This is similar to George Ritzer’s thesis about continual McDonaldization as the background for de-McDonaldization.) Reckwitz in fact affirms that the conflict and relationship between rationalization and culturalization has existed since pre-modern times and that it is the changing relationship between the two poles along with the change in the character of rationalization and culturalization which has defined the successive stages of the evolution of human society from pre-modern through modern to late modern period. As Reckwitz traces out the operation of singularization from pre-modern through modern to late modern times, he notes specifically that singular entities tend to increase through time until they reach explosive level in late modern period: for example, singular individuals were rare in pre-modern times (chiefs, shamans, kings, and priests), more numerous during modern time (artists, movie stars), and everywhere during late modern times (virtually everyone is seeking to become “singular” in contemporary society).

Now the decisive question: why did the continual development of the capitalist system lead to the opposite system? Why did Western society suddenly explode into singularization after the era of standardization and generalization. As can be seen, Reckwitz’s novelty consists in characterizing the Fordist regime as “generalization” and flexible capitalism as “culturalization” or “singularization”. We shall see why flexible capitalism is culturalized economy momentarily. Here I shall note that Reckwitz has never quite exactly pinpointed the cause for the transition from standardization to singularization – even though the period of transition lies clearly in the crucial period between 1968 and 1990. Reckwitz’s simpler answer – simpler than Harvey’s and Boltanski-Chiapello’s – is found in two places. In the first place, he attempts to answer the question by noting that rationalization is all about *how* whereas culturalization is all about *why*:

Ich hatte oben festgestellt, dass die Rationalisierung sozialer Praxis als eine Antwort auf ein Knappheits- und ein Ordnungsproblem der Gesellschaften interpretiert werden kann. Rationalisierung verspricht in diesen Hinsichten Effizienz und Stabilität. Die

Kulturalisierung des Sozialen lässt sich hingegen als Antwort auf ein gesellschaftliches Sinn- und Motivationsproblem deuten.<sup>95</sup>

I have affirmed above that rationalization of social practices can be interpreted as an answer to the problem of scarcity and order in society. Rationalization, in this respect, promises efficiency and stability. The culturalization of the social can be interpreted on the contrary as an answer to the social problem of meaning and motivation.

Thus, as soon as Western society has through rationalization taken care of the problem of scarcity and inefficiency, it goes into the phase of culturalization to remedy the short-comings of rationalization such as alienation (*Entfremdung*) and loss of meaning (*Sinnverlust*): culturalization provides meaning to participants in the capitalist system.<sup>96</sup>

In the second place, Reckwitz notes the convergence of three factors during the end of the Fordist-Keynesian era: the rise of the “new academic middle-class”, the emergence of the economy of singularities, and the increasing digitalization of society. The three factors have different origins – the new academic middle class forms as a result of the expansion of higher education, the economy of singularities emerges in response to boredom with Fordist standardization of consumer products and automation of their production, and digital technology spreads from the military into the civilian world. Both answers of Reckwitz’s are rather cavalier in comparison to Harvey’s and Boltanski-Chiapello’s. The fact is that the continual expansion of the capitalist system, the continual compression of space and time, first leads to a society centered on standardization, objectification, and affect-reduction (*Affektreduktion*), then to a society centered on singularization, culturalization, and affect-intensification (*Affektintensivierung*).<sup>97</sup> With Harvey, everything leads back to a fundamental change in economic substructure, the compression of turnover time, and with Boltanski-Chiapello, to the expansion of the market place which requires increasing flexibility from the capitalists. In my view, the ultimate cause for singularization and culturalization must be sought in the de-manufacturing of society. It should be noted at this point that, eschewing historical materialism, Reckwitz has replaced it with the approach of “social logic”. “Social logic” is supposed to explain why there is always such curious congruence between culture and social practices on the one hand and the dominant production and consumption regime on the other. Namely, Reckwitz will later employ “culturalization” to explain together the contemporary culture of tolerance (the new “academic middle-class”) and the new center of capitalist regime (“creative industry”). But, in my view, he has never sufficiently explained why social logic should have changed at all. I will in the end explain how I have persisted in employing historical materialism even while adopting Reckwitz’s distinction between Generalization and Singularization as the proper descriptors of Fordism and flexible capitalism on the most fundamental level.

Reckwitz will next describe the various facets of the post- or late-modern age he has just referred to, i.e. the culturalization of the economy, the rise of the “academic middle-class”, the digitalization of society, and the new class structure and class struggle of the late modern age. The most enlightening

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95 Ibid., p. 86.

96 Ibid., p. 87.

97 Ibid., p. 17.

aspect of Reckwitz's work is the contrast he makes between the Fordist era of standardization and the new era of singularization in respect to every facet of society he shall examine.

## 7. The new “cultural economy” (*Kulturökonomie*)

Reckwitz considers the usual sociological notion of a “service economy” to characterize the current economic transformation to be too superficial. The new economy, when more deeply characterized, is a “cultural” and “singularity” economy (*Kultur- und Singularitätsökonomie*). This concerns the form of products and services produced in the new economy, the form of work and organization to produce them, the manner of consuming them, and the form of the market itself in which they circulate.

Reckwitz would devote the next chapter to the new form of work and organization. In this chapter he delineates the changes in the three other respects. During the Fordist era goods were standardized and functionally oriented and mass-produced, their consumption was standardized and carried out mostly by the homogeneous middle-class and for the purpose of satisfying wants and achieving status, the market was characterized by goods' competition with one another according to whether they had superior functionality (*Leistungsfähigkeit*) and were fairly priced. In the new economy goods attract consumers according to their cultural quality – how well they arouse affects among consumers – and therefore particularity (authenticity and originality). This sort of “singularity goods” (*Singularitätsgüter*) strive to be “original” and “rare” instead of “functional” and “mass-produced”. Like Boltanski-Chiapello, Reckwitz emphasizes the importance of “authenticity” in the late modern age; he has however defined the term in a more general fashion, as shall be seen below. In this respect the new goods are increasingly events, media contents, or specially tailored services.<sup>98</sup> (“Goods”, in Reckwitz's sense, includes objects, services, events, and media contents.) The main consumers are the new “academic middle-class” who consume these goods not to satisfy their wants but for the purpose of self-realization (*Selbstverwirklichung*). Consumption has become, in other words, “cultural consumption” (*kultureller Konsum*), that is, consumption of cultural items. The market is now characterized by the competition among goods and services for *attention* and *valuation*. It is *Attraktivitätsmärkte*.

The new economy is dominated by the newly emergent “creative economy”. During the Fordist era the creative economy made up but a small portion of the total economy (art, music, film, design, fashion). Today the creative economy has become the kernel of the total economy (such as Apple, Google, Nike, Time Warner). The “creative economy” means that the old triad of economic process, producer, product, and consumer, has been transformed into the new triad of author, work, and audience. The new creative economy is also “knowledge economy” (*Wissensökonomie*) not in the sense that there are more technology and science (*Technifizierung* and *Verwissenschaftlichung*) or more knowledge and information, but in the sense that there are more culture, narration, meaning, and affects. Reckwitz is quick to emphasize that the old economic process (the production of standardized goods with the attendant rationalization and mechanization process) is still around in the new economy but has retreated into the background as support industries (extraction of raw materials, cleaning, transportation, security). In other words, when the center of capitalism has been transformed into the

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<sup>98</sup> That our life is increasingly about “eyeball movement” – a consequence of the culturalization of economy, *Kulturökonomie*. As seen, both Harvey and Boltanski-Chiapello have pointed this out as well.

flexible “creative industry”, traditional, rigid, Fordism has not disappeared but has only become the “background”. (I will comment more below on the foreground-background distinction in the new capitalism.)

Reckwitz takes great pain to emphasize that the new economy is basically the expansion of the Romantic and artist tradition which used to constitute only a minority trend in opposition to the dominant trend of rationalism to become today the dominant trend itself. In this respect I am, as has been seen, fully in agreement with him. Today’s economy is the art world of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century written large, with the same concerns adopted from the art world. While during the Fordist era consumers expect superior functionality from goods, today they want their goods to be “authentic”.

Das Authentische erscheint als das Gegenteil des Künstlichen, es wird als das Echte (bei Rousseau auch als das Natürliche) prämiert und empfunden, wohingegen das Inauthentische bloßes fake ist, ein So-tun-als-ob. Gemünzt auf unsere Fragestellung lässt sich sagen: Ist einer sozialen Entität – sei es ein Mensch, eine Gruppe, ein Ort oder ein Ding – eine besondere, eigentümliche Struktur zu eigen, dann ist sie in den Augen des Betrachters authentisch, folgt sie dagegen nur den allgemeinen Regeln des Immergleichen, dann ist sie es nicht. Authentizität ist ein Affekt- und Erlebensbegriff: Etwas wird unmittelbar als authentisch erlebt und empfunden – es affiziert und erscheint als echt.<sup>99</sup>

The authentic appears as the opposite of the artificial, it is valued and experienced as the genuine (with Rousseau also as the natural); on the contrary the inauthentic is the mere fake, a ‘so-do-as-if’. In relation to our inquiry it should be said: should a social entity – whether it be a person, a group, a place, or a thing – show off a particular, unique structure, then it is in the eyes of the beholder authentic, but should it on the contrary follow only the generalized rules of ‘always-the-same’, then it is not authentic. Authenticity is a concept about affect and experience: something is immediately experienced and perceived as authentic – it arouses affects and appears as genuine.

It can be seen that Reckwitz is here expanding on Boltanski-Chiapello’s narrative: the late modern economy has become “cultural” because it has, as it were, incorporated the artist critique against Fordism: Fordist products are inauthentic! Reckwitz then notes the specific temporal structure of “cultural goods” as opposed to that of “functional goods”, and the peculiar manner in which they are produced and circulate in the markets. In respect to the latter Reckwitz specifically notes the decontextualization of any cultural item and its reintegration within the current “hyper-culture”:

Eine kulturelle Singularität, die einmal ausschließlich fester Bestandteil bestimmter lokal und historisch verankerter Praktiken war, wird aus diesem Kontext herausgelöst und zu einem global zirkulierenden kulturellen Gut, das nun in Wettbewerb mit anderen Gütern gerät und von Konsumenten in pluralen Kontexten mit Kennerschaft

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99 Ibid., p. 138.

angeeignet wird. Daraus ergibt sich eine für die Spätmoderne charakteristische Form der Kultur, die ich Hyperkultur nenne. In der Hyperkultur kann potenziell alles – gleich ob volks-, populär- oder hochkultureller Herkunft, gleich ob gegenwärtig oder historisch, gleich welchen lokalen Ursprungs – den Wert der Kultur erlangen. In der Hyperkultur verlässt das Gut seinen Entstehungskontext, es zirkuliert – häufig global oder zwischen den Milieus – und kann dann in der wahrgenommenen Andersheit in Differenz zu anderen Gütern als singuläres gelten und in anderen Kontexten neu angeeignet werden.<sup>100</sup>

A cultural singularity, which was at one time strictly a component of the particular, locally and historically anchored, practices, is now loosened from this context and becomes a globally circulating cultural good, which enters into competition with other goods and is appropriated by consumers in pluralistic contexts as expert connoisseurs. From this results a form of culture that is characteristic for late modernity, which I call 'hyperculture'. In hyperculture everything – whether it is of folkish, popular, or high cultural origin, whether it is contemporary or historical, and of whichever local origins – can potentially achieve cultural value. In hyperculture the good leaves its context of origin, circulates – often globally and between milieus –, becomes validated in perceived otherness in difference from other goods, and is appropriated anew in other contexts.

Although Reckwitz uses the examples of “world food” and “world music” to illustrate the process, the New Age culture is probably an even better illustration: how Yoga and Taichi are taken out of their original cultural milieu and re-integrated into the life-style of the American academic middle-class.

In the end of this section, Reckwitz comments on what many other commentators have pointed out about the current age, that the market and its commodification has invaded many domains which were previously outside the market and uncommodified.

Zum einen findet eine umfassende Vermarktlichung der Ökonomie statt, das heiÙe eine Expansion marktförmiger Strukturen innerhalb der Wirtschaft, zum anderen wälzt sich die Form des Marktes um. Das heiÙt: die Vermarktlichung ist in der Spätmoderne im Wesentlichen durch die kulturellen Märkte angetrieben und geprägt!<sup>101</sup>

On the one hand an all-encompassing marketization of the economy has occurred, that is an expansion of market-like structures inside the economy, on the other hand the form of the market has transformed itself. That is: marketization is in late modernity essentially driven and determined by a cultural market.

Both Harvey and Boltanski-Chiapello have commented on this process, and all commentators have noticed that the competition between goods was far less intense during the Fordist era than during the

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100 Ibid., p. 145.

101 Ibid., p. 151.

current era. What Reckwitz has done is to recast the noted changes in a new context, the culturalization of the economy so that we may see them in a new light, as the consequence of something else, something larger, which we have hitherto not noticed.

The concepts of “cultural economy” and “singularization” encompass everything commentators have noted about the change in the present age. In particular, as noted, “culturalization” and “singularization” are deeper ways to characterize the feminization of Western society during the new era of flexible capitalism. Culturalization and the strive for authenticity and affect in place of standardization and the strive for functionality are in perfect congruence with the other markers of the feminine age: emotional intelligence, the obsession with spectacles, soft skills, people skill, “emotion work” (in Arlie Russell Hochschild’s sense) and so on, all of which have replaced the old-fashioned IQ, analytical skills, endurance, hard skills, and so on which were valued during the Fordist era.

### **8. *Leistungsgesellschaft vs Performanzökonomie/ Erfolgsökonomie***

Reckwitz then asserts that, corresponding to the transformation of the market from that of standardized goods to that of singularized goods, there has also occurred a similar transformation of the job market. To succeed in the job market in the late modern period, the worker has to establish himself or herself as “singular” and “special”. The manner of work has also changed correspondingly – all in order to successfully put forward singularized products and services on the market place. Routinized work inside a bureaucratic, hierarchical organization which has characterized the classical modern (Fordist) era has changed to temporary cooperation among singularized workers during the late modern era (flexible capitalism). Back in the old days, every worker was the same as, and interchangeable with, every other in the organization (since work was rationalized/ routinized/ mechanized). Today, a work group is formed as “project”: A “project” is a short term association devoted to a single purpose in contrast to the old bureaucracy where a worker works for a single organization for life while getting promoted up the hierarchy. Reckwitz thus continues here the main theme in Boltanski-Chiapello’s work: project, network, slender and flat. In order to produce singularized products and services, the project team must be creative. To be creative, the team must be characterized by “diversity”. Diversity is thus now valued: to recruit workers from diverse (cultural and gender) backgrounds so that each might bring different, hitherto untapped, experiences to the team. Reckwitz is here in complete agreement with Boltanski-Chiapello: it is explained before that corporations want diversity in order to increase flexibility and therefore competitiveness, here it is to increase creativity (and therefore competitiveness). It is certainly not a question of “liberating oppressed people”.

In the previous era, a typical worker in the hierarchy was a *Fachmensch*, getting a job because he had completed the necessary education and training and had passed the required examination, so that he was able to carry out the tasks on the job according to pre-established rules and protocols (the era of *rationalization*). Workers in today’s “creative economy” are even more than before required to possess a higher education degree – the old age where one can get a job with a high school diploma is gone forever. But employment in the “creative economy” requires more than that. The worker needs to show off his *Profil*. His or her personality, style, talent, and especially creativity are more important than his college degree. Reckwitz is again elaborating on Boltanski-Chiapello.



Success on the job market within the economy of singularization depends on factors which the former age of Generalization deemed as “irrational” and therefore not important. For example, what are generally called “soft skills” and “emotional intelligence”. Reckwitz lists the others:

.... die gewachsene Bedeutung sozialer Netzwerke für den Erfolg, die hohe Relevanz des im Herkunftsmilieu vermittelten kulturellen Kapitals, die Abhängigkeit der Performanzvalorisierungen von den durchaus wechselhaften Bewertungsformen und Affizierbarkeiten des Publikums; und schließlich die Abhängigkeit des Erfolgs von den unberechenbaren Auslösern und Konjunkturen auf den Aufmerksamkeits- und Valorisierungsmärkten für singuläre Güter.<sup>102</sup>

... the increasing significance of social networks for success, the high relevance of the cultural capital that is transmitted in one’s family background, the dependence of performance valorization on the completely changing forms of valuation and the public’s affectability; and finally the dependence of success on the unpredictable causes and circumstances on the attention- and valorization-market for singular goods...

What used to be on the border have now come to occupy the central position, more important than the formal qualifications. On the other hand, those who today, in this late modern economy, have no chance of success – the socially inept and the introverts – could have done well and been positively recognized in the previous economy based on Generalization since they were then only expected to do their job like a robot.<sup>103</sup> The manner of work has changed from following rules, routines, and protocols to performing (*Performanz*) in front of an audience (whether consumers or co-workers) in order to get recognized as “singular”, “special”, “one of a kind”, “worthy of attention”. Reckwitz is here making additional observations about life within the “network”.

I must mention here how Reckwitz as well as Boltanski-Chiapello seems to have directly contradicted my observations in my “Rationalization, McDonaldization, and Increasing Stupidity”. In the fields which I have investigated – the mental health industry, the criminal justice system, law enforcement, and the homeland security industry – the old logic of Generalization has not only continued but has actually further solidified. My discussion there is meant to demonstrate that, since 1970s, i.e. since the age of Singularization, the Fordist model of rationalization and mechanization (*sachliche Leistung*) has invaded and completely taken over these domains where formerly human relationships (communicative actions) predominated. This is the exact opposite of the development which Boltanski-Chiapello and Reckwitz have observed in the business world. Since Reckwitz’s observation about the creative industry as well as Boltanski-Chiapello’s about the new business world is certainly valid, I must admit that, in the age of Singularization, the logic of Generalization has not only persisted in such background domains as the extractive and transportation industries, but also in government bureaucracy, criminal justice system, the health and mental health industry – all these may thus be regarded as part of the “background” of the new capitalism as well. Reckwitz’s superb description applies only to the creative industry and is therefore one side of the coin:

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102 Ibid., p. 222.

103 Ibid., p. 223.

Die sachliche Leistung war an eine Arbeitsstelle gebunden, mit definierten Tätigkeiten und Aufgaben, mit (tariflich) festgelegter Arbeitszeit sowie einem festen Arbeitsort. Diese Arbeitsstelle wird in der creative economy von der Performanz ersetzt. Nicht mehr das Ausfüllen einer klar umschriebenen Position wird verlangt, sondern ein überzeugendes, möglichst außergewöhnliches Resultat. Das passt nicht zu einer starren Liste von Tätigkeiten, die das Arbeitssubjekt zu leisten habe, das entsprechend aufgefordert ist, selbstverantwortlich festzulegen, auf welchem Wege vorzugehen ist. Das klassische Format eines *Berufs* verliert so an Bedeutung gegenüber sehr allgemeinen, variablen und ergebnisorientierten Tätigkeitsbeschreibungen....

The impersonal accomplishing was tied up with a 'job', with defined activities and assignments, with work-time fixed in accordance with agreed wages as well as a fixed work place. This 'job' is in the creative economy replaced with 'performance'. The fulfillment of a clearly circumscribed position is no longer required, but a convincing, as much as possible extraordinary result. This is no longer compatible with a bare listing of activities which the working subject has to accomplish, who is correspondingly required to responsibly determine on which way he shall proceed. The classical format of 'calling' has thus lost significance to very general, variable, and result-oriented descriptions of activities....

Indem sich die spätmoderne Arbeitskultur an Performanz ausrichtet, ist sie damit... immer weniger eine Kultur der 'Leistung' und wird mehr und mehr zu einer Kultur des 'Erfolgs'....

Insofar as the late modern work-culture is oriented to 'performance', it is increasingly less a culture of 'accomplishment' but is becoming more and more a culture of 'success'....

In der industriellen Modeme konnte die Einstellung von Arbeitnehmern aufgrund von formalen Qualifikationen häufig bürokratisch erfolgen, und innerhalb der Organisationen war das Erfüllen der Dienstaufgaben *durch* jeden Einzelnen einer Wettbewerbslogik *zwischen* ihnen in der Regel entzogen. Infolge der Ausdifferenzierung unendlich vieler singulärer Profile ergibt sich jedoch sukzessive die hyperkompetitive Konstellation eines Kampfs um Sichtbarkeit und Wertschätzung auch auf dem Arbeitsmarkt....<sup>104</sup>

In the industrial modern the placement of workers could be bureaucratically done on the basis of formal qualifications, and, inside the organization, the fulfilling of task assignments *by* individuals was removed from the logic of competition *between* them. Following the differentiation of endless many singular profiles there emerges

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104 Ibid., p. 211.

successively the hyper-competitive constellation of struggle over visibility and valuation also on the labor market. . . .

Fordism is characterized as *Leistungsgesellschaft* while flexible capitalism, as *Performanzökonomie/ Erfolgsökonomie*. Now, insofar as the new culture of tolerance (feminism, multiculturalism, political correctness) is clearly a superstructure of flexible capitalism (of a culturalized economy), it is then problematic that certain domains of society are becoming even more Fordist while others are de-rationalized. This leads to the problem (which will be dealt with later) of the coexistence of flexible and Fordist accumulation regimes in a single economy which expresses itself in a cultural conflict between the new academic middle-class and the new under-class, between the blue and the red states, for example. I was previously misled to my modernist position (that Fordism has expanded) by my exclusive focus on certain sectors of the economy in which the logic of Generalization has continued.

I have in the past sided with other commentators in using economy's need for greater output (or Harvey's shorter turnover time) to explain why workload has been getting ever heavier, why each worker spends more time working, even at home or while on vacation, and why both husband and wife must work (i.e. *my* McDonaldization thesis). Boltanski-Chiapello have explained this in terms of the new structure of the network, by which the differentiation between the private and professional life is no longer valid. Reckwitz again explains the matter differently by embedding the elements in a new, hitherto unnoticed context. It is because the worker's relationship to his or her job has changed, it's because s/he now sees his or her job as a matter of self-realization. Hyper-competitiveness is not due to shorter turnover time or the enlargement of the market from national to international (globalization). Rather, for Reckwitz, it's because the social logic has changed from standardization to singular objects and persons competing for audience's attention. Audience's attention is scarce, and this is why each worker is competing harder with his co-workers than ever before.

## 9. The digitalization of culture: the performing subject

Reckwitz notes that, since the commencement of modernity, technology has played an increasingly determinant role in the construction of the social. While the modern era is marked by industrialization, the late modern era is determined by the digitalization of our culture. That is, singularization is in part caused by digitalization.

Während die industrielle Technik die Welt nur zu mechanisieren und standardisieren vermochte, forciert die digitale Technologie eine Singularisierung des Sozialen, der Subjekte und Objekte. Während die Industrieteknik ein Motor der funktionalen Rationalisierung und Versachlichung war, ist das digitale Netz ein Generator der gesellschaftlichen Kulturalisierung und Affektintensivierung.

While industrial technology sought only to mechanize and standardize the world, the digital technology causes a singularization of the social, of the subject and object. While industrial technology was a motor of functional rationalization and objectification, the digital net is a generator of social culturalization and affect-intensification.

Obwohl man die frühen Computer in den 1970er und 80er Jahren noch leicht im Sinne der klassischen Kybernetik als Perfektionierung industrieller Kontrolllogik wahrnehmen konnte, wird zu Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts eine Struktur immer deutlicher, die diesem ersten Eindruck widerspricht: Der technologische Komplex aus Computern, Digitalität und Internet ermöglicht und erzwingt eine fortdauernde Fabrikation von Subjekten, Objekten und Kollektiven als einzigartige. Auf den ersten Blick ganz unterschiedliche Eigenheiten der digitalen Kultur lassen sich bei genauerer Betrachtung als Ausprägungen einer solchen technologisch angeregten Singularisierung dechiffrieren: Sie reichen von den um Originalität und Sichtbarkeit konkurrierenden Profilen in den sozialen Netzwerken über das data tracking des ‘digitalen Fußabdrucks’ des Nutzers, der eine Personalisierung des Netzzugangs erlaubt, bis zu den partikularen Web-Communities, die digitalen ‘Stämme’, die jeweils ihre eigene, in sich abgeschlossene Weltsicht teilen.<sup>105</sup>

Although one could easily perceive the earlier computers from the 1970s and 1980s in the sense of classical cybernetics as perfecting the industrial control-logic, by the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the structure is increasingly visible which contradicts this first impression: the technological complex out of computers, digitality, and the Internet makes possible and forces into being a continual fabrication of subjects, objects, and collectives as ‘one-of-a-kind’. What on first glance appear as diverse individual entities of the digital culture should be deciphered upon closer examination as determinations of a technologically enabled singularization: they range from profiles in the social media which compete for originality and visibility, through the data-tracking of ‘digital food prints’ of users which a personalization of net-use makes possible, to the particular web-communities, the digital tribes, each of which is characterized by its own, self-enclosed worldview.

Reckwitz is at pains to emphasize that the Internet is at bottom a “culture machine” (*Kulturmaschine*). While the old industry’s purpose is to produce machines and goods, the Internet exists to produce culture, i.e. media content which arouses affect rather than satisfying wants.<sup>106</sup> In other words the meaning of technology itself has changed from exemplary rationalization to exemplary culturalization during the transition from modern to late modern period. It has changed from being the motor of generalization and generator of functionality to being the motor of culturalization and generator of cultural items – from the driver of masculinity to the promoter of femininity. In this sense, the Internet is the technology of the feminized world *par excellence*.

Die industriell-mechanische Technik, welche die Moderne von der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts bis zur Mitte des 20. Jahrhunderts dominierte, war der Motor der sozialen Logik des Allgemeinen und der sachlichen Logik des Funktionalen. Dies gilt für alle gesellschaftsprägenden technischen Paradigmen seit 1780: für die Industrielle

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105 Ibid., p. 226 – 227.

106 This really solves the dispute between George Ritzer and his detractors about whether the Internet is McDonaldized or de-McDonaldized. What is observed to be the de-McDonaldization on the Internet is in fact a process of singularization.

Revolution im engeren Sinne, für das Paradigma von Dampfmaschine und Eisenbahn, jenes von Stahl, Elektrizität und Schwerindustrie und für jenes des Öls, des Automobils und der Massenkongsumgüterproduktion. Durchgängig handelte es sich hier um industrielle Techniken der Mechanisierung, der effizienten Arbeitsteilung, der Energiegewinnung und der Standardisierung.

The industrial-mechanical technology, which dominated modernity from the second half of the eighteenth century until the middle of the twentieth, was the motor of the social logic of the General and the objectifying logic of the functional. This is valid for all socially determining technical paradigms since 1780: for the Industrial Revolution in the stricter sense, for the paradigm of steam engines and railroads, that of steel, electricity, and the heavy industry, and for that of oil, automobiles, and the mass production of consumer goods. Throughout it was about the industrial technique of mechanization, efficient division of labor, energy harvest, and standardization.

Seit dem Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts wechselt die avancierteste Technologie der Epoche nun jedoch gewissermaßen die Seite und verkehrt sich von einem Transformationsriemen der Rationalisierung in einen der Kulturalisierung, von einem Motor der Standardisierung in einen der Fabrikation von Singularitäten. Die Technologie wird nun in einer speziellen Weise zu einer Förderin dessen, was sie zuvor zu eliminieren trachtete: der Einzigartigkeiten und der Kultur. Es findet eine basale technologische Umkehrung statt: von der technischen Kultur der industriellen Moderne zur Kulturmaschine der Spätmoderne.<sup>107</sup>

Since the end of the twentieth century the advanced technology of the epoch has switched side and reversed itself from a transformation belt of rationalization into one of culturalization, from a motor of standardization into one of manufacturing of singularities. Technology has become in a specific way the promoter of what it tried to eliminate before: those things that are ‘one-of-a-kind’ and culture. There has occurred a technological reversal on a fundamental level: from the technical culture of industrial modern to the cultural machine of late modernity.

Such is the difference between the production and the consumption phase of capitalism. Since by its structure the digital world represents the radicalization of the logic of Generalization (even though by its function it serves the purpose of singularizing our world), Reckwitz evokes again the sort of solution which Ritzer has evoked to save his McDonaldization thesis: the background structure (infrastructure) manifests ever more the logic of Generalization in order to make possible the increasing singularization of culture on the foreground.

Reckwitz makes the point that the traditional thesis that digital technology makes us into an information and scientific society simply misses the point. The Internet’s primary function lies less in making information available and more in making singular people and things ubiquitous, in which case it has made our society more “cultural” and “affective” than informational and technical. Reckwitz

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107 Reckwitz, *ibid.*, p. 228,

emphasizes that the digital culture is primarily a visual culture, texts and sounds closely following upon images. The “digital subject” exemplifies what it means to be a “person” in the late modern age: it’s all about performing before an audience, authenticity, and visibility. This is what the digital culture is really about (it’s not about information). The “digital subject” works hard performing before his or her audience in order to be recognized as “singular” and “authentic” and therefore become visible. While a human being from the Fordist era was also terribly concerned with other people’s perception of him and her – of course: this is a human universal – the approval of others now goes in the opposite direction. Gone are the “normal”, the “type”, the “genus” which characterize the subjects of the Fordist era.

David Riesman hat bezogen auf die organisierte Moderne der 1940er und 1950er Jahre einen Subjekttypus herausgearbeitet, der ebenfalls ständig an seiner Selbstdarstellung vor anderen arbeitet; dieser *other-directed character* trachtet danach, als Angestellter am Arbeitsplatz, als Jugendlicher in der peer group oder als Nachbar in der Vorstadtsiedlung vor den anderen eine gelungene Performance zu liefern. So weit, so ähnlich, könnte man zunächst vermuten. Der entscheidende und aufschlussreiche Unterschied kommt nun aber ins Spiel, wenn man die Struktur der Performances betrachtet. Während Riesmans *other-directed character* danach strebt, sozial unauffällig zu sein, keine Individualität oder gar Exzentrizität durchscheinen zu lassen und den Standards des sozial Normalen und Angepassten zu entsprechen, will das Profil-Subjekt in seiner Performance genau das Gegenteil erreichen, nämlich aus dem digitalen Aufmerksamkeit- und Attraktivitätswettbewerb als einzigartig hervorgehen. Nun genügt es nicht mehr und erschiene zugleich subjektiv unbefriedigend, lediglich ein unauffälliges Gruppenmitglied zu sein. Das spätmoderne Subjekt will und soll vielmehr seine Unverwechselbarkeit leben und präsentieren. Es geht ihm, wie schon mehrfach betont, darum, auf authentische Weise ‘ich selbst’ zu sein.<sup>108</sup>

David Riesman has worked out a subject type in relation to the organized modern of the 1940 and 1950 era, who also constantly works on his self-presentation before others; this *other-directed character* attempts, as an employee in work place, as a youth in a peer group, or as a neighbor in a suburb, to deliver a successful performance before others. So far, so similar, thus one may at first suppose. The decisive and conclusive distinction comes into play when one considers the structure of performance. While Riesman’s *other-directed character* strives to be socially unobtrusive, to not let any individuality or eccentricity appear, and to conform to the standard of the socially normal and appropriate, the profile subject in his or her performance achieves exactly the opposite, namely to come out as ‘one-of-a-kind’ in the competition in the digital world over attention and attractiveness. Now it is no longer sufficient and in fact appears as subjectively unsatisfying to be only an unobtrusive member of a group. The late modern subject rather wants to, and should, live out and present uninterchangeability. It is a matter of, as has already been repeatedly emphasized, being ‘I myself’ in an authentic manner.

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108 Ibid., p. 246.

In the former days, only movie stars function like this, today everyone is in the business of presenting himself or herself to an audience, which is the very meaning of social media.

Das Streben nach Authentizität begleitet aber auch die Selbstgestaltung der digitalen Subjekte und hat die paradoxe Form der performativen Authentizität. Sie ist paradox, weil die Authentizität eines Subjekts dem Wortsinne nach allein sein Selbstverhältnis betrifft: Es ist authentisch, wenn es sich nicht künstlich, sondern ‘echt’ fühlt – und das heißt: wenn es den eigenen Wünschen und Idealen eigensinnig folge, notfalls gegen den Widerstand der Anderen. Das ist es, was das spätmoderne Subjekt will. Zugleich lebt dieses Subjekt in einer Kultur, in der diese Authentizität eine zentrale soziale Erwartung geworden ist: Das Subjekt soll authentisch sein – ‘Sei ganz du selbst, aber bitte sei es auch!’ Wir haben schon gesehen, inwiefern soziale Anerkennung in der Gesellschaft der Singularitäten davon abhängt, als einzigartig authentisch wahrgenommen zu werden, und Subjekte daher gezwungen sind, sich selbst als singulär und authentisch zu performen.<sup>109</sup>

The striving after authenticity guides also the self-creation of the digital subject and has the paradoxical form of performative authenticity. It is a paradox because the authenticity of a subject, according to the meaning of the word, concerns only his or her self-relation: s/he is authentic, when s/he feels not artificial but ‘genuine’ – and that means: when s/he obstinately follows his or her own wishes and ideals, even against the resistance of others. This is what the late modern subject wants. At the same time this subject lives in a culture in which this authenticity has become a central social expectation: the subject should be authentic – ‘Be totally yourself, but please also be it!’ We have already seen to what extent social recognition in a society of singularities depends on being recognized as ‘one-of-a-kind’ authentic, and the subject is thereby forced to perform to make himself or herself singular and authentic.

To sum up: the “feminization” of society means “culturalization”. This means a society which has incorporated the artist demand for authenticity and self-realization in order to become more flexible. “Culturalization” is congruent with “flexibility”. This means, first of all, that society is made up of singularized products and services rather than standardized goods of mass consumption. This means, secondly, that the worker, like a performance artist, is performing before his or her colleagues in order to prove his is “one-of-a-kind” rather than the robotic, mechanical, square-headed *Fachmensch*. This means, finally, that everyone is trying to perform and demonstrate his or her “authenticity” in social settings – since other people approve of you if you are “one-of-a-kind” and “true to your individual nature” rather than, as in the Fordist era, if you conform to a “general type”. This is the primary function of the Internet – and why social networking sites have now dominated the landscape of the Internet. This “performance artist” in search of “authenticity” is more feminine than masculine. (This is probably why girls spend more time chatting on social media while boys spend more time playing video games.) This is what happens when manufacturing – the foundation of modern economy – has

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109 Ibid., p. 247.

disappeared: everyone has become a performance artist. The performance artist is more social and flexible than a *Fachmensch*.

## 10. The rise of the new “academic middle-class”

After examining the change in the economy (goods and the job market) and the rise of a singularizing “culture machine”, Reckwitz turns in this section to the change in life-style which the late modern subjects have undergone. The subjects have undergone a fundamental change from their form during the Fordist era. Not every group – or class – has undergone change in the same way. Reckwitz is now getting into the new class structure of late modern society which no other commentators on postmodern society have thought about. The premier group whose way of being corresponds exactly to the singularization of economy and the rise of a culture machine and who therefore is the primary carrier of the new singularizing life-style is the new middle-class, what Reckwitz has called the “academic middle class”. They are called “academic” because they are usually college graduates – the beneficiaries of the expansion of the university system since the 1960s – and because they constitute the principle workers in the new knowledge and cultural economy (the creative industry). While the singularization of society has an effect on all members and all classes of the new society, its purest expression is the new life-style of the new academic middle class, on which Reckwitz will concentrate in this section.

Es ist die akademische Mittelklasse – besonders angestoßen vom kreativen Milieu –, die in der Spätmoderne in grundsätzlicher und tonangebender Manier an der Singularisierung und Kulturalisierung ihres Lebensstils arbeitet, in dem ein bestimmtes Verhältnis zur ‘Kultur’ sowie der Wert und das Erleben des Einzigartigen leitend wirken. Authentizität, Selbstverwirklichung, kulturelle Offenheit und Diversität, Lebensqualität und Kreativität sind die Parameter dieses Lebensstils, der auch über die Grenzen ihrer primären Trägergruppe hinaus Strahlkraft erlangt und zu einer Hegemonie geworden ist.<sup>110</sup>

It is the academic middle-class – especially seen in the creative milieu – which has worked on the singularization and culturalization of their life-style in a fundamental and tone-giving manner in the late modern time. In such singularization and culturalization of life-style, a certain relation to ‘culture’ as well as the value and experience of the ‘one-of-a-kind’ is the guiding thread. Authenticity, self-realization, cultural openness and diversity, quality of life, and creativity are the parameters of this life-style, which has achieved attractiveness beyond the boundaries of its primary carriers and has become hegemonic [in society].

As can be seen, the “new academic middle-class” constitute the majority of the “liberal progressive” segment of the American population, the dominant segment of the population in the “blue states”, i.e. the areas where the high-tech, service economy (the “creative industry” or what Nancy Fraser has called the “symbolic” and “service sector”) is mostly concentrated. They are the principal embodiment of flexible capitalism and supporters of globalization and the imperialist policies of the American

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110 Ibid., p. 275.



political Establishment. They are the drivers of the new economy of singularization and the spiritual guru, the *grand*, who jumps from project to project in Boltanski-Chiapello's description. They are contrasted with the resisters against the new capitalism, of whom the "new under-class" concentrated in the "red states" make up the majority in the case of the United States. This is the new class structure of postmodern American, and the new classes no longer distinguish themselves from each other according to material wealth, but according to *culture*. They are *cultural classes*.

Die sozialstrukturelle Transformation, welche die westlichen Gesellschaften seit den 1980er Jahren erleben, lässt sich als ein Wandel von der nivellierten Mittelstandsgesellschaft zur kulturellen Klassengesellschaft beschreiben.<sup>111</sup>

The social-structural transformation, which the Western society since the 1980s have experienced, should be described as a change from a leveling middle-class society to a cultural class society.

The new academic middle-class, as the principal embodiment of the new value system of "self-realization" as "one-of-a-kind", is contrasted with the "old middle-class" from the Fordist era, whose value system consisted in being (as should be expected) "normal".

Die 'Mitte' bezeichnete hier nicht nur einen sozialstatistischen Durchschnitt, um den sich herum mehr als neunzig Prozent der Bevölkerung versammelte, sondern war auch der kulturelle Ausdruck eines Lebensstils mit dem Selbstbewusstsein, 'Mitte und Maß' zu markieren: das Normalarbeitsverhältnis, die Normalfamilie, der 'normale', angemessene Konsum etc. Im Zentrum der Lebensform der nivellierten Mittelstandsgesellschaft befand sich... die Arbeit am Lebensstandard – an einer angemessenen, aber insgesamt normal erscheinenden Ausstattung mit Ressourcen, die Lebenskomfort für alle in ähnlicher Weise bedeutete.<sup>112</sup>

The 'middle' here designated not only a social-statistical average, under which more than 90 percent of the population fell, but was also the cultural expression of a life-style with the consciousness that they were the 'middle' and the 'measure': the normal work-relations, the normal family, the 'normal', the appropriate consumption, etc. In the center of the form of life of the leveling middle-class society was found... the work on living-standard – on an appropriate, but overall normal-seeming dealing with resources, which means a comfortable life for everyone in a similar way....

Unlike today, the "middle-class" in the Fordist era made up the vast majority of the population, up to 90 percent. The era of the old middle-class was an easier time for most people. There was greater equality, in terms of income and living-standard, among this "90 percent", whether they were white collar or blue collar. Life was more stable back then, and higher education was not yet necessary for the attainment of middle-class living-standard. Starting from 1970s, when manufacturing began moving out (especially in the case of USA) and the singularization of society was in full-swing, economy was

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111 Ibid., p. 275 – 276.

112 Ibid, p. 277.

transformed into the new knowledge and cultural economy. Together with the expansion of higher education (its massification), the old middle-class structure disintegrated and a new class structure emerged, where one third moved upward to become the new academic middle-class, one third moved downward to become the new (uneducated) under-class, and one third held onto the middle, the remnant of the old middle-class from the previous era. Reckwitz calls this polarization process the *Paternostereffekt*. The polarization process, especially pronounced in the USA, but also a prominent trend in France and the UK, although less pronounced in Germany, has made life much harsher in that a great divide in terms of income *and culture* now separates the upper segment of the society from its lower segment. Again, Reckwitz has placed a well-known phenomenon in a new context allowing it to be seen in a new light. The increasing gap between the rich and the poor is commonly attributed to rampant Neoliberalism. Reckwitz enables it to be seen, however, as a consequence of the new class structure corresponding to the singularization of society and the culturalization of economy. In addition, Reckwitz points out something hitherto unseen, namely that beside *material capital* there is also a widening gap in *cultural capital* as well as in educational level between the new academic middle-class and the new under-class. While I agree with all this, I must point out once again that the ultimate cause is the de-manufacturization of society. Reckwitz could have focused on this ultimate cause when he asserts that the new under-class emerges as the class performing the remaining industrial activities and the new simple service jobs after the transition to post-industrial economy has eroded the traditional industrial sector; but he didn't.

In the following Reckwitz will focus on the cultural divide that separates the new academic middle-class from the new under-class, i.e. the cultural rise (*kulturelle Aufstieg*) of the former and the cultural fall (*kulturelle Abstieg*) of the latter, or how the life-style of the former becomes valued by society at large while the life-style of the latter is looked down upon. As noted, the life-style of the new academic middle-class has changed from the old concern with living-standard to the new aestheticization and ethicization of daily life (*Ästhetisierung und Ethisierung des Alltagslebens*), with self-actualization and authenticity as the goal of life. This new "singularizing life-style" goes beyond "living-standard" and corresponds to a new concern with the *quality of life* (*Lebensqualität*). While people look up to the new academic middle-class on account of their new life-style and their concern with the quality of life, they look down on the new under-class who are merely concerned with being normal and satisfying the basic needs of daily life (what Reckwitz will call *muddling through*).

Der Lebensstil der neuen Mittelklasse als solcher wird gesellschaftlich nun als eine *wertvolle Lebensform* prämiert, und das sie tragende Subjekt gilt als ein *wertvolles Subjekt* mit wertvollen Qualitäten (Kreativität, Offenheit, Stilbewusstsein, Unternehmergeist, Empathiefähigkeit, Kosmopolitismus, etc.). Die Subjekte der neuen Mittelklasse können sich so als Träger der zukunftsweisenden Lebensform begreifen, die zum gesellschaftlichen Maßstab gelangenden und erfolgreichen Lebens insgesamt geworden ist. Umgekehrt erscheint die Lebensform der neuen Unterklasse (subtiler auch jene der alten Mittelklasse) als wertlos und defizitär, und zwar sowohl in der Selbstwahrnehmung der Subjekte als auch in der gesellschaftlichen Repräsentation...<sup>113</sup>

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113 Ibid., p. 284.

The life-style of the new middle-class as such is socially prized as a *valuable way of life*, and the subject which carries it is taken to be a *valuable subject* with valuable qualities (creativity, openness, consciousness of style, entrepreneurial spirit, ability for empathy, cosmopolitanism, etc). The subject of the new middle-class can grasp itself as the carrier of a future-pointing way of life, which has become the social measure of a succeeding and successful life overall. On the other hand the way of life of the new under-class (subtler also that of the old middle-class) appears as valueless and deficient, in the self-perception of the subject itself as well as in the representation of society....

An important feature of the new class-structure is that, whereas the academic middle-class is the embodiment of the new flexible, knowledge and cultural, economy, the new under-class becomes the carrier of the old-fashioned Fordism. The former embodies the logic of Singularization while the latter continues the logic of Generalization. Society's devaluation of the new under-class – because it is they who have continued the values and culture of the Fordist era while operating some of the “background” industries (resources-extraction, construction, transportation) – and their consequent resentment are the themes of Arlie Russell Hochschild's *Strangers in Their Own Land* and also mentioned by Fraser in the aforementioned article in *Dissent*. This cultural inequality – not simply material inequality – is the cause of the new class-struggle in the present era, which manifests itself deceptively as the struggle between openness and intolerance, between love and hate, between political correctness and bigotry, between left and right. While Reckwitz would insist that this struggle which has today captured so much of our attention (thanks to Trump's winning and Brexit, etc.) is really one between the proponents of culturalization and losers in the process, I have argued that it is one between the proponents of the new flexible capitalism who are happy that society has moved beyond Fordism and the “backward” people, the losers, who want to return to the old rigid ways of Fordism. That liberal progressives, insofar as they either *are*, or are allied with, the new academic middle-class, are enforcers of the new capitalism cannot be more obvious today – it's strange that some of them still believe they are against capitalism or Neoliberalism. Aren't they the ones lamenting the disintegration of the European Union? Aren't they the ones objecting to Trump's tariff? Aren't they the ones praising globalization? Aren't they the ones denouncing the rightwing, backward people for wanting no more globalization?

## **11. The new academic middle-class is the opposition becoming mainstream**

Reckwitz asserts a more complex scenario than my simplistic one that the oppositional movement (the “feminine tradition” from the Romantics to the hippies) has simply won. The new life-style of the academic middle-class is really a combination of Romanticism and its enemy, the bourgeoisie.

Man kann gar nicht oft genug wiederholen, dass für die Gestalt des singularistischen Lebensstils eine kulturelle Tradition der Moderne prägend wird, die bis 1970 nur von marginaler und subkultureller Relevanz war: jene der Romantik mit ihren Vorstellungen einer emphatischen Individualität des Subjekts, die es zu entfalten und zu verwirklichen gelte. Ausgehend vom Modell der Selbstverwirklichung und Selbstentfaltung des Subjekts arbeitete diese romantische Bewegung am Projekt einer umfassenden Kulturalisierung und Singularisierung der Welt. Überall ging es ihr

darum, ein bloß instrumentelles, zweckrationales und emotionsloses Weltverhältnis hinter sich zu lassen und die Objekte, Subjekte, Orte, Ereignisse und Kollektive zu ästhetisieren, zu hermeneutisieren, zu ethisieren, zu ludifizieren, um aus ihnen affektive Befriedigung zu beziehen. Diese Kulturalisierung ging einher mit einer Entstandardisierung und Singularisierung: der besondere Mensch als Individuum, das besondere Ding (Handwerk, Kunstwerk), der besondere Ort, das besondere Ereignis sind ihre Zielmarken. Erst in diesem sehr speziellen Kontext konnte der Wert der Authentizität ebenso zentral werden wie jener der Kreativität; erst als besonderes, singuläres erscheint ein Objekt oder ein Individuum authentisch, und zugleich soll es zum Gegenstand schöpferischer Gestaltung werden. Die historische Romantik der Zeit um 1800 markiert den Ausgangspunkt einer Linie künstlerisch-ästhetischer Gegenkulturen, die über die Bohème des 19. Jahrhunderts, die Lebensreformer und Avantgarden um 1900 bis zur Counter Culture um 1970 reicht.<sup>114</sup>

One cannot repeat often enough that, for the form of the singularizing life-style, a cultural tradition of modernity is determinant which until 1970 was only of marginal and sub-cultural relevance: that of Romanticism with its notion of an emphatic individuality of the subject which it must unfold and realize. Proceeding from this model of the self-realization and self-unfolding of the subject, the Romantic movement worked on the project of an all-encompassing culturalization and singularization of the world. Everywhere it was about leaving behind the pure instrumental, rationally goal-directed, and emotionless relation to the world and aestheticizing, hermeneuticizing, ethicizing, and gamifying objects, places, events, and collectives in order to derive affective satisfaction therefrom. This culturalization went hand in hand with a de-standardization and singularization: the particular person as the individual, the particular thing (handwork, art work), the particular place, and the particular event are their objectives. Only in this very special context can the value of authenticity become as central as that of creativity: first the object or the individual appears as particular and singular, and at the same time it should become the object of creative molding. The historical Romanticism of the time around 1800 marks the point of departure for a lineage of artistic-aesthetic counter-culture which ranges from the Bohemians of the nineteenth century, through the Lebensreform movement and the avant-garde around 1900, to the counter-culture of 1970.

*Zweckrational* is Weber's way of characterizing the dominant trend of the first two phases of capitalism, the bourgeois and the Fordist. Reckwitz then describes how the counter-culture has become the norm after functioning as the underdog for two hundred years:

Fast zweihundert Jahre lang handelt es sich im Wesentlichen um gegen den Mainstream gerichtete Subkulturen von begrenztem Einfluss. Die Counter Culture der 1970er Jahre, die mit dem Etikett '1968' behelfsmäßig umschrieben werden kann und deren wirkungsmächtiges Epizentrum der 'kalifornische Lebensstil' ist, markiert den historischen Wendepunkt. Da infolge der Bildungsexpansion nun viele ihrer Ideen

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114 Ibid., p. 286.

von einer kritischen Masse der Bevölkerung, eben der aufsteigenden neuen Mittelklasse, geteilt wurden, konnte die 'stille Revolution' eines Wertewandels von den Pflicht-, Akzeptanz- und Statuswerten zu den postmaterialistischen Werten der Selbstverwirklichung stattfinden. Damit sich die postromantische Authentizitätsrevolution nach 1968 etablieren konnte, bedurfte es freilich entgegenkommender institutioneller und systemischer Strukturen in den folgenden Jahrzehnten: des... Aufstiegs der Ökonomie der Singularitäten mit ihren Arbeits- und Konsumformen, welche auf den Selbstverwirklichungsbedürfnissen aufbauen und sie weiter heranziehen; aber auch des Aufstiegs eines psychologischen und pädagogischen Komplexes, der auf einer 'positiven Psychologie' des *self-growth* und der *human potentials* basiert; schließlich des Durchbruchs linksliberal orientierter politischer Reformen, die ein Recht auf individuelle Entfaltung der Persönlichkeit forcieren, am folgenreichsten bei der Emanzipation der Frauen, daneben bei den Rechten von Kindern und Jugendlichen sowie von gleichgeschlechtlichen Paaren...<sup>115</sup>

For almost two hundred years it is in essence about a subculture of limited influence that was erected against the mainstream. The counter-culture of the 1970s, which can be helpfully circumscribed with the epithet '1968' and whose most influential epicenter is the 'Californian life-style', marks the historical turning-point. Because, following the expansion of higher education, many of its ideas would be shared by a larger segment of the population, even by the rising new middle-class, there has occurred a 'silent revolution' [in the way] of a change of value from those of duty, acceptance, and status to the post-materialist values of self-realization. In order that the post-Romantic authenticity-revolution could be established after 1968, the corresponding institutional and systemic structures were evidently required in the following decades: the rise of the economy of singularities with its manners of working and consumption, which is built upon the needs for self-realization and drives them to develop further; but also the rise of a psychological and pedagogic complex that is based on the 'positive psychology' of self-growth and human potentials; and finally the breakthrough of a left-liberal-oriented political reform which demands the right to unfold an individual personality, of which the most consequential is seen in the emancipation of women, but also in the rights of children and youth as well as homosexual couples....

When the oppositional, Romantic movement becomes the norm, however, it is combined with the bourgeois culture which flourished during Enlightenment and ended with the beginning of the Fordist era (high modernity) and which was the origin of classical liberalism. Bourgeoisie is only revived when combined with its former opposite Romanticism in the form of the new academic middle-class. The extinct bourgeoisie is manifested in the new middle-class' sense of self-responsibility, status-investment through education, and skillful maneuvering through the external world. First, in respect to the Romantic tradition:

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115 Ibid., p. 286 – 297.

Bürgerlichkeit und Romantik befanden sich fast zweihundert Jahre in einem antagonistischen Verhältnis zueinander, und dieser traditionsreiche Antagonismus wird durch die neue, akademische Mittelklasse der Spätmoderne in einer ungewöhnlichen Symbiose aufgelöst.<sup>116</sup>

The bourgeoisie and the Romantics find themselves for almost two hundred years in an antagonistic relationship to each other, and this traditional antagonism is canceled by the new academic middle-class of late modern time in an unusual symbiosis.

Recall the counter-culture movement's war on the Fordist middle-class on the ground of the latter's conformism. No wonder that, when the former wins the war and becomes the norm in the new economy, self-realization becomes the goal of life: the chief characteristic which Boltanski-Chiapello have extracted from the managerial literature of the 1990s.

Ich möchte daher zunächst daran erinnern, dass die Vorstellung eines Selbst, das legitimerweise danach strebt, seine ganz 'eigenen', vorgeblich 'innersten', in jedem Fall aber besonderen Wünsche und Gedanken in die Tat umzusetzen, sie also in seinen Akten und Werken auszudrücken, eine ungewöhnliche semantische Erfindung der Romantik und des Sturm und Drang war. Szientifiziert wurde diese Vorstellung in der Psychologie der Selbstverwirklichung (self-realization, self-actualization) und des Selbstwachstums (self-growth) in den 1950er und 1960er Jahren. Dieser zufolge lassen sich zwei diametral entgegengesetzte Selbst- und Weltverhältnisse unterscheiden: Einerseits ein zweckrationales oder normatives Verhältnis, bei dem es in erster Linie darum geht, Zwecke zu verfolgen, um primäre Bedürfnisse oder materielle Interessen zu befriedigen, oder den von außen herangetragenen Normen der Gesellschaft zu entsprechen; andererseits ein Weltverhältnis der Selbstverwirklichung, das danach strebt, etwas um seiner selbst willen zu erleben und zu erfahren (schöpferische Arbeit, Liebe, Religion, Natur, Kunst etc.). Das sich selbst verwirklichende Subjekt will nicht 'haben' oder 'scheinen', sondern in seinen Praktiken und im jeweiligen Moment 'sein' und idealerweise dabei 'peak experiences' (Maslow) erleben.<sup>117</sup>

I would therefore like to recall next that the notion of a self which strives legitimately to implement in actuality its own and inner, and in each case particular, wishes and thoughts, and thus to express them in its acts and works, was an unusual semantic invention of the Romantics and the Sturm und Drang. This notion was made into a science by the psychology of self-realization, self-actualization, and self-growth in the 1950s and 1960s. According to this psychology, one can distinguish between two diametrically opposed relations of the self to the world: on the one hand the rationally goal-directed or normative relation, in which what is at issue in the first instance is the pursuit of goals as a way to satisfy primary needs or material interests or to conform to the norms of society imposed from outside; on the other hand self-realization's

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116 Ibid., p. 288.

117 Ibid., p. 290.

relation to the world, which strives to live and experience for the sake of itself (creative work, love, religion, nature, art, etc.). The self-realizing self does not want to ‘have’ or ‘seem’, but ‘be’ in its practices and in the present moment and, ideally, attain thereby ‘peak experiences’ (Maslow).

The “feminine tradition” is thus manifested in such varieties ranging from the Sturm und Drang in the late eighteenth century<sup>118</sup> to the *Selbstverwirklichungspsychologie* of the 1950s and 1960s. As noted, just on the eve of the new age, in the 1970s, this tradition was succinctly expressed in Erich Fromm’s *To Have or To Be*, which basically says that the capitalism of the Fordist era has conditioned us to the having mode and made us forget about being. Then, thanks to the transition to flexible capitalism and the singularization of the economy, this “feminine tradition” has become the norm, and one can see in Erich Fromm’s classic the academic middle-class’ philosophy of life: life is about being rather than having.<sup>119</sup> The Romantic way of understanding human being “Everyone is born a special person, charged with a special mission in life”, an eccentric way of thinking back in the bourgeois and Fordist days when everyone was supposed to be “normal”, is today the most common wisdom – in fact, the requirement. One can also see why the academic middle-class take the political stance in favor of feminism, anti-racism, and gender non-conformism: everyone has a right to develop himself or herself according to his or her originality. Again, they are the flexible *grand*, the guru entrepreneur which Boltanski-Chiapello have described. This is the new meaning of “individualism”.

The “artist critique” has thus succeeded with the academic middle-class’ domination of society. We must not be misled at this point. As the 68 revolution has become the norm, the new academic middle-class is also the embodiment of the spirit of the “social critique”. Hence they frequently speak out against growing inequality in contemporary times – as if they were not entirely on the side of Neoliberalism – and are generally in favor of social programs such as public funding of housing projects for homeless people.

Now, in respect to the bourgeois tradition. The new academic middle-class also wants economic success along with self-realization: in this they have outgrown the hippies, their immediate ancestors. Because they seek self-realization as their life goal like the Romantics and the artists and 68 hippies while also wanting to be financially and culturally successful in the world like the old bourgeoisie, they become a combination of both, initially opposite, traditions: “successful self-actualization” (*erfolgreiche Selbstverwirklichung*).

This combination of the Romantic-hippie tradition with the bourgeoisie means that the inward-turning, world-rejecting self-realization of the former tradition where one rejects the world and searches inward for one’s authentic self (*weltabgewandte Selbstverwirklichung*) has been transformed into self-creating

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118 I first learned about the Sturm und Drang from Will and Ariel Durant’s *The Story of Civilization: Part X: Rousseau and Revolution*, p. 520 – 522.

119 For example, Erich Fromm’s 1974 sermon (Deutschlandfunk Kultur broadcast on 26.08.2018: [https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/philosophie-aus-den-archiven-erich-fromm-liebe-ist-eine.2162.de.html?dram:article\\_id=426311](https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/philosophie-aus-den-archiven-erich-fromm-liebe-ist-eine.2162.de.html?dram:article_id=426311)). Arguing against the Age of Rationalization and Generalization: “Mehr und mehr tun wir nur das, was einen Zweck hat... Der Mensch heutzutage denkt kaum mehr daran, dass das Schönste im Leben ist, seine eigenen Kräfte zu äußern, nicht für einen Zweck, sondern wo das Tun selbst zusammenfällt mit dem Zweck.”

*in* and *through* the world (*weltzugewandte Selbstverwirklichung*), such that the world has to transform itself to accord with this new life-style, i.e. the economy *has* to be culturalized.

Es steht außer Frage, dass sich dieses Selbst nicht im Rückzug auf ein Innen oder gegen die Welt, sondern erst im Umgang mit der Welt verwirklicht: Was ich eigentlich bin und wirklich will, erweist sich erst in meinen alltäglichen Praktiken, in dem, was ich für mich ausprobiere und gerne oder mit Leidenschaft tue. Diese weltzugewandte Selbstverwirklichung muss voraussetzen, dass die Welt für eine solche Haltung eingerichtet ist. Tatsächlich kommt die Spätmoderne mit ihren reichhaltigen Offerten der globalen (und digitalen) Ökonomie der Singularitäten zwischen Yoga-Retreat, Ethnic Food, Kreativarbeit, Facebook und Gesangsstunden, aber auch mit ihren liberalen Erziehungsstilen und emanzipierten Geschlechterbeziehungen einem solchen subjektiven Selbstverwirklichungsstreben entgegen und stärkt es...

It is out of the question that this self should realize itself by withdrawing into an inner world or from the outer world, but it can only do so by maneuvering with the outer world: what I really am and will become only shows itself in my everyday practices, in what I try out for myself and do happily or with passion. This turning-toward-the-world self-realization must presuppose that the world is set up for this comportment. In fact the late-modern corresponds to such subjective striving for self-realization with a rich offering of global (and digital) economy of singularities in the form of Yoga-retreat, ethnic food, creative work, Facebook, and singing lessons and also with liberal education styles and emancipated gender-relations and strengthens it...

Die weltzugewandte Selbstverwirklichung der Spätmoderne ist also zugleich eine selbstorientierte Weltverwirklichung. Sie ist mit alltäglichen Prozessen der Kulturalisierung und der Singularisierung der Welt verknüpft.<sup>120</sup>

The turning-toward-the-world self-realization of late modernity is thus at the same time self-oriented world-realization. It is connected with the everyday process of culturalization and singularization of the world.

Reckwitz has been describing the spiritual guru in Boltanski-Chiapello's description not simply in the business world but also in the social world in general, and here he is elaborating on Boltanski-Chiapello again. The "authenticity" which the postmodern guru searches for is different from its original form among the Parisian artists because s/he must make a good living at the same time and so search it in the wider world rather than in him- or herself only. (Namely, self-realization must be turning-toward-the-world because, as Boltanski-Chiapello have noted, there is an inherent limit to capitalism's incorporation of "authenticity".) It is thus the case that the culturalization of the economy and digitalization happen *in order to* perpetuate the life-style of the new academic middle-class, and that goods are produced and consumed in the new economy not for the sake of satisfying a physical need but for their intrinsic value, such as good experiences which can help the consumers realize themselves. Insofar as the goal of the new life-style is not simply to make money but self-realization

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120 Ibid., p. 291 - 292.



(just as it is not simply self-realization but also to make money), the new academic middle-class is more concerned with the quality of life than with living-standard. Culturalizing one's environment for the sake of self-realization means also to singularize it:

Das gilt für die Arbeit ebenso wie für die Partnerschaft, das Essen und das Verreisen. Die geschmackliche Dichte des Essens, die Vielseitigkeit eines Reiseziels, die Besonderheit des Kindes mit all seinen Begabungen, die ästhetische Gestaltung der eigenen Wohnung – überall geht es um Originalität und Interessantheit, Vielseitigkeit und Andersheit. Die Singularisierung und Valorisierung der Alltagswelt ist ein Projekt der Authentifizierung des Lebens. Generell strebt das spätmoderne Subjekt im Umgang mit der Welt nach Erfahrungen des Authentischen.<sup>121</sup>

This is valid for work as well as for partnership, eating, and traveling. The thickness of the taste of food, the many-sidedness of the destination of traveling, the particularity of the child with all its talents, the aesthetic molding of one's own living quarter – everywhere it is about originality and being interesting, many-sidedness and otherness. The singularization and valorization of the everyday world is a project of authentication of life. In general the late modern subject strives after experiences of the authentic in his or her dealing with the world.

It is also for this reason – for the sake of their self-realization *through* the world – that the academic middle-class, these liberal progressives, want diversity and multiculturalism: “I am large, I contain multitudes.” The diversified world is more congruent with self-realization than the monotonous and monoethnic Fordist world. The late-modern subject achieves singularization or self-realization by being a curator of sorts: choosing diverse elements from diverse cultural traditions and recombining them into a new entity which differs from every other entity because each is a different combination.

Ich fühle mich wertvoll und besonders, wenn ich in meinem Leben die Vielfalt des Authentisch-Besonderen erlebe und mir daraus virtuos etwas für mich zusammenstelle. Im Rahmen des singularistischen Lebensstils wird der bloße Konsum im Grunde sogar als defizitäre Aktivität abgewertet, so dass das kuratierte Leben beides sein kann: radikal konsumistisch und grundsätzlich antikonsumistisch.<sup>122</sup>

I feel valuable and particular when I experience the diversity of the authentic-particular in my life and therefrom put together for myself something virtual. In the framework of singularizing life-style mere consumption is devalued as deficient, so that a curating life can be both: radically consumptive and fundamentally anti-consumptive.

Culture becomes “hyperculture”, then, in order to facilitate the late modern subject's (the academic middle-class') project of self-realization:

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121 Ibid., p. 293.

122 Ibid., p. 297.

Kultur wird aus dieser Perspektive nicht – wie im traditionalistischen Kulturverständnis – innerhalb der eigenen sozialen Gruppe reproduziert, sondern hat sich in eine Ressource in Gestalt eines heterogenen Feldes von Aneignungsmöglichkeiten verwandelt. In dieser Hyperkultur kann potenziell alles zur Kultur werden...<sup>123</sup>

Culture is from this perspective not – such as in the traditionalistic understanding of culture – reproduced within one’s own social group, but is transformed into a resource in the form of a heterogeneous field of possibilities of appropriation. In this hyperculture everything can potentially become culture....

We all know this from our daily life: a Chinese dish or an Indian specialty is taken out of their original context and re-inserted into the New Age culture so that the New Ager, by appropriating them, can become “authentic”. Self-realization then means the destruction of the original culture (i.e. the context) and the creation of a new culture using its remnants. All cultures are consequently on the same plane and of the same importance, none better than any other. (This is of course a typical criticism of American multiculturalism.) That diversity helps the late modern subject’s search for authenticity also explains the increasing rate of interracial marriage among the new academic middle-class: they are more inclined to make themselves distinct and different by marrying a different kind. The way of being of the new academic middle-class is thus cultural cosmopolitanism:

Zusammenfassend ist das Subjekt der neuen Mittelklasse durch einen Kulturkosmopolitismus charakterisiert. Kultur erscheint ihm als globales Reservoir, reich gefüllt mit vielfältigen Elementen, die jeweils ihre eigene Berechtigung und ihren eigenen Wert haben und potenzielle Gegenstände der Aneignung durch das nach Authentizität trachtende Subjekt sind...<sup>124</sup>

To sum up, the subject of the new middle-class is characterized by cultural cosmopolitanism. Culture appears to him or her as a global reservoir, richly filled with diverse elements, which have their own justification and values and which are objects of appropriation by the subject that strives after authenticity....

The new academic middle-class looks down upon the provincialism of the new under-class and the old middle class both of whom reject diversity. Those liberals in the new academic middle-class make good money with their jobs in the cultural economy, obtain personal fulfillment from realizing their individual being, and, thanks to the post-industrial condition, achieve high social status and are socially recognized, all the while their counterparts in the under-class and the old middle class are merely getting by. This sets the stage for the *new class struggle of the late modern age* – a struggle between authenticity and conformism, between the flexible creative industry and Fordism – in which what people think is a struggle between tolerance and hate really consists.

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123 Ibid., p. 298.

124 Ibid., p. 302.

## 12. The life-style of the new academic middle-class

Reckwitz provides a detail description of the new life-style of the new academic middle-class in terms of eating, work/ free-time, relationship to one's own body, movement in the world, housing, children's education, and the meaning of education in general.

Zugleich und damit verknüpft werden Essen, Wohnen, Reisen, Körperbewegungen sowie das zu erziehende Kind und die Schule in der neuen Mittelklasse zu Gegenständen einer Singularisierung. Angestrebt und erwartet werden das *besondere* Essen, das *besondere* Wohnumfeld, die *besondere* Reise, das *besondere* Körpererleben sowie das *besondere* Kind, das eine *besondere* Schule besucht. Auch hier ergeben sich widerstreitende Dynamiken von Singularisierungen und Standardisierungen. Alle diese Bereiche werden so zu einer bevorzugten Quelle für Authentizitätserfahrungen.<sup>125</sup>

In connection therewith, eating, living, traveling, body-movements as well as the education of children and schools have become the targets of singularization among the new middle-class. What are striven after and expected are: the *particular* food, the *particular* living quarter, the *particular* travel, the *particular* body-experience as well as the *particular* child who goes to a *particular* school. Here emerges also the conflicting dynamic between singularization and standardization. All these domains have become the preferred sources for the experiences of authenticity.

*Eating.* During the Fordist era, food followed the logic of Generalization and was mass-produced and standardized (factory farming and McDonald's) and was merely conceived for their functional value, a mere means to an end (the maintenance of life). The singularization of food in the late modern era, as expected, can be traced back to the counter-culture movement which began opposing the Fordist tradition in every way. The hippies thus wanted authentic, healthy, organic, and hand-made food. Today this trend is the norm among the new academic middle-class, who want not only healthy, organic, local, but also singularized food – everyday there is supposed to be a different combination of cultural food: Italian, Indic, Chinese, “world food” – so that, through eating, the new middle-class spiritual guru can realize himself or herself as singular. Food consequently becomes aestheticized and an ethical matter (it must be good for the environment, for the self, and for other living organisms). From a profane matter under the Age of Generalization the ingestion of food is transformed into an extraordinary act. Food preparation and eating sometimes even become a matter of holy reunion with nature, not only reversing the age of Generalization but as if returning to the primitive time.

The functional and standardized food (McDonald's and other sorts of fast food, processed food, can food) which was the norm during the previous era is now relegated to the new under-class only. The new under-class is expected to perpetuate the out-of-date Fordism in every aspect of their life-style. The academic middle-class look down upon these fast food-eaters from the under-class who follow the traditional logic of Generalization and only eat in order to survive. Despite the increasing trend of the

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125 Ibid, p. 308.

singularization of food among the middle-class, however, the consumption of processed food has increased overall in Western societies.

*Living.* In the previous era, living followed the logic of Generalization: standardized living quarters for the masses, series of apartment housing or suburb houses all looking the same, in neighborhoods that were interchangeable. The change again started with the counter-culture movement, when the hippies moved into old neighborhoods in the city to flee from standardized living and experience “authentic living”. The new academic middle-class continue and amplify the trend. The result is the gentrification process witnessed in all major metropolitan, ethnically diverse big cities.

Die Sorge der neuen Mittelklasse um das Wohnen umfasst wie gesagt zwei Aspekte: den Ort des Wohnens und die Gestaltung der Wohnung. In beiden Hinsichten wird das Wohnen kulturalisiert und singularisiert. Der Wohnort ist zu einer Frage des besonderen kulturellen Wertes und damit auch des sozialen Prestiges geworden, das Alltagsdesign der Wohnung zum Gegenstand einer alltäglichen, kreativen Kuratierung. Immobilien, Architektur, Innenarchitektur und Design avancieren entsprechend zu tragenden Säulen der creative economy. Dass Wohnorte und -viertel nicht mehr austauschbar sind, sondern ihnen gesellschaftlich jeweils ein besonderer Wert zugeschrieben oder abgesprochen wird, ist entscheidend für die globale, nationale, regionale und lokale Geografie der Spätmoderne. Orte sind zum Gegenstand einer gesellschaftlichen Valorisierungsdynamik geworden.<sup>126</sup>

The attention which the new middle-class pay to the problem of living encompasses, as noted, two aspects: the place of living and the design of living. In both respects, living is culturalized and singularized. The living quarter has become a question of special cultural values and also of social prestige, and its design, the target of everyday, creative curating. Real-state, architecture, and interior design have become correspondingly the pillars of the creative economy. That the places of residence and neighborhoods are no longer interchangeable, but that a special value corresponding to the time are to be attributed to them – this fact is now decisive for the global, national, and local geography of late modernity. Places have become the target of social valorization dynamic.

The subject of the academic middle-class realizes himself or herself not only in his or her special living quarter, but also through his or her choice of a special city. S/he is a curator in interior design, putting together elements from diverse cultures.

Betrachtet man die Wohnungen der Akademikerklasse zwischen Vancouver, Amsterdam und Melbourne ergibt sich das übergreifende ästhetische Muster eines Kulturkosmopolitismus des Interior Design. Es lässt sich als fragile Balance zwischen zwei Raumqualitäten interpretieren: Klarheit, Ruhe und schlichte Eleganz einerseits, Interessantheit und kulturelle Diversität andererseits. Authentisch erscheint die

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126 Ibid., p. 315.

Wohnung offenbar, wenn sie beide Qualitäten miteinander vereint, wenn sie klassisch und außergewöhnlich wirkt.<sup>127</sup>

When one considers the living quarters of the academic class between Vancouver, Amsterdam, and Melbourne, one finds an over-arching aesthetic pattern of cultural cosmopolitanism of interior design. It should be interpreted as a fragile balance between two sorts of quality of space: clarity, quietude, and plain elegance on the one hand, and being-interesting and cultural diversity on the other hand. The living quarter appears evidently authentic when it has united both qualities, when it feels both classical and extraordinary.

This is correlated with the emergency of the “creative city” – a principal theme in Reckwitz’s previous works: namely, every major metropolitan city now strives to be different from every other and attractive in its own right in order to attract the newly emergent academic middle-class. The result is, as noted, re-urbanization and gentrification. Again, the new academic middle-class look down on those lower class people who still live in standardized housing in the ghettos. This – the revaluation of metropolitan city centers – results also in the devaluation of other cities and regions which have remained Fordist and failed to capture any part of the creative industry. Thus inner-America (red states) is devalued while cities in the blue states compete for attractiveness. This is part of the polarization process – class struggle – between the new academic middle-class and the new under-class.

*Traveling.* In the Fordist era traveling was done through industrial, mass tourism with standardized “package” for everyone, and the purpose was temporary relief from work. This is no longer the case with the new academic middle-class. The new academic middle-class travel far more often than the middle-class in the previous era: they travel to foreign lands for school when young and, when working adults in the “creative economy”, frequently travel on business. Outside work, they travel in order to “realize themselves”, i.e. to seek authentic places to visit as a way to better their experience with the world rather than simply for relief from work. Traveling becomes more and more a matter about new, individualized experiences and aesthetic enjoyment of foreign cultures in their “originality” (“authenticity”). The new academic middle-class is thus “anti-tourist”: they trek through unvisited lands in order to discover people and places untouched by mass tourism: traveling is culturalized and singularized.

Die Suche des Reisenden nach der Einzigartigkeit des Ortes verlängere sich dabei bis in die einzelne Mikrosituation hinein: Man streift durch bestimmte Straßenzüge, sucht bestimmte Restaurants oder Museen auf, wählt bestimmte Hotels jeweils wegen ihrer besonderen Atmosphäre.<sup>128</sup>

The traveler’s search for the ‘one-of-a-kind’ place extends even into individual micro-situations: one treads through particular alleys, seeks out particular restaurants or museums, and chooses particular hotels each time because of their particular atmosphere.

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127 Ibid., p. 317.

128 Ibid., p. 323.

In this, the new academic middle-class are again continuing, and normalizing, the original practice of the counter-culture movement:

Die Gegenkultur ist eine globale Bewegung von travelers und globetrotters, die auf eigene Faust und ‘abseits ausgetretener Pfade’ fremde Kulturen entdecken (klassisch: die Indienreise) und aktiv, auch körperlich fordernd die Natur erkunden wollen.<sup>129</sup>

The counter-culture is a global movement of travelers and globetrotters, who want to discover foreign cultures on their own initiative and ‘off the beaten track’ (classically: the India trip) and to get to know nature actively and with bodily exertion.

Recall the story of Bhavagan Das (*It's Here Now (Are You?)*). Within the new flexible capitalism in which the 68 search for authenticity has become the norm, the new academic middle-class achieve their status and accumulate their cultural capital through this kind of singularized traveling. Meanwhile, the new under-class hardly travel at all and, even when they do, are merely the dumb tourists that are the usual customers of mass tourism industry.<sup>130</sup>

*Body.* Body-building among the new academic middle-class conforms to their new, singularized life-style. They cultivate a healthy body that is the opposite of the unhealthy and overweight body of the new under-class. The body in the preceding Fordist era is a mere means to an end in conformity to the logic of Generalization. Back then, the body was formed in standardized, mass sports such as football, baseball, or basketball (*Wettkampf- und Publikumssport*). Once again, it is the counter-culture movement in the late 1960s which first introduced a new way of using and cultivating the body that emphasized consciousness of one's own body and forming it in singularized practices such as Asian body exercises like Yoga or Taichi. The new academic middle-class again normalize this new way of cultivating the body. At issue is one's consciousness of one's own body, one's spiritual connection with it, the *extraordinary, singular experiences* derived therefrom (*ekstatische Grenzerfahrungen*), whether in running, rock-climbing, Yoga, Tachi, Tango, or Salsa.

Sport in diesem Sinne interessiert weniger unter dem Aspekt des passiven Zuschauers oder des Wettbewerbs mit anderen, im Mittelpunkt steht vielmehr die eigene körperliche Aktivität, in der sich das ‘verkopfte’ Kreativsubjekt requalifiziert.<sup>131</sup>

Sport in this sense interests little under the aspect of passive viewers or competition with others, rather, at the center is one's own bodily activity, in which the ‘overly intellectual’ creative subject re-qualifies itself.

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129 Ibid., p. 321.

130 The greater mobility of the subject of the academic middle-class certainly means that s/he contributes to global warming and the destruction of earth's atmosphere far more than his or her counterpart in the new under-class.

131 Ibid., p. 327.

Note that, once again, the subject of the academic middle-class finds his or her body-training techniques by choosing diverse ingredients from diverse cultures and recombining them into new forms.

The product of such healthy practices is a slender, healthy, attractive and stress-resistant body, part of the person's self-realization. Although this was originally the typical concern of women, it now also characterizes men's way with their body. The ideal of the body among the new academic middle-class is feminine – in accordance with the general feminization of society. Insofar as the new body incurs social prestige, it is, in Reckwitz's words, "subject capital" (*Subjektkapital*). In this perspective, the fact that more and more people, especially more and more men, have plastic surgery is less a consequence of increasing equality and more the result of a change-over to the new singularized life-style.

Die Standardisierung des schönen Körpers gilt häufig als blutleer und maskenhaft. Auch hier wird der Wert der Authentizität relevant: Persönlichkeit und Look müssen zueinander passen, sich zu einer charismatischen Attraktivität verbinden.<sup>132</sup>

The standardization of the beautiful body is now seen as bloodless and mask-like. Also here is the value of authenticity relevant: personality and look must suit each other, and must be tied to a charismatic attractiveness.

*Education and schools.* Schooling during the Fordist era followed the logic of Generalization:

In der industriellen Moderne stellte die Schule ein herausragendes gesellschaftliches Feld der formalen Rationalisierung und Standardisierung dar. Die soziale Logik des Allgemeinen und des Gleichen war prägend: Die Massenbildung ist eine 'industrielle' Bildung gewesen (und ist es nach wie vor), in der die gesamte Bevölkerung nach Alterskohorten geordnet in elementaren und teilweise höheren kognitiven Fertigkeiten 'beschult' wird. Idealerweise lernen hier alle Schüler das Gleiche in gleichem Rhythmus und auf gleiche Weise. ... Besonders deutlich in den Vereinigten Staaten seit den 1930er Jahren, setzte sich in der breiten Mittelklasse das Ideal des 'sozial angepassten Kindes' durch. Die Grundidee war, dass das moderne Kind, indem es sich beständig in Gruppen bewegt – zunächst in der Schule und der Familie, dann in den Peer Groups, schließlich am Arbeitsplatz –, zu einem sozial kompetenten und zugleich regelkonformen Menschen erzogen werden sollte. Individuelle Unangepasstheit, Emotionalität, Introversion oder gar Exzentrik standen demgegenüber unter Verdacht.<sup>133</sup>

In the industrial modern the schools represent an outstanding social field of formal rationalization and standardization. The social logic of the General and the Same was determinant: mass education was an 'industrial' education (and it is still today), in which the whole population was ordered according to age groups and 'schooled' in elementary and partly higher cognitive skills. Ideally, all the children learned the same

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132 Ibid., p. 327.

133 Ibid., p. 330.

thing according to the same rhythm and in the same way... Especially so in the United States since the 1930s, the ideal of ‘socially conforming child’ became the norm among the wider middle-class. The fundamental idea was that the modern child, insofar as it has to constantly exist in groups – first in the school and in the family, and then in peer groups, and finally in work places – should be raised into a socially competent and at the same time rule-conforming adult. Individual unconformity, emotionality, introversion or eccentricity thus come under suspect.

From the 1980s onward, we witness the same polarization process in education. While the new academic middle-class have intensified the education of their children, among the new under-class education is failing. Among the academic middle-class parents have invested increasing amount of effort in their children’s upbringing, aiming to develop their *emotional* and *cultural* capacities as well their cognitive capacities, so that they can develop their own particularity (*Besonderheit*) instead of conforming to the social norm such as was expected in the previous era.

Zwar ist soziale Kompetenz nach wie vor relevant, das Ideal ist nun jedoch nicht Anpassung, sondern das autonome, selbstmotivierte Kind mit ausgeprägtem Selbstwertgefühl und vielseitigen Interessen, die in ihrer Eigensinnigkeit zu fördern sind. Man kann es auch so sagen: Die spätmoderne Erziehungspraxis ist ein Singularisierungsprogramm des Kindes. Jedes Kind, so die Überzeugung, ist anders und besonders – und soll es sein.... Dem konformistischen Kind ohne eigensinnige Interessen wird hingegen mit Skepsis begegnet.<sup>134</sup>

Of course social competence is relevant just as before, but the ideal is now not conformity, but the autonomous, self-motivated child with its special self-esteem and many-sided interests which in their particularity must be promoted. One can also say: the late modern educational practices are singularization programs for the child. Every child, thus the conviction goes, is different and particular – and it should be so... The conforming child without its particular interests is now met with skepticism.

Harkening back to the Romantic vision of human beings to which the academic middle-class hold fast – each person is born unique with a particular mission to carry out in life – children must develop their own particular potentials as well as be able to succeed later in life in the new cultural and knowledge economy. Thus are required, not only good schooling, but also extensive experience with the world at large through traveling. Corresponding to the polarization of education between the new academic middle-class and the new under-class and the new expectation for their children among the former, the school system also polarizes. The traditional standardized school system (along with all the standardized testing like PISA or TIMS) for the new under-class, and the elite schools promising children’s self-realization and their preparation for the knowledge economy for the new academic middle-class. The commercialization of the education system (including higher education) which so many complain about is, in Reckwitz’s view, the consequence of the new expectations among the new academic middle-class:

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134 Ibid., p. 331 – 2.



Schulbildung ist nun selbst zu einem kulturellen, mit Singularitätsanspruch auftretenden Gut geworden, und seine überaus kritischen und wählerischen Konsumenten sind die Familien der neuen Mittelklasse. Die ambitionierten Schulen wollen sich motiviert von ihrem pädagogischen Anspruch nach Bildungsqualität singularisieren, und sie sollen sich singularisieren, da die Eltern und Schüler es von ihnen verlangen und sie selbst am Ende im Wettbewerb mit anderen Schulen nur als anerkannt 'exzellente' Lehranstalten bestehen können.<sup>135</sup>

Schooling has now become a cultural good with its own claim to singularity, and its critical and choosy consumers are the families of the new middle-class. The ambitious schools want to singularize themselves motivated by their pedagogic claim to quality of education, and they must singularize themselves, because parents and students require this of them and they themselves can only survive the competition with other schools when they are recognized as 'excellent' teaching places.

Hence, regarding the new academic middle-class, every school competes to advertise itself as "special" and "different" from every other school and offer "one-of-a-kind learning" culture. The culture of "creative industry" and "creative city" has colonized the school system as well.

All the things I have complained about in my Ortega spirit turn out to be the results of the singularization ideals of the new academic middle-class. The Romantic ideal of careful and sensitive raising of children in order to ensure that they unfold their inborn potentials is what has led to the "spoiled children" of the current generation.<sup>136</sup> When the adults constantly tell the young that they are each born "special" and try to remove every obstacle to their individual and particular "flowering", it's no wonder that the latter should grow up feeling entitled to have everything they want and complain about the slightest discomfort. This then feeds into the development of the victimization culture and reinforces feminism and liberal progressive ideals: there is so much bigotry in society because the ability to tolerate discomforts has so tremendously lowered (hence, as Heather MacDonald repeatedly laments, students of the latest generation, the most taken care of in the history of education, somehow believe their life is at risk in university campuses). Grade inflation is also a consequence in higher education: the new generation will complain aggressively believing their rights are violated if they don't get a good grade.

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., p. 334.

<sup>136</sup> Although Reckwitz did not mention this, this Romantic tradition has probably found its most evolved expression in anarchist Francisco Ferrer's educational enterprise in early twentieth century. One finds, for example, the following in a 1908 edition of his *Bulletin of Modern School*: "No tenemos decirlo: queremos hombres capaces de evolucionar incesantemente; capaces de destruir, de renovar constantemente los medios y de renovarse ellos mismos; hombres cuya independencia intelectual sea la fuerza suprema, que no se sujeten jamás a nada; dispuestos siempre a aceptar lo mejor, dichosos por el triunfo de las ideas nuevas y que aspiren a vivir vidas múltiples en una sola vida." The idea is that, when the teacher refrains from imposing anything on the student, the student can fully develop his or her own potentials, by which the new will constantly emerge and evolution be hastened toward perfection. Note also the artist ideal of "living multiple lives". Such Romantic ideal of education is recurrent among the left, the latest example being Jacques Rancière's *Le maître ignorant*.

*Work-life balance.* While in the previous era work is rational and private life emotional, in the current era work and private life become increasingly similar, both requiring emotional and relationship skills and both about emotional fulfillment. (Reckwitz is here elaborating on Boltanski-Chiapello's observation that the dividing line between professional life and private life is increasingly blurred under the new flexible capitalism.) *Urban:* the new academic middle-class is exclusively urban in accordance with the increasing polarization between cities and country sides in the new era. *Greater mobility:* In search of self-realization, authenticity, and diversity, the subject of the new academic middle-class is virtually never staying where s/he is born. In fact, s/he is expected to move from one metropolitan city to another throughout his or her life. *Juvenization (Juvenilisierung):* Among the new academic middle-class, "youth, as a cultural pattern, has become attractive and dominant for all age groups" in accordance with their emphasis on diversity, flexibility, emancipation, and self-development.<sup>137</sup> The search for exotic cultures, urbanism, and new experiences are all what young people love to do. There is henceforth no more generational conflict between the old and the young as was notably the case during the 68 revolution. *Degendering:* As men become increasingly feminine, women and men have become increasingly the same among the new academic middle-class. In fact, each person now chooses from the repertoire of traditional gender characteristics what s/he likes to compose his or her own gender identity: singularization, self-realization, and flexibility. Reckwitz is here insightful enough to notice that the rise of women – women's liberation – is mainly a class phenomenon, that it cannot be considered independently of the polarization process occurring between the new academic middle-class and the new underclass (*Paternostereffekt*), that it is a consequence of the culturalization of economy. This is his way of phrasing what has previously been observed, that women are recruited into the new economy because they are more flexible and function better in the more flexible, service economy, that this is unfathomable had the economy remained Fordist and manufacturing-based.

The new academic middle-class subscribe to what Reckwitz calls the "new liberalism" (*Neue Liberalismus*): meritocracy, the quality of life, and cosmopolitanism. This is basically his way of designating liberal progressive values. Because they are more concerned with the quality of life, they are highly interested in health and cultural politics, whereas the generations before were concerned with bread-and-butter themes.

Schließlich setzt sich der Kulturkosmopolitismus der neuen Mittelklasse in einen politischen Kosmopolitismus und Globalismus um. Dieser manifestiert sich etwa in prinzipieller Unterstützung von Handelsfreiheit, Globalisierung und internationaler Kooperation, von Offenheit für migrantische Einflüsse auf die multikulturellen Gesellschaften, aber auch in Toleranz für und Gleichberechtigung von bisher diskriminierten Personengruppen (Frauen, Schwule und Lesben, Behinderte) und in einem Verständnis von Außenpolitik als humanitärer Weltinnenpolitik (Entwicklungshilfe, Menschenrechte, humanitäre Interventionen).

And so the cultural cosmopolitanism of the new middle-class is converted into a political cosmopolitanism and globalism. This manifests itself somewhat in a principled support for free trade, globalization and international cooperation, openness toward migrants' influence on the multicultural society, but also in the

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137 "Jugendlichkeit als kulturelles Muster wird für alle Altersstufen attraktiv und dominant", *ibid.*, p. 337

tolerance for, and equality of, hitherto discriminated groups (women, gays and lesbians, the disabled) and in an understanding of foreign policies as humanitarian world-domestic politics (aids for development, human rights, humanitarian intervention).

.... über die Globalisierung der Märkte, über den Postindustrialismus und die Expansion der Bildung, über ökologische, nachhaltige Politik und eine kosmopolitische Gleichberechtigung...<sup>138</sup>

... over the globalization of the market, over post-industrialism and the expansion of education, over ecological, sustainable politics and a cosmopolitan equality....

All the themes come together here. Because the new academic middle-class is the embodiment of flexible capitalism, they espouse free trade and globalization which are the foundation of flexible capitalism. And because they are capitalists in this sense, they espouse liberal progressive values – from feminism to multiculturalism to tolerance for non-conforming groups – which are the value system devised to make society, capitalism, more flexible and competitive. If culturalization and singularization are the modus operandi of flexible capitalism, it's no wonder that these processes are especially congruent with liberal progressive values. But Reckwitz's view on the matter is more limited: because the goal of life among the academic middle-class is self-realization, i.e. becoming singular and authentic, they want tolerance and diversity which constitute the foundation of their life-pursuits: everyone must be allowed to develop in his or her unique way and the social environment must remain diverse enough to facility such self-development. And it is because of this concern with self-realization and authenticity that they are especially interested in those foreign cultural practices which are tied up with "spirituality" and "intuition" (Buddhism, Yoga, Meister Eckhart) while I have explained these feminine cultural elements as more conducive to making society more flexible.

### **13. The life-style of the new under-class**

The new under-class include the left-over blue collar workers (in the remaining manufacturing sector), simple service sector (*einfache Dienstleistungen*), the unemployed, and welfare recipients. They remain trapped in the old logic of Generalization and are devalued in public opinion which is currently dominated by the perspective of the new academic middle-class. They lack cultural capital and are unable to culturalize their life. They are discontent because, when the new academic middle-class dominate public opinion, they have had to internalize the negative evaluation of their life-style. They are the losers in the new knowledge and cultural economy, losers in the process of modernization, globalizaztion, and culturalization (*Modernisierungsverlierern, Kulturalisierungsverlierern*). In the American context, Reckwitz is clearly referring only to the white under-class since, although the African American and Native American under-class clearly suffer the same disadvantages, they are comfortably incorporated into the "tolerance" culture of the new academic middle-class.

The new (white) under-class get less quality housing (unsingularized housing and neighborhoods), less quality education (the old-fashioned standardized schooling), eat less quality food (the old-fashioned

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138 Ibid., p. 341.

standardized cuisine, fast-food heavy in meat and sugar), and are body-wise frequently overweight and sick and in any case vulgar-looking. Recall from Hochschild's narrative in *Strangers in Their Own Land* that the white under-class in Deep South not only have no conception of "quality of life" but in general sustain much lower living-standard than the academic middle-class in the blue states: shorter life-expectancy, smaller income, less likely to graduate from high schools and colleges, more likely to die from sickness and accidents, higher rates of divorce and teen pregnancy, and living in an environment that is far more polluted. Reckwitz calls the life-style of the under-class, instead of self-realization, "muddling-through", i.e. getting-by, merely surviving. Their ideal is, instead of self-realization, the old middle-class ideal of self-discipline. They want their children to be disciplined instead of realizing their singular potentials. They defend the old ideal of "being normal" (and are hence intolerant of homosexuals and so on). Their children go to schools to learn the basics rather than to acquire a chance to develop their individuality. They are concentrated in the culturally barren country sides. Their relationship to their job is instrumental: a means to survival. Politically they reject the feminist culture and cosmopolitanism which the new academic middle-class promote and veer toward rightwing populism which is anti-elite and rejects globalization – causing the new academic middle-class to look down upon them even more. (In Boltanski-Chiapello's terms, these under-class people, with their rigidity, intolerance and adherence to the Fordist ways, are the *petit*.) The new under-class are in every way the exact opposite of the new academic middle-class. Completely in line with the polarization in economy:

Mit der neuen Mittelklasse hat sich das gesellschaftliche Arbeitsideal in die Richtung 'attraktiver Arbeit' gewandelt, von der man nicht nur Anstrengung, sondern auch Befriedigung erwartet, so dass die Routinearbeiten umso unattraktiver erscheinen müssen. Zugleich haben sich materielle Entlohnung und sozialer Status der als 'einfache Routinearbeiten' geltenden Tätigkeiten merklich reduziert. Während die Berufe der neuen Mittelklasse zumindest im Idealfall also materielle plus ideelle Befriedigung bieten, können die Tätigkeiten der Unterklasse so meist keine der beiden Bedingungen einlösen: die Entwertung ist eine doppelte...<sup>139</sup>

With the new middle-class the social work-ideal has been transformed in the direction of 'attractive work', from which one expects not only labor but also satisfaction, so that routine work must appear ever more unattractive. At the same time the material compensation and social status of activities that count as 'simple routine work' have been drastically reduced. While the professions of the new middle-class provide at least ideally material as well as ideational satisfaction, the activities of the under-class offer none of these two conditions: the devaluation is a doubled one....

The conflict between the new academic middle-class and the new under-class pretty much determines the entire social dynamic of the late-modern society. (More on this below.) This is because the white under-class, the constituents of rightwing populism, constitute the bulk of the retarding forces in the game of the implementation of new capitalism: the classical liberals, conservatives, white identitarians, and white supremacists make up only a minority on the right, at least in the United States. Reckwitz

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139 Ibid., p. 353.

includes an additional section on how the super-rich and the remnants of the old middle-class fit into the dynamic, but their role is inessential.

#### 14. The new class struggle of the late-modern age

Here Reckwitz deals with the most important question: how singularization and culturalization manifest themselves in the domain of politics. Reckwitz asserts that, as economy and the social culturalize, politics has also culturalized, since the 1980s as Western society transits to the age of singularity. Since then, the politics of the particular (*Politik des Besonderen*) has replaced the politics of the general (*Politik des Allgemeinen*) of the Fordist era. The politics of the particular then diversifies into two strands: *apertistisch-differenzielle Liberalismus* and *Kulturezzenzialismus*. The former then diversifies into the Neoliberalism of middle-right and the leftist liberalism (*linksliberale Politik*: Reckwitz's way of referring to liberal progressivism) of middle-left, and what characterizes it is the demand for *openness* and *deregulation*: that the government should open up all borders to allow free circulation of merchandise and refrain from intervening in trade in the one case and that the government should open up all borders to allow free circulation of people and refrain from imposing gender roles and other social norms in the other (i.e., free trade on the one hand and tolerance and diversity on the other). Here again, those that frequently regard each other as enemies – leftist activists who want immigration and deconstruction of gender roles on the one hand and neoliberal economists and politicians who want “small government” on the other – are actually of the common stock: Neoliberalism is about openness and deregulation in the economic sphere and liberal progressivism (including the “social justice revolution”) is about openness and deregulation in the social sphere. (Well, in the language of the previous sections, one is about granting flexibility directly to the capitalists and the other about creating a more flexible society in general.)<sup>140</sup> Meanwhile, “cultural essentialism” takes the form of “identity movements” that include both rightwing identitarian movements and religious fundamentalism.

Culturalization of the economy and society during the late modern period has thus generated a triad in the political sphere: Neoliberalism, liberal progressivism, and cultural essentialism, with the first two strands of apertistic-differential liberalism standing over against cultural essentialism. The two sides are polar opposites. While culturalization runs through both apertistic-differential liberalism and cultural essentialism, “culture” serves very different purposes in the two cases. In the former cultures serve as pool of resources the new academic middle-class draw upon to realize the quality of life they expect (hence openness, diversity, tolerance, and multiculturalism) while in the latter culture serves as the foundation of historical and ethnic community (hence rightwing identity politics with rejection of immigration and multiculturalism and a desire for closedness). While apertistic-differential liberalism wants, and actively drives, globalization to create the pool of resources which the new culturalized life-style of the new academic middle-class requires, cultural essentialism rejects globalization and wants the borders shut down.

Reckwitz names 1968, 1979, 1990, and 2001 as the decisive dates in the process of the constitution of this triad “leftist liberalism”, “Neoliberalism”, and “cultural essentialism”. From 1930 to 1970, it is the

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<sup>140</sup> Furthermore, whether it is the free circulation of merchandise or the free circulation of people the same criticism applies (as I have done): it's environmentally destructive.

era of Fordist-Keynesianism where social democracy reigned. This means that the government heavily regulated the economy in order to enforce equality in the economic domain and that social norm was erected to suppress “abnormality” in order to enforce sameness in the social domain (the DSM, for example, by defining homosexuality as “gender identity disorder”, specified what it meant to be a “normal” human being: heterosexual and conforming to gender roles). That was, again, the era of Generalization. This “social democratic consensus” was oriented toward an industrial (manufacturing) economy. In 1968, the year of the counter-culture movement, the leftist liberalism which would later become the kernel of the way of being of the new academic middle-class (self-realization, feminism, multiculturalism, and deconstruction of gender roles) was first constituted. The counter-culture movement demanded that society refrain from enforcing sameness in the social domain. Deviations from normality (homosexuals and peoples of color) must be accepted as equally valid and gender roles must be deconstructed. (Namely, the artist critique, even though the deconstruction of gender roles was specifically a demand from the feminists, who were the offshoot of the counter-culture movement.) All this would later become the demand for deregulation popular among the new academic middle-class, that all “gender non-conforming” people be accepted as equally valid in society. In 1979, when Margaret Thatcher was elected premier minister in the UK, the era of Neoliberalism officially began. The demand was now that governments refrain from regulating trade and business and introducing social welfare to enforce equality. By this time, as the economy had begun demanufacturing and transiting to a knowledge-, culture-, and service-economy, a new political consensus oriented toward competition, entrepreneurship, openness, and deregulation replaced the original “social democratic consensus”: the hippies and Milton Friedman have both offered their receipts just in time. It is then no coincidence that mass immigration into Western countries also started around this time to accompany the relocation of manufacturing plants overseas and the free movement of goods and to satisfy the new demands for deregulation and openness. The Iranian revolution that year also marked the beginning of religious fundamentalism world-wide, i.e., the beginning of cultural essentialism. In 1990, when the USSR collapsed, the last bastion of Fordist-Keynesianism had finally dissolved and the era of Generalization officially ended. The whole planet was now entering into the new era of singularity – the era of openness and deregulation. Finally, 911 attacks in 2001 marked the final blossoming of religious fundamentalism and cultural essentialism world-wide.

Again, instead of speaking about flexibility, Reckwitz focuses on singularization. Openness and deregulation are favored in both the economic and the social domain because they facilitate singularization. The ideal of singularity drives both the neoliberals and the mainstream left (the new academic middle-class) to value specialness and particularity although in different domains, i.e. both camps are conditioned by, and strive to contribute to, the culture of singularization. For Neoliberalism the valuation of specialness and particularity is manifested as the demand for novelty and particularity in order to increase the nation’s or the corporation’s competitiveness in the global economy.

Das Regime des Neuen, dessen Kehrseite der Abbau der alten, nicht mehr  
‘wettbewerbsfähigen’ Branchen ist, gilt nun als zentrale Voraussetzung für Wachstum  
und Beschäftigung....<sup>141</sup>

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141 Ibid., p. 377.

The regime of the new, of which the underside is the dismantling of the branches which are no longer competitive, is now seen as the central presupposition of growth and business-doing....

An die Stelle einer staatlichen Regulierung nach Art des keynesianischen Steuerungs- und Wohlfahrtsstaates, in dem allgemeine Regeln durchgesetzt und allgemeine Leistungen verteilt wurden, tritt damit im innovationsorientierten Wettbewerbsstaat eine Förderung von solchen Performanzen, die im Kontext von Märkten einen Unterschied machen. Das ist die differenzielle Seite des neuen (Wirtschafts-)Liberalismus: Er fördert Differenzen, Unternehmungen im weitesten Sinne, die vom Bisherigen abweichen und deswegen auf den Märkten erfolgreich sind....<sup>142</sup>

Instead of state regulation according to the sort of Keynesian *Steuerungsstaat* or welfare state, in which generalized rules prevail and generalized services are meted out, there is now in innovation-oriented competition-state a promotion of such performances which make a difference in the context of the markets. This is the differential side of the new (economic-)liberalism: it promotes differences, enterprises in the widest sense, which deviate from the 'hitherto' and therefore are successful on the markets....

The *Wohlfahrtsstaat* of the previous era of Generalization is now replaced with *Wettbewerbsstaat*. On the side of leftist liberalism the valuation of specialness and particularity is manifested as the demand for diversity: everyone must *not* be the same. For example, Fordism has imposed gender roles as "normal" and forced everyone to conform to them: this was regulation; now flexible capitalism is here to deregulate by dismantling these gender roles. As a consequence, leftist liberalism has invented the new concept of "human rights" which is not the same thing as "citizens' rights" from the previous era. While the purpose of "citizens' rights" from the Fordist era was to enforce sameness (*Gleichheit*), the purpose of "human rights" in the current era is to enforce diversity: to protect the rights of all those groups of people who were regarded as "abnormal" during the Fordist era to be different or deviate from the norm: women, homosexuals, trans-gender people, disabled people, people with alternative life-style and so on. The key word today is "non-discrimination" which means protecting the rights of persons to be different, quite distinct from the "non-discrimination" of the Fordist era which meant treating everyone equally because everyone was supposed to be the same. Thus, while one side of the coin "the society of singularities" is "competition state" with its emphasis on novelty, its other side is "cultural diversity" with its emphasis on difference. While businesses want government regulation out of the picture in order to be better able to come up with new and different things to remain competitive, the new academic middle-class want social regulation out of the picture in order to have greater cultural diversity as a way to make possible and facilitate their project of self-realization and increase the quality of their life. Hopefully you can see that "diversity" is simply another way of saying "new": both are about "Otherness". The politics of diversity is precisely a politics of the new – both the social justice revolutionaries and neoliberal economists want "Otherness" to be the new norm.

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142 Ibid., p. 378.

Reckwitz is careful to distinguish the diversity demand of the liberal progressives (of the new academic middle-class) from the civil rights movement of the 1960s – or even from second wave feminism for that matter. The civil rights, feminist, and counter-culture movements have *morphed* into today's diversity politics. The diversity movements of contemporary time is less about the advancement of a particular disadvantaged group and more about promoting diversity for the sake of diversity or for the sake of enlarging the pool of cultural resources – somewhat like the promotion of biodiversity in ecology. This has important implications later on when Reckwitz considers the rise of rightwing populism in reaction to the diversity politics of the mainstream left.

Now, “cultural essentialism” or “cultural communitarianism” (*Kulturkommunitarismus*) which has arisen in reaction to apertistic-differential liberalism – as the opposite tendency – includes ethnic communities with their identity politics (*ethnische Gemeinschaften mit Identitätspolitik*); cultural nationalism (*Kulturnationalismus*); religious fundamentalism, especially Islamic and Christian; and rightwing populism (*Rechtspopulismus*). The same process of singularization runs through cultural essentialism as well as apertistic-differential liberalism: all strands of cultural essentialism are about the singularization of the social and the political. We recall that, during the Fordist era, because of the pressure to standardize society, the formation of ethnic, religious, and national communities within society was discouraged – the ideal was then a homogeneous society where everyone was equally a citizen of the same nation. When society becomes culturalized, the new academic middle-class wants multiculturalism because it is congruent with their project of self-realization, namely, their strive for authenticity is here occurring on the level of the individuals. Among the under-class, however, the strive for authenticity occurs on the level of the group. The affective valorization (*affektiv aufgeladene Valorisierung*) which the subjects of the academic middle-class carry out with respect to subjects, objects, time, and space the poorer subjects of the under-class carry out with respect to the collective. The subject of the under-class relinquishes any attempt to realize himself or herself as an “authentic individual” but strives to be a member of a group which is, and must be kept, “authentic”. To keep itself authentic, the group, whether religious, ethnic, or national, must keep itself separate from, and uncontaminated by, other groups. Hence, although it is the same drive for singularization and authenticity, the cultural essentialists, because they are unable to realize themselves as authentic individuals thanks to their Fordist way of life and impoverished cultural capital, denounce multiculturalism (the cosmopolitan hyperculture which the academic middle-class has created for everyone), want to banish “outsiders”, and desire to live in a culturally, ethnically, or religiously homogeneous community. Their battle with the academic middle-class is thus set in motion.

The identity of the group among the cultural essentialists is created on three levels: history, space, and ethic (*Geschichte, Raum, und Ethik*). The authentic group has a particular history that is different from other groups', is tied to a specific territory that is different from that of other groups, and is defined by a particular set of customs that no other groups share. But Reckwitz emphasizes that, while this sounds similar to the case of the traditional communities before the modern era, it is in fact quite different: it is “neo-community”:

Dies ist der zentrale Unterschied: Traditionale Gemeinschaften schienen als impliziter Hintergrund alternativlos gegeben, moderne, postromantische und posttraditionale Neogemeinschaften hingegen müssen erst neu institutionalisiert und kreierte werden,



und die Subjekte entscheiden sich dazu, an ihnen teilzunehmen, da sie eine kulturelle und affektive Attraktivität ausstrahlen. Die Neuinstitutionalisierung trägt immer das Paradox in sich, dass diese Neogemeinschaften soziale Konstruktionen im Sinne von ‘imagined communities’ (Benedict Anderson) sind, die aber ihre Kontingenz invisibilisieren müssen, das heißt zweifelsfreie Fundamente (einer Nation, einer Religion, einer Herkunft etc.) zu suggerieren haben...<sup>143</sup>

This is the central distinction: traditional communities appear to be given as an implicit background without alternative, but modern, post-Romantic and post-traditional neo-communities must on the contrary first be institutionalized anew and created, and the subjects must decide to take part in them on the ground that they radiate cultural and affective attractiveness. The re-institutionalization carries in itself the paradox that these neo-communities are social constructions in the sense of ‘imagined communities’ (Benedict Anderson), which must make their contingency invisible, that is, suggest doubt-free foundations (a nation, a religion, an ethnic origin, etc.)....

Reckwitz notes that cultural essentialism has its original root in Romanticism just like the self-realization ideal of the new academic middle-class. While the dominant rationalization process homogenized society and suppressed cultural and regional differences, the Romantics celebrated the attractiveness of these cultural and regional particularities. Apparently both the leftist liberalism and cultural essentialism are descended from Romanticism. Today cultural essentialism is principally stirred into being by the cultural cosmopolitanism championed by apertistic-differential liberalism: it is the under-class’ way of pursuing authenticity in response to the devaluation originating from the new academic middle-class.

Reckwitz then provides a description of each of the four strands of cultural essentialism. The first is the identity politics which has grown out of the minorities rights movements and minorities empowerment movements and mass immigration since the 1960s. Although the minorities in question here (African Americans, Native Americans, and *some* immigrant communities) are as much “under-class” as the new white under-class – both are losers in the globalization process – their identity politics quickly merges with the leftist liberalism of the academic middle-class as part of the latter’s instrument to enforce openness and deregulation in the social domain and to constitute the multiculturalism that underpins their life-style as self-realization. In this sense, Reckwitz should be considered mistaken in classing minorities’ identity politics as part of the cultural essentialism which stands in opposition to apertistic-differential liberalism of the academic middle-class. Funnily, the academic middle-class never quite notice that the globalization process which they champion is the very cause of the impoverishment of the poor minorities (blacks and Native Americans) whose rights they profess to champion.

The best examples of cultural nationalism – national separatist movements which have emerged within Western societies since the culturalization of everything – are Quebec nationalism, Catalanian nationalism, and Scottish nationalism. Although these sorts of nationalist movements are not an under-

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143 Ibid., p. 399.

class movement but are born from traditional resentment against domination, they are born when the resentment is culturalized (the strive for collective authenticity) and stand in sharp contrast to the openness and deregulation which the academic middle-class from the dominant group champion. Reckwitz also includes here the cultural nationalisms of China, Russia, and India – their self-culturalization (*Selbstkulturalisierung*). In the case of Russia, this cultural nationalism distinguishes itself by setting itself against a West that is conceived solely in terms of its apertistic-differential liberalism (the culture-less rationalism without values or the cosmopolitan hypermodernity with excessive individual self-realization).<sup>144</sup> For example, Alexander Dugin.

When it comes to religious fundamentalism, Reckwitz takes pain to emphasize that, in the previous era, rationalization process had discouraged the religious formations and encouraged secularization. The churches that remained were rationalized as *Amtskirche* (the bureaucratized church). The rise of a new wave of religious fundamentalism since the 1980s is the result of the singularization of society and the new form of religion has little in common with the old-fashioned *Amtskirche*. The members of the new religions are not born into them such as was the case in the previous era, but voluntarily choose them in accordance with the affective values with which they have attracted new believers. In the new era of singularization religions form a market place on which different religious strands compete to attract new believers. Whether Christian or Muslim, religious fundamentalism is part of the trend of striving for collective authenticity instead of individual authenticity:

Fundamentalistische Gemeinschaften leben von einem grundsätzlichen Anspruch auf religiöse Authentizität: Die Fundamemalien des Glaubens erscheinen gegeben und außerhalb der Debatte.<sup>145</sup>

Fundamentalist communities live off of a fundamental claim to religious authenticity: the fundamentals of the belief appear to be given and outside of any debates.

Now Reckwitz describes the rise of rightwing populism after the collapse of social democratic consensus (Fordist-Keynesianism) when the era of standardization and generalization came to an end:

Der Aufstieg des Rechtspopulismus lässt sich nicht als schlichte Verlängerung eines traditionellen Rechtsradikalismus begreifen, er ist vielmehr Ausdruck der Umstrukturierung des westlichen Parteiensystems. In der organisierten Moderne von 1945 bis 1980 war dieses von der Dominanz der Volksparteien als ‘Sachwalterinnen des Allgemeinen’ sowie durch die Leitdifferenz (Stichwort ‘Cleavage’) zwischen sozialdemokratischen Mitte-links- und konservativen Mitte-rechts-Parteien geprägt. Die Parteienlandschaft der Spätmoderne ist seit den 1980er Jahren durch einen Bedeutungsverlust der Volksparteien und einen Aufstieg diverser kleinerer Parteien gekennzeichnet, so dass ein Markt sich profilierender, nach ‘Authentizität’ strebender politischer Gruppierungen entstanden ist. Wie gesagt: Grundsätzlich findet nun ein Paradigmenwechsel vom korporatistisch-sozialdemokratischen Konsens zum apertistisch-differenziellen Liberalismus statt, wobei der neue Cleavage innerhalb

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144 Ibid., p. 409.

145 Ibid., p. 411.

dieses Paradigmas zwischen Neoliberalismus und Linksliberalismus verläuft. Mit dem Rechtspopulismus bildet sich jedoch eine neue, grundsätzliche Konfliktlinie des Parteiensystems aus, und zwar offenbar in Reaktion auf die entfaltete Hegemonie des neuen Liberalismus. Der Rechtspopulismus fordert das Paradigma des apertistisch-differenziellen Liberalismus in dessen links- und wirtschaftsliberaler Spielart heraus. Dieser neue, starke Cleavage basiert auf dem Gegensatz zwischen einer ‘kommunitaristischen’ und antipluralistischen Politik der soziokulturellen Gemeinschaft des Volkes auf der einen und einer liberalen und kosmopolitischen Politik der Öffnung der Märkte und Identitäten auf der anderen Seite: es handelt sich um einen Cleavage zwischen einer Politik der Schließung und einer Politik der Öffnung.<sup>146</sup>

The rise of rightwing populism should not be conceived of as a strict extension of traditional rightwing radicalism, it is rather an expression of the re-structuration of the Western party system. In the organized modernity from 1945 to 1980, this party system was determined by people’s parties as the ‘administrators of the General’ as well as by the ‘cleavage’ between social democratic middle-left and conservative middle-right parties. The landscape of party [politics] is since 1980 characterized by people’s parties’ loss of meaning and the rise of diverse small parties, so that a market has emerged for political groups that profile themselves and strive after authenticity. As noted, there has occurred a paradigm switch from corporate, social-democratic consensus to apertistic-differential liberalism, whereby the cleavage runs between Neoliberalism and leftist liberalism within the new paradigm. With rightwing populism there is now a new, fundamental line of conflict within the party system, and obviously in reaction to the emergent hegemony of the new liberalism. Rightwing populism challenges the paradigm of apertistic-differential liberalism in its leftist and economic-liberal sorts. The new, strong cleavage is based on the opposition between communitarian and anti-pluralistic politics of the social community of the ethnic group on the one hand and the liberal and cosmopolitan politics of the openness of the market and identities on the other. It is about a cleavage between politics of closedness and politics of openness.

Reckwitz’s point is that, when the traditional white middle-class disintegrated, the new white underclass is formed, and, because they can’t embrace the life-style of the new academic middle-class lacking the cultural and educational capital, they seek authenticity in their collective identity, as the authentic Americans or authentic French, and therefore reject the multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism which the academic middle-class champion. Rightwing populism and identitarian movements are „poor men’s“ way to authenticity. It is about recasting the Fordist „general“ in the light of singularization.<sup>147</sup>

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146 Ibid., p. 413 – 414.

147 These Fordists in the American red states thus suffer from “white anxiety”, that, as more immigrants pour into the country and the society becomes pure diversity, the “authentic American” which they are will have but disappeared (become mere one strand among many) by 2044. See Deutschlandfunk broadcast, “White Anxiety” – Die Angst der Weißen”, 05.11.2018: <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/vor-den-kongresswahlen-in-den-usa-white-anxiety-die->

What Reckwitz didn't cover is the new conservative and right-wing spectra that are allies of the white under-class with their rightwing populism but do not completely fall in with them. When rationalization gives way to culturalization, the "white man" with its characteristics from the previous era of rationalization becomes marginalized. The embodiment of this "white man" is not only disadvantaged in the material sense (because they can't adapt to the new knowledge and cultural economy) but also in the cultural sense (because their characteristics are devalued). These rigid rightwingers (the identitarians and white supremacists) can only revive this "white man" ("masculinity") by using the same technique of culturalizing it as "authentic" and striving for the authentic on the collective level. Again, this striving for the authentic "white" has to be conducted on the collective level (hence the rejection of multiculturalism) because the "white man" is a standardized thing and the strive for authenticity on the individual level is rejected on the ground that it is too feminine. This is the defense of what used to be the norm but is today marginalized and devalued (the standardized white man, white men's masculinity and culture) within the context of culturalization and a generalized striving for authenticity.<sup>148</sup>

We may conclude the review of Reckwitz's classic with the following two conclusions. First, within Reckwitz's framework, the answer to the question „Why has Western society inverted to its opposite?“ is something like this: without much of a manufacturing sector left, capitalism can grow only by inventing a cultural economy. This is congruent with the shift from using tangible products to occupy our time to following images and sounds with our eyes and ears. Then, when capitalism requires flexibility to be the new rule of the game, the feminine, hippie, people come to dominate the capitalist scenes as the *grand*. Everything then fits together: the culturalized economy, flexible capitalism, the hippies as the new middle-class with their goal of self-realization, and the new politics of openness and diversity. The consequence is an opposite world. While, within Boltanski-Chiapello's framework, the answer to the fundamental question about the inversion of patriarchy into matriarchy is capitalism's dismantling of Fordist rigidity for the sake of flexibility, within Reckwitz's framework, it is the inversion of Generalization into Singularization as the new social logic. The world of Generalization is a world dominated by white men and masculinity while the world of Singularization, by women and minorities and femininity. My effort in this review has been to demonstrate that, like those blind men who are feeling the different parts of the elephant, all the narrators of the postmodern age are accurately describing the same thing but from different angles, and that a more complete picture of what is going on can be had only by putting their different descriptions together and finding congruences between them. I have thus also somewhat emphasized how much Reckwitz's culturalized economy resembles the postmodernism which Harvey has described: random images and shallowness on the one hand and products as singular and cultural items on the other; the ideal person as relational, fragmented, emotional, and feminine on the one hand, and self-actualized as singular and unique on the other. The

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[angst.724.de.html?dram:article\\_id=432370](http://angst.724.de.html?dram:article_id=432370).

148 At the very end of this section, Reckwitz makes this interesting observation: In the postmodern era, even terror attacks and mass-murders are "singularized" and aimed at arousing affect. They follow the same dominant social logic of singularity. Just as the perpetrator is seeking recognition for his "specialness", so the victim often does it too. Hence the great battle over the recognition as victim (*der Kampf um Anerkennung als Opfer*). The social logic is something that runs through everything that happens in a society without exception.

description of singularities is also perfectly congruent with the shortened temporality which Harvey has described, and with the McDonalidization process I have described emanating from the Internet.

Secondly, I must emphasize that the inversion process is never complete. It is stalled because the battle between the left and the right, the class-struggle between the academic middle-class and the white under-class, can't as yet conclude itself. In this battle, the liberal left are defending multiculturalism and feminism because these constitute the kernel of their life-style, and, because their life-style is part and parcel of the new economic order, the singularized and culturalized economy, their life-style is considered legitimate and they have the upperhand. Those on the right are fighting multiculturalism and feminism because they do not have the educational and cultural capital to join the new knowledge economy and creative industry, because their old Fordist way is devalued, and because the life-style of the new academic middle-class turns their stomach (because they have stuck to „masculinity“ from the Fordist era). And yet, as they fight to be valued again, they have to package their struggle to return to Fordism or the social logic of the General in terms of the social logic of the Particular, as part of the general striving for authenticity. They can never win as long as the economic order remains singularized and culturalized. The question remains however whether they can ever be completely defeated by the academic middle-class.

### **15. The „Great Paradox“ and the dynamic of the new class struggle**

The issue about the inversion of Western society is thus intimately related to the issue about the new class struggle as the internal dynamic of the new capitalism – the battle between its progressive and retarding forces: society is inverted when the academic middle-class completely suppresses the under-class, i.e., when apertistic-differential liberalism completely suppresses cultural essentialism. (Here, as noted, only rightwing populism and identitarianism are considered from among all the strands of cultural essentialism.) In this section I shall consider whether this is possible by looking deeper into the new class struggle.

When capitalism, after its transformation, requires the flexible (feminine) guru, only a certain segment of the population can fit into the new framework. Not everyone is born an artist. People who are born rigid and masculine, while optimal for the Fordist era, simply find the whole feminine world intractable. Capitalism must marginalize these people, if not eliminating them. When capitalism has culturalized economy in order to maintain itself in existence after de-manufacturing, the natural born artists find the new world totally compatible with their interests and goals (self-realization, authenticity). They are the new academic middle-class, and they are elevated and valued by the new cultural capitalism. Those that are born or have grown up rigid or without the cultural capital necessary to participate in the cultural economy, feel alienated within the new world, all the more so when the new cultural capitalism marginalizes them and devalues them. What happened is therefore a typical process of marginalization. The new academic middle-class, with their social justice warriors, are the oppressors, and the rigid, uncreative people are the newly marginalized and oppressed. These *petit* people therefore fight back, hoping to recreate the Fordist world to suit them just as the culturalized economy of flexible capitalism suits the academic middle-class and the social justice warriors under their employment. To speak in terms of Reckwitz, since the academic middle-class determine the terms and categories in which we speak and think, resistance necessarily consists in making the Fordist entity,

the “race” or “ethnic group”, into the embodiment of authenticity. The rigid, uncreative, masculine people I have in mind here are the rightwing populists and identitarians, but in a way the conservatives fit in here as well.

Everyone knows that, in the United States, the new academic middle-class and the newly oppressed, the Fordist people, are distributed geographically according to the coastline-inland dichotomy. I shall use the conflict between the blue states and the red states in the United States as an illustrating instance of the struggle between the academic middle-class and the new under-class. In this regard I want to bring up Arlie Russell Hochschild’s *Strangers in Their Own Land* and the issue of the “Great Paradox” which is the theme of her book in order to illustrate how the distinction between Fordism, Generalization, and masculinity on the one hand and flexible capitalism, culturalization, and femininity on the other can better describe the new class struggle or the battle between the progressive and retarding forces of capitalism.<sup>149</sup>

The Great Paradox refers to the fact that the Reds (the white under-class concentrated in the red states), who are poor and live in the most polluted regions in the nation, somehow consistently vote for the Republicans, the party that want to deregulate the market in order to further concentrate wealth in the hands of the one percent and provide corporations with more freedom to pollute. The Paradox (in one form or another) was first raised by Thomas Frank in *What’s the Matter with Kansas?*, and he answered it by saying that the Republicans duped the white under-class into voting against their own economic interests by aligning neoliberal policies with conservative stance on social issues. Hochschild, unsatisfied with such explanation, attempts to answer the Paradox by pioneering the “Deep Story approach” and appealing to people’s “emotional self-interest” as the principal motor of their voting behavior.

In accordance with my goal, I shall summarize Hochschild’s conclusions in my own terminology. The feminine, flexible, “natural born artist” given to emotions feels happy at the sight of newly wed homosexuals and sad at the sight of refugees and blacks, and this feeling is elevated by the new capitalism to the status of the “norm” because it serves to increase flexibility and enrich the cultural economy. It becomes what Hochschild has called “liberal feeling rules”. For the sake of enriching the cultural economy, the liberals from the academic middle-class in the blue states expect the rigid Fordist people in the red states to feel the same way. (The Reds: “The liberals are imposing their feeling rules on us.”) And yet the rigid Fordists just don’t find it in themselves to feel like this because they are born, and raised, “masculine” and “rigid”. Furthermore, when, for the sake of society’s flexibility and cultural diversity, the liberals tell them that these homosexuals and refugees and blacks are victims, they just don’t see how this is true. As the Deep Story which Hochschild has identified among the Reds runs: the government and the liberal activists identify these peoples as “victims” and put them ahead of the Reds – especially Christian, heterosexual white men – in the waiting line for the American Dream. These people – women, immigrants, blacks, Muslim refugees, and even the animals which the liberals

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149 To understand Hochschild’s view, I have not only read the book, but also listened to many of the lectures and talks which she has given subsequent to the publication of the book (including her two appearances on Democracy Now). The most helpful is her address to the Rosa-Luxemburg Foundation published on 4 May 2018 (<https://youtu.be/LtJDvH42Bug>). I have also consulted the study guides which she has put up on her website: <https://arliehochschild.wordpress.com/>.

want to save from environmental pollution – have cut in line! How lucky! Why are they victims? Meanwhile, these rigid white men themselves feel more and more like victims, they are the *real* victims, who are unable to get ahead in the line because they are considered “privileged”. And yet, as their material conditions deteriorate under a new capitalism to which they are unfitted (the disappearance of the manufacturing sector which has formerly dominated their landscape), where is their “privilege”? They are the real victims, and those women and minorities ahead in the line are fake victims. Yet, in accordance with their value (ultimately, Fordist masculinity), they will never ask the federal government to put them ahead in the line as well. In a world in which the rigid and the masculine are devalued and in which the fake are presented as real and the real as fake, they feel like strangers, “strangers in their own land”. When somebody like Trump gets on the stage, who, like them, has no sympathy for the fake victims (demands “release from liberal feeling rules”) while identifying the real victims as victims – who contradicts the fake world of the academic middle-class with the real world of the white under-class – they suddenly don’t feel like strangers. In Reckwitz’s words, the academic middle-class has been packaging the inauthentic as the authentic and the authentic as the inauthentic, but now, at last, somebody has presented the authentic as the authentic and the inauthentic as the inauthentic. The Reds are thus voting according to their emotional self-interests – they hope for a world in which they won’t feel like strangers – not according to shrewd calculation of economics. The former is far more important than the latter, and Hochschild’s narrative is full of instances where the latter is distorted to fit the former. This is how Hochschild has solved the Great Paradox.

Every group of people have their own Deep Story, and it is this which determines their voting behavior rather than economic calculation. The blue states, for example, have a similar paradox. Andrew Gilman, for example, has asked (*Red State, Blue State, Rich State, Poor State*) why the rich blue states always vote for Democrats who advocate for more taxes on them. The answer is that it is the social issues which concern them more, not money. Namely, the liberals are also motivated by their Deep Story when they vote rather than by economic interests.<sup>150</sup>

As noted, I have been carrying my own Great Paradox as well – for all sides: why do the liberal progressives want immigration when immigration is bad for the environment? Why do the liberal progressives frequently believe Neoliberalism is their enemy when they are obviously working for, and their ideology is obviously congruent with, the latter? Why do the conservatives and many of those on the right act as if they support Neoliberalism (such as when they profess support for “capitalism”) when the latter is obviously their enemy? This somewhat expands on Hochschild’s original paradox: why do

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150 At the end of the book, in her “letter” to her Red friends, Hochschild produces a description of a common blue state Deep Story. This Deep Story only explains why the Blues hate the sort of privatization of public resources for which Republican “free-market” has become a synonym. This however hardly exhausts the liberal left’s sentiments: they have a Deep Story about other aspects of society than privatization by corporations. I have recently watched “On the Basis of Sex” and discovered that this is essentially liberal white women’s Deep Story: although she has so much talent to make the world a better place, white men, who control society, reject her and look down on her, believing erroneously that women couldn’t possibly possess any talent. She is thereby prevented by male chauvinism from expressing her talent and making the world a better place. In this way, this Deep Story is actually very similar to the Southern working-class white men’s Deep Story. (The difference is that the line is leading to a better world, the World Dream, rather than to the American Dream, and that the woman is pushed out of the line because of her gender.) But she eventually overcomes the obstacle and demonstrates her talent causing white men to recognize her as their equal. This Deep Story is related to my previous psychoanalysis that liberal white women act as if society has owed them and must therefore pay them back by treasuring them and including them.

the Reds support “free market” (deregulation; Neoliberalism) when this makes them poorer and their environment more polluted? While the solution is the Deep Story approach (by appealing to people’s emotions rather than to any rational understanding and calculation on their part), I want to modify it with my “Fordist-flexible capitalism” distinction in order to incorporate the whole problematic within my own framework.

The academic middle-class support free trade and globalization because their life goal is self-realization and authenticity and they feel consequently at home in the social environment which openness and deregulation (the key words of free-trade and globalization) have created. In other words, they support globalization and free trade for cultural reasons – for the sake of the diversity of cultures which globalization and free trade make possible – and not so much because they love “free market”. In particular, they love the femininity which this cultural diversity connotes. For strange reasons, they somehow don’t associate “capitalism”, “free market”, or “Neoliberalism” with femininity and cultural diversity even though they are instinctively aware that globalization and free trade have something to do with what they want. When they feel happy at the sight of gay marriages or sympathy at the sight of refugees and homeless black people, they also don’t notice that they feel this way – feminine – because it is the new capitalism which wants them to feel this way. They certainly will never notice that free trade and globalization are the reasons why certain disadvantaged minorities for whom they have expressed so much sympathy, such as African Americans, can never quite get out of their under-class situation. What they do notice is that, at times, “capitalism” and “free market” do not seem so “feminine”: such as when corporations are given free rein and not required to abide by environmental protection regulations, when wealth is increasingly concentrated in the hands of the one percent, when corporations privatize community resources (schools, etc.), or when social protection programs are dismantled as part of the deregulation package. At such times, “capitalism” and “free market” seem to connote the rational, egoist man associated with the previous stages of capitalism rather than with the new cultural, knowledge, and service economy. At such times, they speak out against the evil “capitalism” and “free market”. Thus, the key to understanding why the liberal progressives are at times “pro-capitalist” (speaking out against Brexit and Trump’s tariffs) and at times “anti-capitalist” is to not only appeal to their Deep Story but also to understand that the fundamental layer of any Deep Story is an image about either masculinity or femininity. Nobody among the academic middle-class, nobody of the liberal left, actually understands what “capitalism” and “free market” really mean. They certainly don’t understand what “Neoliberalism” really means. When they hear about how Koch Brothers extracted oil in a foreign country and didn’t bother to clean up the mess afterwards, they think this is “capitalism” or “free market” or “Neoliberalism” and hate it – because it is so “masculine” and “masculinity”, with the rigidity it connotes, disgusts flexible guru. When they hear about the Brexit, they fail to notice that this is “anti-capitalism” but hate it because it is also so “masculine” (the egoist man who refuses to cooperate with others but insists on going his own way). When they hear about how Trump wants to roll back free trade by imposing tariffs, they feel threatened because, this time, they instinctively know that, without globalization, the “creative industry” in which they realize themselves and the world of diversity in which they express their femininity will all collapse.

Meanwhile, the white under-class and their conservative allies champion “free market”, the rights of corporations, and the dismantling of social programs because, just like their opponents among the academic middle-class and liberal progressives, they don’t really know what “free market capitalism”



means. They haven't yet got out of their Fordist stereotypes and believe that "free market capitalism" is still about giant Fordist corporations. They believe "free market capitalism" means Fordism. The poor whites in the Deep South, in Louisiana, are misled because the big companies they see on their territories are all petrochemical and oil giants – Citgo, Sasol, Pittsburgh Plate Glass: namely, the remnants of the Fordist economy, those nature-exploitation enterprises which, as Reckwitz has emphasized, still operate according to the old logic of Generalization and which, displaced from the center stage by the creative industry, function quietly in the background in the era of culturalization. That is, the problem with people on all sides – the conservatives, the classical liberals, the liberal left, the white under-class in the red states – is that they mistakenly believe "capitalism" still means "Fordist economy" (the Koch Brothers, ExxonMobil, etc.) when capitalism has already so transformed itself in the period from 1968 to 1990 that the old-fashioned Fordist economy only operates on the margin of today's capitalism. When Fordist giants want freedom from regulation, the Reds are misled to feel that this is about returning to the golden age of Fordism – masculine, hierarchical, rational – and consequently vote in favor of it. Not really understanding what "free market" and "capitalism" really mean today, they then misrepresent themselves by saying they support "free market" and "capitalism" – when what they really mean to support is "Fordism" and "masculinity". The same with the liberal progressives: when deregulation and openness contradict their ideals by leading to pollution, privatization of the public sector, and the dismantling of social programs, the feeling this conjures up inside them is: this is Fordism, masculine, hierarchical, rational, egoist, and the restriction of the freedom to realize oneself as one pleases. They are not really against capitalism per se; they like it when it is about the creative industry which occupies the center stage in today's capitalist world and only hate it when it is about the old-fashioned Fordist economy that still exists in the background.

In the American context, everyone has the *feeling* that the Democrats are "feminine" and the Republicans "masculine". The same in Europe: the politically correct Establishment (what Marine Le Pen has called "UMPS" in France and the CDU-SPD mainstream in Germany) feels "feminine" and rightwing populism and identitarians "masculine". When we say that people vote according to their emotional self-interest, we must clarify that they vote according to whether it feels "feminine" or "masculine". When the Reds vote in favor of corporations, they are voting according to their emotions in a larger sense than Hochschild has described: that's a vote for Fordism, not for free market capitalism per se. It is above all a vote for masculinity, for the masculine world of the previous Fordist era. The sort of Ayn Rand classical liberalism – free market, minimal government, rational egoist, and rugged individualism – which serves as the ideological platform of, for example, the Tea Party, is precisely the Western version of "masculinity" which started just before Enlightenment and reached its highest expression in Fordism.

In a startling 2006 PBS television show called "Is God Green?" Bill Moyers tried to interview top leaders of the evangelical churches – including the Reverends Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell and the Christian activist Ralph Reed. All of them referred Moyers to their shared spokesman, Dr. Calvin Beisner, an adjunct fellow at the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty, based in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Beisner, in turn, cited Genesis chapter 1, verse 28: "Then God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it.

Have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’”

Dr. Beisner said the Bible also sanctioned mountaintop removal, presumably by coal companies. “If you are going to mine for precious metals, for fossil fuels, for anything else, you don’t do that with a feather brush,” Beisner tells Moyers. “I think the Scriptures actually tell us about the wonderful things that we can do with metals. We’re told of gold and silver and other such things. Those things require mining, and ‘force’ is simply a scientific term for the application of energy to physical objects to bring about change.... My simple point about Genesis 1:28 [is] that we cannot escape the force involved in the Hebrew word for ‘subdue.’” The Acton Institute was founded to “teach on (and) to favor a free market perspective,” its website says, and it is financially supported by various corporations, including ExxonMobil.<sup>151</sup>

How obvious here is the notion of the rational man dominating and reforming nature, of rationalism unhindered by feminine empathy! It is the restoration of the Fordist masculine world, of Fordism to the center stage, which is the goal of the American Right. In the Red Deep Story, the line-cutters are detested because they are feminine, or violation of the masculine code of hard work *and then* reward. And by “hard work” the Reds mean “hard labor” in a masculine profession, in a Fordist giant. The social justice activists that bring in the line-cutters are also detested because, more than the fact that they are perpetrating unfairness, they are too overflowing with femininity (empathy). Hence also the Reds’ disdain for government workers: too feminine, do-nothing free loaders. Because they ascribe to the logic of Generalization of the Fordist era, i.e. the old-fashioned masculine way, they disdain homosexuals and blacks and immigrants, the abnormal and the non-standard: it’s because it is really about Fordism, Generalization, and masculinity that “bigotry” always seems to go hand in hand with praises of “capitalism”. Because the Reds ascribe to the old-fashioned masculine way, they are rugged individualists and don’t show sympathy for refugees and disdain a government which takes from the rich and gives to the poor. Because they detest the feminine way of the liberals – the way of the *new* capitalism – they feel only disgust when the latter run around in hysteria over the need to protect the endangered nature. They disdain the idea of receiving welfare even when in need because they don’t want to be “feminine” like the line-cutters. While clearly reactionary (i.e., reacting against the liberal left’s devaluation of them), they disdain the artist life-style in the blue states as too “feminine”.<sup>152</sup> It is also because what is at issue in the Red universe of things is masculinity that, as Hochschild has noted, women in the red states are more open to the idea of government help and regulation than men. The more one reads Hochschild’s narrative, the more one senses the Protestant ethic still reigning among the Reds – again, the relic of the era of rationalization.

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151 Hochschild, *ibid.*, p. 123 – 124.

152 “Like her father and uncle, Harold Areno, Janice feels proud to have a rooted self, a self based in a busy, dense, stable community of relatives, co-parishioners, and friends. A newer cosmopolitan self, one that seemed uprooted, loosely attached to an immediate community, prepared to know a lot of people just a little bit, a mobile, even migratory self – this seemed to be coming into vogue. Such a self took pride in exposure to a diverse set of moral codes, but did a person with that kind of self end up thinking ‘anything goes’? It was frightening. It was wrong. And Janice was having none of it.” *Ibid.*, p. 166. The Red Janice actually looks down upon the flexible guru that is the *grand* in the City by Projects.

Just as it is “masculinity” which the Reds mean when they profess support for “capitalism”, it is also about “masculinity” when they speak in favor of “freedom”. As Hochschild has pointed out, what Louisianans mean by “freedom” is really just white men’s freedom: the right to own guns and drink alcohol. They do not mean women’s freedom to control their own body (abortion) or blacks’ freedom to express themselves.<sup>153</sup> What they really want is not freedom per se, but masculinity. They want their society to value old-fashioned (Fordist) white men’s masculinity. This is the same with everybody else. Nobody really wants freedom; everyone wants simply what they want. What the liberal progressives, or the academic middle-class, really want is a feminine society, a society of artists, a society that values femininity or their feminine way of life (the spiritual guru of flexible capitalism) more than masculinity or the Reds’ masculine way of life (the industrial white men of Fordist economy). For this reason, when Hochschild writes a letter attempting to persuade the Reds to be more sympathetic of the Democratic Party because the Democratic Party is better at bringing them prosperity, she will never succeed. She doesn’t quite understand what the Reds really want: the Reds want Fordist masculinity and economic success *at the same time*. They will never budge on the issue of masculinity, will never stoop so low as to become “feminine” just in order to improve their economic position. Even when they strive for “authenticity” (i.e., going along with the imperative of Singularization), it is “authenticity” compatible with the logic of Generalization. They want their cake and eat it at the same time. They are firmly anchored in the Fordist era, convinced that economic prosperity only follows from the Fordist, masculine way of life. If somehow it doesn’t, it’s not because the structure of capitalism has changed but because these feminine people in the liberal states have rigged the game.

The same understanding must be applied to the conservatives and classical liberals as well. The classical liberal ideals they want to preserve are really just the constituents of the masculine world of rights and hierarchy (the ethic of justice as opposed to the ethic of care) which underlies both the bourgeois capitalism and the Fordist regime. These ideals aren’t popular anymore under the flexible accumulation regime, under which the ethics of the feminine world (the ethic of care) must dominate. (Carol Gilligan was really just another “artist” in Heidegger’s sense, putting forward a new ethics which will better fit the new accumulation regime.) In other words, the conservatives and classical liberals are also merely dreaming of returning to the Fordist world when they espouse “free market” and “capitalism”.

The dynamic of the new class-struggle is by now totally clear. The academic middle-class and their social justice warriors are fighting for the new flexible and cultural capitalism and trying to rid the world of, or marginalize, the remnant Fordism while those that they call “bigots” are trying to do the opposite and return the whole society to Fordism. The “culture war” is at bottom a conflict between two opposite accumulation regimes, flexible and Fordist. It is a necessary feature of the new capitalism – and so of the postmodern age – insofar as both its flexible center and its Fordist background are necessary components of the total economy. When the opponents in this war speak in favor of, or against, “capitalism”, do not take their words seriously: they do not quite know what they are talking about.<sup>154</sup>

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153 “Young black males are regulated too. Jefferson Davis Parish passed a bill banning the wearing of pants in public that revealed ‘skin beneath their waists or their underwear,’ and newspaper accounts featured images, taken from the back, of two black teenage boys exposing large portions of their undershorts.” *Ibid.*, p. 68.

The solution of the Great Paradox (whether Hochschild's or my own), i.e. evaluating people's political stance not according to their words but according to whether they are on the side of Fordist masculinity or flexible capitalist femininity, also points up the fact that, at least in the United States, the new class struggle conceals the problem about the co-existence of two contradictory accumulation regimes. Take, as an example, the paradox that people who worry the most about pollution are those who are least exposed to it (i.e. the academic middle-class in the blue states) and that people who worry the least about it are those most exposed to it (i.e., the under-class in the Deep South). The creative industry and the service economy are concentrated in the coastal regions, in the blue states, and have recruited people who are "artists" or conditioned them to become "artists". These people are feminine people who are terribly concerned with taking good care of themselves (as well as the poor marginalized peoples) and utterly intolerant of the slightest discomfort and suffering. (They are the "spoiled children".) They are thus hyper-vigilant about environmental pollution, and yet the creative industry and service economy which dominate their landscape are the farthest away from the Fordist, earth-exploitation industries. The Fordist, earth-exploitation industries are concentrated in the red states and have recruited people who are masculine, or conditioned them to be masculine, in the Fordist way (according to the logic of Generalization). Because they are "manly", they are less concerned with taking good care of their body and are more tolerant of discomfort and suffering. It is only appropriate then that the Fordist, earth-exploitation industries which dominate their landscape should be the most polluting and yet tolerated by them. (Namely, the polluting industry itself, because it follows the logic of Generalization, makes people tolerant of pollution.) Each kind of accumulation regime has generated a respective cultural superstructure that suits itself (the feminine, the artist, and the cultural on the one hand and the masculine, the mechanical, and the rational on the other). The two Americas correspond to Reckwitz's division of the new economy into a foreground (the creative and cultural economy that follows the logic of Singularization) and a background (the old Fordist industries that continue to follow the logic of Generalization). But, because the foreground is the dominant and the background the recessive, the academic middle-class is on the elevated position, controls public opinion in general (all the mainstream media), and is recognized as superior by society and the world at large, while the white under-class is on the defensive and reactionary (Fox News is reactionary against CNN and MSNBC). This is probably why, although the artist camp is destined to have the upperhand in the culture war because they represent the progressive side of capitalism, the retarding forces cannot be completely eliminated: the background industries, although marginalized, will always be a necessary component of capitalism, however renewed. The inversion of Western society can never be complete. In their hatred of the oil and other extractive industries, the liberal progressives seem to be instinctively aware that these are the obstacles to their achieving total domination of society.<sup>155</sup>

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154 As noted, only the far right in Europe, especially in France, have a clear conception of what capitalism really is; hence their rhetoric against capitalism and globalization.

155 Hochschild is talking about this dual nature of the new capitalist system when she talks about the inter-dependency between the red states and the blue states: "In the meantime, left and right need one another, just as the blue coastal and inland cities need red state energy and rich community. The rural Midwest and South need the cosmopolitan outreach to a diverse wider world. As sociologist Richard Florida notes, 'Blue state knowledge economies run on red state energy. Red state energy economies, in their turn, depend on dense coastal cities and metro areas, not just as markets and sources of migrants, but for the technology and talent they supply.'" (Ibid., p. 232 – 233.) I have here proposed my own, historical materialist, explanation of the blue and red divide in the United States. (Other kinds of explanation include, for example, Daniel Elazar's.) That the blue and the red regions of the United States are different according to their different accumulation regimes is also indicated by the fact (which Hochschild did mention) that 90 percent of oil

As can now be seen, I have persisted in employing historical materialism while absorbing Reckwitz's and Hochschild's insights. Social logic is the consequence of the regulation effects emanating from the underlying production and consumption regime. While the Fordist regime imposes Generalization upon culture, the creative industry imposes Singularization. Because the creative industry is in the foreground under the new capitalism, the language of Singularization encompasses the whole society and the Fordist people are forced to express their Fordist sentiments in the language of Singularization (hence the search for "authenticity" on the level of the collective). The Deep Story, insofar as it embodies Fordist masculinity or flexible capitalist femininity, is also conditioned by the underlying production regime, whether in the foreground or in the background.

## **16. Social justice, the American empire, and the elites' version of sustainable civilization**

An issue which Reckwitz could not but have neglected to study is the connection between the new academic middle-class on the one hand and American imperialism around the world and the problem of sustainable civilization on the other. (This is not only the case in America, but even the academic middle-class in Western Europe are usually pro-American and anti-Russian.) I shall thus make the following observations for Reckwitz in order to complete the portrait of the academic middle-class. I shall limit these observations to the case of the United States.

Now the reasons why America is conducting imperialist warfare around the world are: (1) to control natural resources, especially hydrocarbon energy sources; (2) to obtain strategic positions from which to assert dominance in a particular region; and (3) to enforce the Dollar as world's premier reserve currency. (3) is especially relevant here. Clearly, because America spends each year more than it takes in (trade deficit), if it doesn't enforce the Dollar Rule, its empire will collapse immediately. For this reason, the new academic middle-class and, at their vanguard, the social justice warriors, are intimately connected to American imperialism – just as Frederic Jameson has asserted that postmodernism is ultimately part and parcel of American unipolar world-domination. America spends more than it takes in because most of the manufacturing sector has gone overseas, which has therefore prompted American imperialism overseas and produced the dominant leftist paradigm domestically (the new academic middle-class with their values and life-style, along with social justice warriors as their vanguard) to support the new culture of "consumption without production" and the new "knowledge economy". When most of the manufacturing sector has gone overseas, this forces the United States to enforce the Dollar standard overseas and its economy to culturalize in the domestic sphere. Postmodernism, the new cultural economy, and the social justice revolution are ultimately one side of the coin, of which the other side is American imperialism overseas. There is thus an intimate connection between Jordan Peterson's struggle with social justice and Daniele Ganser's engagement with peace activism.<sup>156</sup> This is something which neither side has understood.

This intimate connection is demonstrated by the new shape of American mainstream media and the realignment of the mainstream left with American imperialism as well as with globalization especially

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companies' political contribution goes to the Republican party.

<sup>156</sup> Refer to his *Illegale Kriege* and the countless lectures he has given in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland out of the chapters in the book.

since the election of Donald Trump. The mainstream media (CNN, MSNBC, The New York Times, The Washington Post) have become not only government's war propaganda machine but also the mouth-piece of the new academic middle-class. The following summarizes the worldview from which the mainstream media will never deviate in their reporting: "Putin's Russia is evil", "Muslim terrorists are America's enemies", "'Right-wing people' (including conservatives and classical liberals) are sexists and white supremacists", and "Women are victims of society's sexism and men's sexual violence". Mainstream media are "fake news" in that this summary doesn't actually (or always) describe reality. (In fact, it frequently describes the opposite of reality.) In order to arrive at these pre-conceived conclusions, the mainstream media usually report only one side of what is happening while omitting the other side, just as good propaganda does. What is peculiar since Trump's election is the merger of anti-Russia war-propaganda (American imperialism) with social justice and liberal progressive ideals to constitute the new status quo of mainstream media, i.e. the complete worldview of the new academic middle-class. It is the coin we are talking about, with both its sides. Thus, when the left and the right come into conflict, the mainstream media make sure to report only what the far right activists did to the Antifas without mentioning what the Antifas did to the other side, just as, when it comes to Russia, they make sure to only report what Russia has done to interfere in America's election without mentioning the United States' far more frequent interfering in Russia's elections – this, so that the academic middle-class can always hear what they want to hear, what confirms their worldview, what validates their view of themselves as the good and the victims. The new leftist paradigm, or the worldview of the new academic middle-class, is distinctively different from the traditional leftist paradigm which today is represented on the margin by, for example, Jill Stein or Tulsi Gabbard. Jill Stein dares call the Department of Defense the "Department of Offense" (i.e. *naming* American imperialism as Daniele Ganser continues to do), promote "Diplomacy of Peace" instead of war for natural resources, and challenge the dominant, mainstream, anti-Russia war propaganda (she is the only one who has pointed out on mainstream media that the United States has interfered in Russia's elections far more often than the reverse). Tulsi Gabbard has also openly opposed US support of ISIS and Al-Nusra in Syria to remove Assad (something which nobody in the academic middle-class even knows about). Both Stein and Gabbard are "left" in the *traditional* sense in that they want to promote social justice ideals *without* advocating for American imperialism (as well as without supporting free trade and globalization). This kind of traditional left is today pretty much disowned by the *mainstream* left, i.e. the academic middle-class, and hardly exists anymore in the US (hence Fraser's lament).<sup>157</sup> We must accept the fact that the mainstream left has re-aligned itself with American imperialism – hence their self-righteous denunciation of Putin as an "authoritarian dictator" and their paranoia over Russian disinformation campaign to destabilize the West, all in agreement with US imperial Establishment's anti-Russia war propaganda (i.e. the exact opposite of reality: it is the United States which has been running the most intensive disinformation campaign against Russia and its allies in the past twenty years). This is a salient feature which Reckwitz has never explicitly named when describing the new academic middle-class: the liberal left, now that they have become mainstream (as the academic middle-class), have changed to believing that America is doing right when pressuring Russia or doing regime-change inside Russian allies, a position exactly opposite of their ancestors back in 1968 (i.e. the hippies' opposition to the Vietnam War on anti-imperialist grounds). And so are the liberal left's infinite

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157 The remaining figures of the traditional left occasionally appear on Democracy Now, which is thus half-way between the mainstream left and the traditional left.

praises for the CIA and the FBI since the Trump business, something unthinkable for their hippie ancestors.<sup>158</sup>

Although Reckwitz has never named the academic middle-class' realignment with American imperialist Establishment, he did express the insight that the current left and the current right are *not* the continuation of the traditional left and the traditional right back in the Fordist era. Another illustration of the discontinuity and re-alignment is the denunciation of conspiracy theories so common nowadays on mainstream media and among the academic middle-class. The older generations of conspiracy theories – such as those surrounding the assassination of President Kennedy and Martin Luther King and the orchestration of 911 attacks (that the government did all of this) – were expressions of the traditional left, i.e., anti-American imperialism. Today “conspiracy theories” are ridiculed and denounced by the academic middle-class and their mainstream media as “rightwing propaganda” and “rightwing fake news”. Anti-government conspiracy theories have now become “rightwing”! It's now the rightwing people who reject social justice ideologies who espouse anti-government conspiracy theories! (For example, the case of “Q”.) The switch of positions in the case of anti-government conspiracy theories is of course partly caused by the tremendous decline of these theories' quality in the past ten years when more and more stupid people join in, adopt them, reinvent them, and make them increasingly incredulous and absurd (“PizzaGate”, “Q”). Nevertheless, the main factor is that those who espouse social justice today no longer feel alienated from American imperialism as they did back in 1968.<sup>159</sup>

It would seem that the new academic middle-class have realigned themselves with American imperialism simply out of ignorance: namely, because they simply don't know anything about Putin or George Soros or American Establishment's official policy about regime-change. They simply don't know what their country did to Russia back in the Yeltsin days, how Putin saved Russia from American imperialists, how George Soros' NGOs promoted color revolutions in former Soviet space to advance American corporate and geopolitical interests under the disguise of promoting democracy. It would seem that they have succumbed to Establishment's anti-Russia war propaganda because they don't know any better. It would seem that, if they read Walter Lippmann (*Public Opinion*), if they listened to Daniele Ganser's lectures on *Achtsamkeit* and propaganda, if they did know any of these histories, they would realign themselves with Jill Stein and stop condemning Trump for his pro-Russia stance – insofar as they, so feminine, always feel sympathy for the oppressed and downtrodden. However, just as the academic middle-class support free trade and globalization out of an instinctive notion that the latter are congruent with their feminine sentiments and way of life, it would seem that they also instinctively know that it is American imperialism which buttresses their social dominance and way of life. If the United States stops enforcing the Dollar standard in the world with brute force, the entire cultural and service economy – which has provided the academic middle-class with the feminine world

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158 Recall the FBI's COINTELPRO.

159 When Alex Jones started out his career, he was properly speaking a “traditional left”, i.e. showing sympathy for the weak and speaking out against the powerful, hence speaking out against American imperialism. Then he was disillusioned with social justice while continuing to speak out against American imperialism. At this stage he could be called a “leftist conservative”. Then, when the mainstream left shifts to aligning with American imperialism, Alex Jones becomes a “rightwing conspiracy theorist”. This shifting designation of Alex Jones' political stance illustrates Reckwitz's insight that the contemporary left is a mixture of traditional left and traditional right while the contemporary right is a mixture of traditional right and traditional left!

in which they may realize their feminine being and assert themselves as the norm – would simply collapse.

The new academic middle-class is also the embodiment of values which the Bilderbergers want to promote for the sake of making our civilization sustainable. As I have elsewhere noted, when finding that our consumer and industrial civilization is not sustainable in the long run, the Bilderbergers have decided to accelerate the development of this civilization mode instead of halting it; when finding that openness and deregulation and the feminist and human rights culture are making our civilization unsustainable in the long run, they have decided to promote this way of life instead of rolling our culture back to the patriarchal dark age without human rights – this is because they have decided to focus on reducing human population size instead of on curbing consumption as the way to solve the crisis of human civilization. For this reason, they have decided to promote the dominant leftist paradigm (feminism and multiculturalism) which buttresses the new economy and which the new academic middle-class embodies. A feminist and liberal progressive culture where all women work and the Fordist nuclear family (or any traditional family) is rendered non-existent is in line with Bilderberg’s agenda in that women will thereby have fewer children resulting in population shrinkage. The most recent Global Compact for Migration is a case in point.<sup>160</sup> This is Bilderberg’s plan to increase migration from the developing world to the developed world in the future by making it into a human right.<sup>161</sup> We have seen why the World Economic Forum (many members of which participate in Bilderberg meetings) has been lobbying for this pact: it’s good for business not only in the short term (greater flexibility in the labor market and increased consumption in developed nations) but also in the long term (it will help the poor countries from which migrants originate develop economically and thus enlarge the global market). Behind this economic motive is certainly the Bilderberg’s hope that, while the African and Muslim immigrants will have less children after their assimilation into Western societies, the modernization of their home countries will also result in a slowdown of population growth there. (Namely, imposing Western life-style on the whole world over will curb population growth globally – as the case of China has clearly demonstrated.) By favoring immigration from poor countries in general and this Global Compact for Migration in particular, the academic middle-class is also aligned with Bilderberg’s agenda. This is the final step in which the liberal left have accomplished their inversion from opposing power and wealth to aligning with them. The agents of capitalism (Neoliberalism), American imperialism, and the Bilderberg (Western imperialism on the most general level), the academic middle-class is the enemy *par excellence* of any leftist conservative.<sup>162</sup>

## 17. The “empathy wall”: the academic middle-class is not all that “academic”

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160 See UN’s webpage for the program: <https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/migration-compact>.

161 See, for example, the analysis given in Fehlende Part (RT Deutsch) on 12 October 2018, “UNO-Migrationspakt: eine Frage der Perspektive”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rtsdgcKZe7o>.

162 As noted, this understanding of the realignment of the mainstream left is more widespread in Europe than in the United States. In Europe, the academic middle-class, while representing social justice, is also aligned with American war propaganda (especially against Russia). Thus, the European far right movements, consistent with their historical status as the resistance movements, have typically aligned anti-immigration agenda with anti-American and pro-Russia foreign policy objectives. In both Europe and North America, the combination of social justice with American imperialism among the academic middle-class means that these people are utterly confused about who the real victim is in both the domestic and the international context: mistaking non-victims for victims in the former and victims for aggressors in the other. See the next section for the reason for such mental confusion.



In the end, I want to comment more on the problem of the increasing polarization of our postmodern society. (I'm here continuing my concern expressed in "Rationalization, McDonaldization, and Increasing Stupidity" and "Addenda"). This problem occupies me just as it has Hochschild and other American sociologists insofar as one of my political ideals is precisely communication.

Anyone who values Habermas' ideal of communicative action – where rational people come together, talk to each other to understand each other's point of view, assess each other's interests, and then reach a compromise – must be totally disappointed whenever s/he watches a debate between the left and the right nowadays. It is senseless because it is always conducted in precisely the way people should *not* talk to each other.<sup>163</sup> Those on the right want to show that those on the left are wrong (that Western society is not really racist and patriarchal) and promoting a pernicious ideology (that their "social justice" is injustice and oppressive and erodes the cherished values of classical liberalism on which Western society is founded). They seem to have forgotten Dale Carnegie's famous rule, that you can never convince people no matter how good your arguments and evidences are: "a man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still".<sup>164</sup> The most senseless I have seen of these debates is that between feminist activists and men's rights activists. (More often than not, those on the left simply shut down those on the right with brute force.) Even though, as I have been asserting, the *only* effective way to rid society of social justice warriors is not to convince people that this is all a wrong and bad idea but to bring manufacturing back to the country, i.e. re-industrialization – when North America is re-industrialized, all the feminism and complaints about racism and promotion of LGBT rights will simply disappear of their own accord: I'm offering a *falsifiable prediction* – it is still worthwhile to consider the reasons why the ideal of communicative action simply can't happen here.

First of all, sometimes it is not even clear whether there *could* be a right answer in these debates. If there is a debate about whether the government should promote oranges or apples, and one side wants oranges because oranges taste good to them while other side wants apples because apples taste good to them – which side is correct? Which side is correct when one side wants multiculturalism and the other side ethnic homogeneity? As has been pointed out, the conflict between the left and the right is not a matter of rational reasoning, but a conflict of feelings, a matter of preference for (new capitalist) femininity or (Fordist) masculinity. The most important lesson from the above is that most people are not rational, that their default state is irrationality and emotions. To justify their feelings and preferences, they fabricate facts to make their feelings and preferences look like accurate and objective descriptions of reality.<sup>165</sup> These facts can then be debunked. Thus Hochschild checks statistics to demonstrate that most of the narratives which come out of Louisianans' Deep Story simply aren't correct representations of reality. The conservatives and classical liberals have also tried to demonstrate that liberal progressives' narratives about social reality (all that bigotry and oppression) simply don't

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163 When the left and the right, the conservatives and liberal progressives, engage in a debate and try to "win the argument", they have two possible goals: (1) to convince each other; (2) to "win the argument" (to create the appearance of winning the argument) not as a way to convince each other but as a way to convince the audience. I restrict myself here to the first case.

164 In *How To Win Friends and Influence People*.

165 Thus the feminists fabricate numbers about women's victimization in order to make the liberal white women's Deep Story, mentioned earlier, look like an accurate metaphor of reality, and to make the preference for a feminine world look like a necessary goal for everyone on ground of fairness.

correspond to the real reality. I have spent much time examining the cognitive failures which result in such erroneous representations of reality, such as selective evidence to confirm a pre-established grand narrative, or mistaking one's partial experience of reality for a correct representation of the whole reality. (Hochschild's Deep Story can be seen as a "metaphor" of the grand narrative pre-existing in one's head.) I have used the example of the blind men's narratives about the elephant: the feminists say "women are disadvantaged" because they insist on only touching the elephant's nose while men's rights activists say "men are disadvantaged" because they insist on only touching the elephant's tail. To understand the matter better, one can consult the earliest analysis of the cognitive failures in question, i.e., Walter Lippmann's *Public Opinion*: the distortion of perception due to the complexity of reality, the necessity of simplification, censorship, the fear of facts which do not conform to existing beliefs, and finally the use of existing beliefs to select and interpret facts in such a way as to defend one's own interests.<sup>166</sup> The last point is the most important (in Hochschild's words: excluding facts which contradict one's Deep Story). As I have come to realize while watching the senseless debate between the left and the right, the human brain is not originally designed to understand reality – this is a derivative function of the brain – but to develop fantasies about it, and this for two purposes: (1) to protect one's self-esteem and class interests, and (2) to keep society functioning orderly. Any human being will firmly believe in a wrong narrative about reality in order to inadvertently, without knowing, defend his or her self-interests and class interests and the social system that is in place.

Let me come back to Dale Carnegie's famous rule, "one can never convince another person", that most people simply will never change their mind, and that attempts to change their mind against their will always only harden their resolve to cling onto their current beliefs against all logic and evidences. It's simply impossible for men's rights activists to convince the feminists that patriarchy is no more, and impossible for the conservatives to convince the liberals and so on. This is because self-interests and class interests and the efficient functioning of the economic system are getting in the way.

It is only possible to persuade somebody to a different belief: (1) when the person has a desire to learn and assumes that he or she might learn something from you. This is one of Jordan Peterson's rules in his *12 Rules For Life*. The highest form of such dialogue for the sake of learning is the Socratic dialogue, which Peterson has described as "mutual exploration for the sake of uncovering a hitherto unknown truth" ("Conversation on the Way"). Only a higher species will ever experience such desire to learn and have the open mind to assume other people have something to teach. Most ordinary people are not capable of such desire. Most of the new academic middle-class, all the social justice warriors who go around promoting love and tolerance, are simply not such higher species. (2) When the person has never developed any opinion about the matter – a *tabula rasa*. (3) Or when the matter under discussion holds no particular significance for the person. It is always possible to convince people that the object seen in the outer realm of the solar system is a planet and not a comet because nobody really cares. (4) It should also be noted that it's much easier to convince another person about simple facts (whether I speak German or not) than about values (whether multiculturalism is better than white identity).

Now those on the right can never convince those on the left because the liberal left have no desire to learn, have already developed strong opinions about social justice, have already invested their entire

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<sup>166</sup> Summarized at the end of Chapter 1: The World Outside and the Pictures in Our Heads.

being into the issue under discussion, and believe strongly that “America is still racist and patriarchal” is as indisputable a fact as “the sun revolves around the earth”. The desire to learn, or the lack of it, is the most important issue here. This underlies the possibility of communicative action or its impossibility. Even when those on the right provide all sorts of statistics showing that women are no longer disadvantaged and so on, those on the left will simply ignore all the evidences. When a leftist conservative demonstrates that immigration is bad for the environment (i.e., when liberal progressives’ goals undermine each other), the latter will simply shout “racism” and remain committed to both immigration and environmental protection. Pretty soon one realizes that liberal progressives can’t be reasoned with simply because they refuse to learn anything new. And, without learning, the errors in their head (in their grand narratives or Deep Stories) simply can’t be corrected.

I have elsewhere expressed the insight that the liberal left believe in their paradigm (feminism, multiculturalism, “heteropatriarchy”) – just as the uneducated on the right believe in their “rightwing conspiracy theories” such as “Q” – because *that’s all they can understand*. Whenever I hear a liberal speak, I’m struck by how simple their worldview is: people hate Hilary Clinton because she’s a woman, Obama because he’s black, and George Soros because he’s Jewish. Everything is explained by reference to bigotry, there is no need to know what the supposed “victims” have done to arouse hatred. This is to point out that most people are simply not very smart, that they will resist any attempt to make them understand more because there is a deplorable limit to their cognitive capacity. Beyond this, people are more invested in keeping their beliefs consistent than in verifying them, and changing them, through empirical observation. Recall Kuhn’s description of how difficult it is for “paradigm shift” to happen. People are also highly invested in keeping their knowledge about the world consistent with their “Deep Story”. When confronted with factual evidences to the contrary, namely, *when forced to learn*, people will simply fall back on the previous evidences that they have already selected to confirm their paradigm and Deep Story.

The inertia of people’s mind, their refusal to learn, is also due to the fact that their self-esteem and class interests and the interests of the economic regime are getting in the way. The liberal progressives are highly invested in the selective evidence process because their paradigm justifies their actions, makes them feel good about themselves, and protects their self-interests. The feminist has for her whole life been paying attention to incidents which prove that society favors boys at her expense while ignoring contrary incidents because this justifies her action in demanding society to compensate her and makes her feel morally superior. The typical liberal progressive wants to promote immigration because this enables him to express his moral superiority (that he is full of “love” and “acceptance”), and he will not tolerate other people spoiling his mood by pointing out that immigration is bad for the environment.<sup>167</sup>

Then, the liberal progressives refuse to learn anything new because, as the academic middle-class, they have to defend their class interests, their dominant position in society. Because it is ultimately about domination and justifying domination, you can never expect the academic middle-class and their social

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167 All this of course comes straight out of Lippmann’s *Public Opinion*: “A pattern of stereotypes is not neutral. It is not merely a way of substituting order for the great blooming, buzzing confusion of reality... It is the guarantee of our self-respect; it is the projection upon the world of our own sense of our own value, our own position and our own rights...” “A world which turns out to be one in which those we honor are unworthy, and those we despise are noble, is nerve-racking...” (Chapter VII, Stereotypes As Defense.)

justice warriors to one day practice such simple wisdom about communication as Carnegie's "Try honestly to see things from the other person's perspective" or Jordan Peterson's "Listen as if you could learn something from the other person". You would think that, for the sake of a harmonious society, the practice of such wisdom is especially important for those on the left since they currently dominate the media, public opinion, and universities and everyone is forced to become more or less familiar with their way of seeing things. It is on the other hand rarely reported in mainstream media what people classified as "the right" (all the varieties) really think and want: they are simply stereotyped as "hate" or "heteropatriarchy" or "white supremacist" and so on. Both the activists and mainstream media stereotype those who don't agree with them as a way to summarily discredit them and dismiss them. This is simply how the dominant class treats the subjugated class throughout history. Effective communication is necessary if one is looking for the truth such as in Socratic dialogues, wants to understand why the other party disagrees with oneself, or is seeking compromise with the other party such as is the ideal in Habermas' notion of communicative action as the foundation of a democratic regime. But, because it is about class domination, people on the left simply have no interest in knowing what is true and why some people disagree with them or in compromising with people who have other interests. Like their predecessors, the bourgeoisie and the feudal lords, the liberal progressives that make up the academic middle-class are in the business of defending their class interests – maintaining their dominant position in the new society of singularities and flexibility – which is furthermore equivalent to perpetuating the new economic structure (here, the culturalized economy and flexible capitalism). The sun will rise from the West when, one day, you find the social justice warriors running our universities actually wanting to "listen" to other points of view or "see things from other people's perspectives". When the game is about rooting out oppositions and achieving domination, in the interest of one's class and the new economic structure, there is definitely no mood for learning. Someone who genuinely listens to the other side and wants to make an objective judgment about them such as Cassie Jaye<sup>168</sup> or Arlie Russell Hochschild are extraordinarily rare entities among the academic middle-class. Most people are simply not on earth to use their brain to understand anything, whether they are academic or not, and people in power never have any notion of this thing called the "desire to learn".<sup>169</sup>

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168 The maker of "The Red Pill".

169 The lesson I have derived from Machiavelli's insistence on the necessity of religion to the well-functioning of a political order (*Discourses*, 1.11, "Of the religions of the Romans") is this. The purpose of human beings' belief system is not to capture the truth – people do not form their belief systems in order to understand reality or know the truth – but in order to keep their social system functioning. The Romans didn't know that, if they violated their oath, nothing would in fact happen: their belief about the supernatural power of the oath was erroneous. But such belief really made the Roman society function smoothly. Hence many philosophers have observed the role played by the belief in God in keeping society in order. This fact (about the original function of the human mind) may justify the Straussian position that rulers must use deception (religions, fantasies, noble lies) to keep people virtuous and in order. As a leftist conservative, I still hold fast to Lippmann's position that an organization of experts be set up to educate citizens about what is going on in the world and society – a suggestion that would certainly be laughable to the Straussians. But I believe that it will work as long as people have low enough self-esteem. And so the conclusion of this section is that, in order to remove the corruption of human nature (referred to earlier in the comment about (among other nations) China's corrupting of American society), i.e., to reinstate human beings' desire to learn and to communicate (the political ideals of intelligence and communication), we must first of all rid ourselves of class antagonism and class interests. Perhaps, for example, by reindustrializing. Then, we can carefully separate facts from preferences. After that, we can finally inquire whether there is an alternative to Bilderberg's version of sustainable civilization. For certainly, the Bilderbergers have favored the path of planetary economic development not only because it is in their business interests, but also because it is the easier way (it being impossible to persuade people to give up human rights and so on and forget about

For these reasons, the use of the word “academic” to designate the new dominant class – just because they are all college graduates – is truly unfortunate. Most of the people that make up the “academic middle-class” are quite ignorant and stupid and do not have an open-mind or the humility to recognize the limitation of their own cognitive capacity and to want to learn from others. They are not critical thinkers, and do not have the capacity to reflect on themselves to understand why they believe what they believe. Most of them are in fact not that educated – only a tiny minority among them are. (A bachelor degree really doesn’t mean anything nowadays.) They are on board with the anti-Russia war propaganda campaign on mainstream media because they are ignorant of past US relations with Russia. They demonize and stereotype their opponents on the right because they have no interest in understanding other people but are only interested in domination. They believe their way of understanding things is correct because they aren’t smart enough to get out of their partial view of reality. Even when one of their own points out that their ideology does not always bring positive results, they quickly silence him being more interested in protecting their class interests and the interests of the new capitalist system.<sup>170</sup> The resultant brain-death and blindness are notable because, throughout the Western world, the “mainstream” (the new academic middle-class) has been defining their opponents on the right as people who can’t help themselves not only because they hate and are trying to defend their (white male) privileges but also because they are stupid and uneducated – while defining themselves as “the light of reason” battling the tide of injustice, ignorance, and uneducation. The reality is either the exact opposite or a mere battle between “dumb and dumber”.

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consumption).

170 Thus, when Robert Putnam produces a study showing that increased diversity in a city causes everyone to be less trusting of other people and less inclined to talk to everyone else, even members of his or her own ethnic group, he is condemned by the mainstream left and has to be silent about his research results. For a summary of his study, see Deutschlandfunk report, “Schildkrötenmentalität und ethnische Diversität”, 14.10.2016: [https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/schildkroetenmentalitaet-und-ethnische-diversitaet.691.de.html?dram:article\\_id=50067](https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/schildkroetenmentalitaet-und-ethnische-diversitaet.691.de.html?dram:article_id=50067). For a report about how other sociologists have refuted Putnam’s study to enforce the dominant leftist paradigm, see Daisy Grewal, “Does Diversity Create Mistrust”, Scientific American, 29.11.2016: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/does-diversity-create-distrust>.