

CAPITALISM AS A NORMATIVE SOCIAL ORDER? THE INTERWEAVING OF INDIVIDUALISM AND MARKET SOCIETY

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INTRODUCCIÓN

Karl Polanyi (2001) claims that the modern economy grew up from a very distinctive socio-economic formation: the auto-regulated market. Even if markets can be found in almost every human history phase, they were embedded to other social formations and were regulated by wider social rules, as communal laws or religious precepts. Nonetheless, according to him, this type of modern markets is characterized by its self-sufficiency and its alleged independence from societal affairs; but, more striking, by its ability to export its rules and impose its needs to other spheres of society (in Marx's words, and—and later retaken by Habermas—to *colonize* them). Thereby, Polanyi termed as *market society* to the type of society where modern economy landed, meaning that its social reproduction is highly attached to economic currents.

However, Polanyi's work took another standpoint from that of Karl Marx and Jürgen Habermas. It is this former thinker who stated that the critique of the economy arose as a critique of capitalism (Marx, 1978), the economic formation that has

RESUMEN: Este trabajo es un esfuerzo por indagar la forma en que el capitalismo, al principio una forma de producción e intercambio de bienes, terminó por convertirse en una especie de orden social normativo. Para ello, se hace un repaso general del desarrollo del individualismo moderno para saber cómo el capitalismo, específicamente como economía de mercado, ha afectado al desarrollo de la cultura. Se alega que un tipo específico de comunidad humana, la sociedad de mercado, emerge a la par que el capitalismo y de un giro moral al capitalismo, en la forma del sí mismo como mercancía, elemento que se vuelve necesario para su reproducción de capitalismo.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Individualismo, capitalismo, economía de mercado, moral, sí mismo

ABSTRACT: This essay is an attempt to examine how capitalism, at its outset a system of goods' production and exchange, ended up turning into a form of normative social order. In order to do so, I will make an overall review of modern individualism development to survey how capitalism, particularly market economy, has disturbed cultural development. I then allege that a specific type of human community, the market society, rises pairing capitalism and gives it a moral turn to capitalism, in the form of the self as commodity, component that becomes necessary for capitalism to reproduce itself.

KEY WORDS: Individualism, capitalism, market society, morals, self

been steering world's economy for, at least, almost five centuries (Braudel, 1979). From the outset, this critique also took place as a critique of the society in which capitalism was made possible, or at least part of it. The increasing and overwhelming advance of capitalism in the previous centuries was aided by the imposition of an ideology that framed class differences and attempted to justify the social configuration brought about by accumulation of capital and surplus at expense of exploitation and expropriation (Althusser, 2014). Thus, for capitalism to be unfolded it needed a minimal normative justification.

In that regard, I'm interested about the possibility of a normative structuration of society under the aegis of capitalism as an *institutionalized social order*, as Nancy Fraser (2014) has termed it. What I mean by normative structuration is the manner in which a society reaches a degree of integration by the means of a sanctioned morality. In that sense, the institutionalization of free market social organizations is also deemed as a way to reach cultural legitimation for the economy and, allegedly, a "good life". Thus, society is also reproduced insofar as it complies with capitalist values, such as *indivi-*

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dualism, for they are deemed not only necessary or functional but as worthy and valuable (Weber, 2002).

The questions that will guide this essay are aimed to shedding light over topics such as the following: how is it possible that capitalism as an institutionalized social order is reproduced by normative means? That is, to what extent does capitalism is not only reproduced by labor, exchange, appropriation, and exploitation, but also normatively—in contrast to simple economic and political terms?

In order to try to formulate a proper answer to that question, I shall begin by briefly characterizing capitalism as a social order, particularly as a market society. In the second section, I will argue that *individualism* can be added to an account of capitalist social practices as a sort of normativity which run inside specific practices.

PRODUCTION AND REPRODUCTION OF CAPITALISM IN SOCIETY

According to Karl Polanyi (2001), Industrial Revolution was only possible by the emergence of a *market society*. Capitalism and the Industrial Revolution didn't occur only as a combination of certain material conditions and technical and material progress, but by a set of dislocations in the social life broadly speaking, from labor relationships to the structure family (Nisbet, pp. 21-44; Mies, pp. 175-185). Such social transformations consist in the shift from a subsistence-driven economy to an economy based in *profit*. Social relationships are thus modified, and money introduced as a medium between them. The economy is thereafter raised as an independent sphere of sociality granted with legally safeguarding from the interference from other spheres of society, as religion. The economic role of the government was then to foster or slow the pace of economic change, as well as to control the access to the market (Sommers and Block, 2005).

After a harsh process of slowly but fierce imposition, capitalism has sei-

zed over social reproduction and has dominated most of world's economic mode of production (Quijano and Wallerstein, 1991). As Karl Polanyi brilliantly saw, the *capitalist turn*—as a *civilization turn*—entailed changes in the way in which labor and land were regarded: they were commodified in order to be incorporated as materials into the process of production. Even the social conception and definition of labor and land was transformed. They ceased to be entities by their own, outside capitalist productive process, to be deemed not only as resources but as means of production. Land was regarded as an opportunity area, "waiting" to be exploited, as a usable thing, not as an entity by itself. As well, labor was a considered as productive force and subjected to a set of measurements—and a measure itself—able to be increased or decreased¹. Labor was taken away from humans and was considered as part of the productive process (Moore, 2010).

It means that capitalism was not only imposed—though it may be still being enforced there where capitalist production haven't been secured (Harvey, 2003)—but also *socialized* (Marcuse, 1967). In transforming social relationships into economic ones, the result was the other way around: economic relationships were transformed into social ones. The capitalist economy was embedded into the society, first, as a material process in which social relationships were forced to be adapted to the industrial mode of production, one that required large amounts of almost everything that can be socially produced: work, people, education, laws, among others (Fraser, 2012). Second, probably as a consequence of the latter, the market was imposed as a model for social order (Polanyi, 2018). That way, not only the means and relationships of material production were turned up-

side down to fit into capitalism, but also capitalism was re-embedded in society morally, as normative reproduction of capitalism.

It was a double movement: on the one hand, capitalism is imposed; on the other hand, it is socialized. In that sense, capitalism cannot be a mere economic system or a mode of production. It is also a social order. Nancy Fraser (2014) notes that markets are self-producers of their own needs and that they seize over non-fully marketized aspects social reproduction, as householding, in what she terms as "functional imbrications" or "dependence" of markets on society. (pp. 59-60) Capitalism is not a merely economic system; it is rather a social system. Its main feature is to consider everything not only as a commodity, but also as *economic*. Moreover, capitalism as a social order does not only means the reification of all social life spheres, for it resorts on gray areas of non-marketized activities (Fraser, 2012). Thus, capitalism is an institutionalized social order, in which all the spheres of sociality are intermingled and affected by productive relationships².

In all these matters, boundaries of what is comprised into the capitalist reproduction and what is not are meaningful, because these boundaries are drawn on normative stances that are regarded as "non-capitalist" (Fraser, 2012, 2014). These "separate" realms enter in competition to rule over that spot, as in the case of public and private spheres, which establishes the boundaries for the different ways that power and violence are exerted: capitalism has resorted, internally, on the division of society into classes and externally on law and military force (Harvey, 2003). However, these kinds of boundaries do not exist as definitive limits between opposite spheres, rather "...this view suggests that it

¹ See also Foucault, 1995.

² To better grasp the depth of what such institutionalization of capitalism means, see also Walzer (1983) "Complex Equality", in *Spheres of Justice*.

would be wrong to construe society, polity and nature romantically, as 'outside' capitalism and as inherently opposed to it." (Fraser, 2014, p. 69).

Hence, it can be stated that capitalism is also a mode of symbolic reproduction of the social world. In the latter sense, Jürgen Habermas (1984) claims that everyday consciousness had become fragmented by the particularizing action of systemic understanding, which means that everyday life is realized not by means of common understanding and communication but by rather "mechanic" means of interchange, which just need a minimum degree of interaction to be fulfilled (pp. 334-36). In that regard, Habermas states that society is now being individualized and disjointed by the increasing division of labor and the differentiation of life spheres. And this is what paves the way for the colonization of the *lifeworld*, understood as: "...the symptoms of reification appearing in developed capitalist societies by the fact that the media-controlled subsystems of the economy and the state intervene with monetary and bureaucratic means in the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld." (p. 356), which go along with further division of labor, differentiation of traditional forms of life, interaction mediated by economic or bureaucratic roles, transformation of citizens into "clients", and a double movement of mass legitimation and disaffection with democracy (Marcuse, 1967; Streeck, 2012).

As well, capitalist normative reproduction seems to be a matter of socialization and propaganda, useful for capitalist goals (Althusser, 2014; Ellul, 1973). Capitalist values and norms seem to be socially secured by repetition and imposition—as systemic requirements they are—rather than by a social agreement of what is the best way to live, I mean, as a *good way* to live. As such, they perhaps lie outside of a sphere of "pure" values and norms and just follow the pattern of the kind of social reproduction needed for capitalism to survive. The

specific ways in which socialization of capitalist values is attained varies according to the traditional culture in which is taught.

Moreover, in the latter sense, capitalism cannot be described as external or superposed to society. It is rooted in the very source of social reproduction. It not only needs society's supplies and resorts on non-paid household and nature, but it also seems to be part of these processes (Fraser, 2014, Moore, 2014). Hence, it is problematic to give a complete account of modern cultures, especially in industrial or post-industrial societies, without bearing in mind capitalism as one of their main forms of reproduction, if not the principal, particular for post-industrial societies. Capitalism is not only paired with these cultures but rather integrated to them. The problem of the critique of capitalism as a critique of the society in which it takes place, thus, emerges.

INDIVIDUALISM AS A MORAL DIMENSION OF CAPITALISM

However accurate the description Polanyi makes of how capitalism emerged, there is an underlying and overwhelming moral critique of market economy. In his account, it seems that market economy is foremost a western civilization's moral deviation. In that regard Polanyi is paralleling Marx. The advent of capitalism—in Polanyi's perspective, the self-regulated markets—is a deformation of humanity, but *humanity* in a broader sense. By regarding humans' life as labor, and the latter as a commodity subjected to price markets, self-regulated markets are devouring human more significant abilities.³

The metaphor of the "satanic mill" Polanyi introduced meant that physical and life worlds are subjected to market economy in the form of commodities. What is dreadful about

this is that not only everything has a price but that everything can be regarded as a commodity and economical. This is not only a conceptual but an empirical objectification of the world. Hence, after capitalism, are we able still to speak about society as we commonly understood it? In what kind of social order do we live in? It is society or, as it were, a sort of "extended market sociality", in the sense of society as a mimic or as a market supplier-consumer? Perhaps society cannot be equated plain and simple to market or as its provider, but the same cannot be said about a market detached from society.

So far, we have seen that the rise of capitalism as the most extended type of economic mode of production required of a change in which the society was reproduced. Capitalist economy thus emerged not only as an economic but also as social system. In order to be sustained, it took large amounts of both natural and human resources. It changed the way in which human socialization was made in terms of environment and community and changed/created social institutions to fulfill its requirements. As such, it comprises most of life spheres—both public and private, and natural—and brought about a society which is devoted to production and consumption. Its social paradigm is that of the market as an auto-regulated sphere in which most human activities are oriented to profit-making enterprises. In a word, capitalism not only changed the world in an economic sense but also morally speaking.

Accordingly, Rahel Jaeggi (2016) states that "... the term "capitalism" shall designate a social *and* economic system, so encompassing the whole ensemble of economic, social, cultural, and political dimensions marking the way of life in capitalistically constituted societies." (p. 46). In these regards, Jaeggi's aim is to give

³ That critique can be related to that made by Michel Foucault in relation to biopolitics (1995) Not only man, but *humanity*, is smashed by the advance of market society. Market economy takes for its own sake the most of humans' capabilities.

an account of three different types of critique: first, a functional one, which considers capitalism as an inefficient social and economic system; second, the moral, contends capitalism as unfair on the grounds that it produces workers exploitation; and third, the ethical, which alleges that life under capitalism is bad and *alienated*. (Jaeggi, 2016)

Related to the first one, Jaeggi contends that the understanding of economy in social sciences has been a *narrowed* one, even for Marxist theorists as those of the emerged from the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt. Hence, she seeks to apprehend the economy as a set of social practices that are embedded in a wider scheme of social action and thus create what she calls a *form of life*, that means, a system of practices related to one and other which are constituent of sociality, and as such learned and not fully consciously accepted, but at the same time able to interpretation and deployed individually (2017, pp. 166-167). For example, property, the market, and labor cannot be merely related to other social practices, as economic rights and moral rules of exchange, but as part of a wider socio-normative structure in which their very meaning is given. That way, capitalism, as a particular type of economy, relates to a set of social practices that made it possible just as it creates its own conditions of possibility.

Hence it seems that the moral critique of exploitation can only be understood as an ethical critique, as a critique of capitalism as a *form of life*. Thus, from an ethical point of view, Jaeggi argues, life under a capitalist aegis is alienated. This claim brings to the fore the relation of ourselves to the world as an objectification of life relations. Here, it is of utmost importance to understand that capitalism has a *culture* that demands following and membership. Commodities seem to have a value that is not only economic but ethically non-neutral: commodities are *valuated*, and

thus there is something ethical about all the relationships surrounding its existence.

In that regard, a shift in the meaning of *value* can also be traced. Value takes two meanings: value as an element of production and value as moral worthiness. In relation to the latter, *individualism* is placed in a particular situation among other capitalist values.

It is worth noting that, as C. B. Macpherson (1964) pointed out, a particular type of individualism, a *possessive individualism*, is attached to early liberal political theory, chiefly in England during 17th and 18th centuries. Possessive individualism highlights the self as a property—as the first and original property—from which natural rights are derived, especially the right to property, which in turn is defined as the “exclusive control”; and the *individual* as “the proprietor of his own capacities” (p. 263).

It is perhaps John Locke who better defines that idea. According to him, individuals, in the state of nature, are all free and equal, they enjoy the fruit of their work and organize with other to carry undertakings. All three freedom, equality and property are thus natural rights, that means, they're endowed to every human being by nature to them be enjoyed. As human ravenousness and aggression is perpetually lurking and threatening everything precious is in life, the social contract must be formed to protect and defend natural rights. Property, as a natural right, springs from *labor* as a human capacity to turn nature into something usable and valuable: it is natural to individuals not just to work but to create objects which facilitates their life. That way, property is the immediate result of labor invested into nature.

As well, in the early 19th century Alexis de Tocqueville soon acknowledged that there was a problem with it. In a famous quote, he stated that: “Individualism is a reflective and peaceable sentiment that disposes each

citizen to isolate himself from the mass of those like him, and to withdraw to one side with his family and his friends, so that after having thus created a little society for his own use, he willingly abandons society at large to itself.” (p. 482). Tocqueville warned that the growth of equality in democratic societies was attached to an increasing individualism that will ultimately threaten the whole system. Individualism was then understood as part of individual political freedom and democratization, but its relationship with capitalism was left out of sight.

Individualism, then, is neither a new phenomenon in modern societies not brought about by capitalism itself. It was rather a cultural or a civilization change which came lately to couple with the dominant mode of economic production. Individualism in the modern sense can be traced back to the Reformation (Fromm, 1969), with the sprung out of religious freedom as an individual right, which was since then associated to individuality and political liberties, and then as a *theme* during the Enlightenment, in which individualism was a result in the search of one's authenticity in the midst of a society that seemed to oppress individual expressiveness and worth, as well as the rise of a new kind of nuclear familiar model and economic growth, one that rested in overseas trade (Taylor, 1992). Individualism then was not merely a trait of the new “economic man”, as preconized by Adam Smith, but also the development of a novel consciousness of the self that claimed the recognition of one's value and a place in history.

Smith recognized such element as a moral element of both market economy and capitalism. According to him, self-interest is central to his understanding of human behavior and economic interactions (1982a). In his view, self-interest refers to the natural inclination of individuals to pursue their own well-being, happiness, and satisfaction of their desires. However,

Smith's understanding of self-interest is nuanced and goes beyond mere selfishness. Smith believed that individuals are not solely driven by narrow, short-term self-interest but also by a broader, long-term perspective. As well, in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1982b), Smith states that individuals have an innate capacity to empathize with the emotions and experiences of others, which moderates their pursuit of self-interest. This moral sense encourages individuals to consider the impact of their actions on others and to act with benevolence, fairness, and justice.

In sum, Smith argued that self-interested behavior leads to positive outcomes for society through the mechanisms of competitive markets. He famously described how individuals, motivated by their self-interest to maximize profits or utility, unintentionally contribute to the greater good of society as if guided by an "invisible hand" (1982a). Smith believed that the pursuit of self-interest within the context of free markets and competition leads to greater efficiency, innovation, and prosperity for society as a whole. That way, Adam Smith's conception of individualism cannot be separated into purely economic or purely moral dimensions. Instead, it stands as an attempted integrated view that recognizes the interconnectedness of economic behavior and moral principles. From its outset, theorizing about market economy entailed a moral dimension as a justification.

In these matters, Marshall Berman (2009) points out to that specific development of *authenticity* as opposed to *self-interest* during 18th and 19th centuries. Based on Montesquieu and Jean-Jacques Rousseau writings, Berman claims that the self was discovered in opposition to the fetters that tradition and social status imposed over the population. As a new form of economy and politics were bringing about a new type of society, to become one-self, the individual must free himself from customs and expecta-

tions held by social conventions and brace its original *liaison* with nature. This new attitude towards the world was not only a strategy for survival and a mere adaption to times, but a moral quality to be developed and nourished, mostly in opposition to what society demanded and as a work of retrospection.

However, as Berman shows, this enterprise may also lead to what it exactly tried to oppose: to *inauthenticity*, in the form a devoid self who only pursues power and success in an attempt to fill the vacuum of finding oneself alone. Hence, utopias of social systems which should control education, economics, romantic relationships, etc., in the form of ideal or perfect human communities, sprung as a way to curb such "inauthenticity", just as, on the other hand, dreams of abandon society and living alone in the woods were thought not only as a escape from a repressive society but also as an ethic endeavor to discover the true self and keeping it from almost inevitable social *malaises*. As we now know, both ends are dead ends: the former leads to totalitarian states, while the latter just drive individuals out of their communities. Neither Montesquieu nor Rousseau, not Berman, find a satisfactory solution to this problem.

Thus, capitalism also changed the conception of what is considered *worthy*, not only in economic terms. Max Weber (2002) realized that the economic structure of the very society is directly connected to its social organization: the economic system of a given society is not only about commodity exchange and creation of wealth, but also about its interest relationships and cultural arrangements. Weber finds the "spirit" of this social organization in Protestantism, which he reconstructs as social *ethos*: capitalism had existed elsewhere in the world, but just in modern Western civilization it has acquired the category of an *ethos*. Under capitalism, earning money as become an expression of *virtue* and business enterprises

as a *spiritual calling*; capitalism thus gained a moral dimension absent in any other stage of history and in any other part of the world. "Salvation", under capitalism, became a worldliness attribute, not a celestial one. In that sense, He argued that Calvinism, fostered a worldview characterized by individualism, asceticism, and the pursuit of worldly success as a sign of divine favor. This ethic of hard work, self-discipline, and rational economic activity contributed to the rise of capitalism and reinforced individualistic values in Western societies.

As Georg Simmel (1990) remarks, the allegedly "free labor market" attained by the introduction of money as a mode of transaction and considered as an achievement of modern economy in relation to the freedom of the individual, rather created an interesting binding-unleashing dyad: it sets free but at the same time subjects. Money was a mean, a tool, and its possession was also considered of high esteem. Money, a thing, escaped from the "earthly world" and was transfigured itself as, foremost, a possibility. As well, Weber (1958) himself noted that *honor status*, and old form of stratification, turned into a form of hierarchical distinction in capitalist societies. Status, according to him, is the social honor, prestige, or esteem accorded to an individual or group by others in society. It encompasses various dimensions of social standing, including economic, social, and political factors. That way, status reflects the perceived social *worth* within the broader social hierarchy (pp. 180-195), as Anne Koenig and Alice Eagly (2014) had researched. Individuals who are ranked with a superior status are those who entail more individualistic traits, such as competitiveness and agency, in contrast to those who show communal qualities, as caring and cooperativeness.

Market society then also arises as the relations between individual proprietors, who are proprietors in so far as they are free, and the original "property" (MacPherson, 1964) they

possess is themselves, which, as such, cannot be transformed into a commodity but in the form of *labor*. That way, society is partly integrated under capitalism as relations of labor exchange in this secondary form of the self, which means that the self has turned into a commodity available in the market just as other kinds of raw materials necessary for production. This also requires someone to purchase this “raw material” who might also be in a position to need it and buy it, which, *alas*, means that this market has at least two types of “proprietors”: those who offer themselves and those who buy these selves.

The possessive individualism model then points out not only to one as a proprietor of oneself but one as a self *alienated* in the labor market. Jaeggi (2014) points out to this problem as an unresolved theme both in philosophy and contemporary society. *Alienation*, according to her, means being not able to establish meaningful connections with others, in the form of social relationships, and that a person enters a community as a self insofar one makes a self in the doing of oneself. Thus, the “unalienated self” as able to volition, not merely to achieve the object of volition, that means, is a possibility of the will rather than a material “concretion” of the self. Appropriation, thus, refers to making the self rather than possessing oneself: it is a process, not an object.

In these matters, are modern selves able to build up themselves outside the market society or rather the self is made within it? That means, can the pursue of oneself as a non-alienated self be carried out free from the economic, political, and cultural social practices of contemporary capitalism?

Hartmut Rosa states that, allegedly, it is through the individual realization that the “good life” by the individual self can be attained (1998). This author asserts that political liberalism aims to fully allow the individual to *choose* its means to search his

own definition of “good life”, both in material and ethical terms. In that sense, individualism is tightly close to economic deregulation and juridification, because liberalism seeks to free people from material dependency and secure its right to pursue their happiness. However, despite political liberalism claims that it juridically secures the individual to choose the way in which it wants to live a good life (Rawls, 1996), it seems that this “right” is highly narrowed to what capitalism necessitates to be sustained, which is an ethic of production and not of “work” (Sennet, 1998). Thus, the criterion of a “good life” that capitalism really protects and secures is *productiveness*, not every individual pursuing of happiness.

Hence, in the latter sense, political liberalism is highly attached to capitalism. It thrives to set the individual free so he can choose what kind of life and surrounding “commodities” might “furnish” its life. Rosa (1998) claims that propensity to consumerism is an internal feature of modern societies. Modern culture narrows and defines the range of options of “meaningful” objects, actions, and desires, thus giving birth to “personal identities” (also Streeck, 2012). It is in the latter sense that the “objective-spirit” of the modern self is paired with consumerism. People are meant to “choose” among a range of “options” the kind of life they want to live in accord with a set of objects and activities.⁴ In a market society, the formation of personal identities is thus driven by the *recognition* of the validity of the kind of way of life chosen. That way, what is considered as “valuable” and “right” must match with productiveness and freedom.⁵

Jean Baudrillard (2002) asserts that in the “consumer society”, as he terms certain dynamics and systemic interactions of modern western societies, is where consumption has been transformed into a social activity in opposition to a simple personal purchasing choice. That way, consumption is oriented towards the fulfillment of a desire and the search of meaning of this desire. As such, it is part of a larger process of human interaction that involves communication and value reproduction within a system of signs—which are furthermore partially signified by the very consumption—as well as it is part of a sense process production as collective phenomenon, not an individual one.

As well, “Consumer society is also the society for the apprenticeship of consumption, for the social indoctrination of consumption. In other words, this is a new and specific mode of *socialization* related to the rise of new productive forces and the monopolistic restructuring of a high output economic system.” (p. 49). As such, it is a process of adaptation to a certain collective behavior characterized by consumption as a myth of realization of one’s happiness. What is remarkable about it is that consumer society’s subject is the individual at the level of consumer-producer,⁶ who “As a producer, and as a consequence of the division of labor, each laborer presupposes all others: exploitation is for everyone. As a consumer, humans become again solitary, cellular, and at best *gregarious*” (p. 54)

But still in the “consumer society” hypothesis the economy seems to be detached from the society, as if the former has invaded the latter

⁴ “Choosing”, it seems, as a substitution of “deciding”. Is the realm of decisions also colonized by consumerism, in a way that we talk about of *choosing* a way life—or life as an object, as a product or service we “choose” among others available—instead of talk about of *deciding* how to live?

⁵ For a claim on an ethical identity, based on meaningful decisions of what is valuable in life around significant others, see Taylor 1991.

⁶ See also Streeck, 2012.

and seized over it. In some extent, as we have seen, this is what somehow happened, but it does not account for the whole story. Yet it seems difficult to think about the reproduction of society and economy as separate realms that are just systemically coupled. A coupling of this kind is much to say, due to it comprises a tight interdependence and mutual fulfillment of tasks. However, it seems that this coupling has reached another level or has gone too far, so it has been transformed into a cultural matter; more specifically, a civilization matter. That way, capitalism is not only attached to society, but presently it seems that they are rather merged. What at the outset were functional principles of capitalism that rendered it effective are now normative values of the society. What at the beginning was needed in order to deploy capitalism as an imposition to society has now attained a degree of morality.

Richard Harvey Brown (2005) remarks that, for example, in America, "...individualism is more than a social construction about self, feelings, others, and objects. It also is a moral principle in which freedom of individual action is a virtue, even if the consequences are painful, whereas constraints on it are sinful." (p. 145). Even if individualism was not brought about by capitalism, but as it did with other institutions of society, it took over it and turn it into one of its sources of reproduction. Individualism was a sort of by-product of modernity and the strength loosening—or lack of— of old social institutions, such as family, monarchy, strong Christian churches, and, at least in the American tradition, the ideal subject of democratic politics.

Modern individualism can be also traced to inner feelings as a source of morality:

Thus one may achieve competence in expressing one's feelings in settings devoid of moral commitments, but such activities reproduce rather than counterbalance the new amoral professionalism of the public

sphere. In both cases, personal or occupational distress, shortcomings, or aspirations are no longer transformed into collective moral and political narrations. Instead, the reverse is true. Public issues are often reduced to technical problems or personal troubles. Metanarratives having been disposed of, everyone has his or her own story to tell, a story that is more a calculated confession derived from media spectacles than a moral witnessing for political solidarity. As a result, what might otherwise have become self-directing, action-oriented communities remain passive audiences or transient associations of individuals bound only by the similarity of their fleeting impulses and desires (p. 157).

Individualism, in the latter sense, means the social development of a process of rationalization and instrumentalization of others as tools for one's "growth" and "enhancement", which effortlessly couples with marketization of social relations and the turning of citizens into costumers. This, as Harvey Brown remarks, not only objectifies people into products, but also detach them from public space and transforms the collective in a matter of the individual, a process that democratic governments also exploit in order to gain legitimacy (pp. 161-162; Streeck, 2012)

This kind of individualism, according to Harvey Brown, is not a result of increasing public recognition of each's subjectivity and validity in post-industrial democratic societies but a process of rationalization that drives modern individual to isolation and segregation, so people can easily withdraws society at large by the means of restricting and objectifying their social interactions (Wijaya and Nasution, 2022), or by joining communities of mutual recognition of traits and preferences, as radical identity politics or even right of left extremism. (Berger, 2018)

This process of rationalization then is not only a trait of larger social relations or of the wider economy but becomes an interpersonal feature of dealings between individuals in

everyday life. A first step into this was migration from agricultural communities to city factories in the early stages of industrialization, which, beyond from creating the market economy, tore apart communities and barely ancient forms of sociality. Karl Polanyi even depicted this process as the workings of a "Satanic Mill" when enclosures ravaged communal property and transformed land and work in commodities. A further step in late capitalism is turning persons into commodities as well, as Lauren Langman and Leonard V. Kaplan point out (1978), mostly sponsored by a narrative of freedom and self-realization, which is attainable only by severing as much as possible from one's own community and embracing consumption as the means of shaping one's authenticity.

Such commodification also works as a sort of "moral functional requirement" for capitalism because individuals are raised and socialized in the moral "value" of pursuing one's interests and desires—though they are actually related to marketization of the self and "dream jobs. Thus, what Langman and Kaplan define as "pathologies of the self" (p. 344) turn out to be factual requirements for the late capitalist society, by the means of creating the psychological need of narcissistic traits, such as exclusive high self-esteem and putting one above others, as a reflection of happiness and success, which are almost only attainable by professional accomplishment and "exhibitionist" consumption.

In that sense, Christopher Lasch (2018) identified in the late 70's that narcissism was becoming a particular trait in the American society, emphasizing on personal fulfillment and self-actualization. In both cases, there is a tendency to prioritize individual happiness and satisfaction, sometimes at the expense of deeper social connections or commitments, superficial social connections, and a lack of meaningful interpersonal bonds. Moreover, Lasch's critique of

narcissism and modern individualism recognize the influence of consumer culture on shaping individual identity and values. In modern individualistic societies, consumerism often promotes the idea that personal fulfillment can be achieved through the acquisition of material goods and experiences, contributing to the cultivation of narcissistic tendencies.

A little more need to be said in relation to individualization and self-creation in the increasing social interaction in the web, as in multi-user domains, online purchasing, and individual streaming and its spectators. As Manuel Castells (2013) defines it, the shift from traditional electronic to digital media consisted in an environment of mass communication to one of mass *self*-communication. It means that traditional media content was steered by large corporations to passive audiences, while contemporary internet media allows users to broadcast their own content to participant audiences. We are witnessing a certain development of a capitalist alienated individuality, but it's certainly not the last stage of that development. Individualism and alienation reproduce in a very similar fashion that they does in "real" life, that means, it replicates inequalities and objectification of the selves, both in the sense that these selves are shaped and furnished by the means of "features" and "objects" to attain identification, and that these "traits" are rather selected and most of the times purchased and neither acquired nor qualified (Jaeggi, 2014).

Moreover, those tendencies are regarded as the "rules" of internet's presentation of oneself. Zizi Papacharissi (2011) argues that the presentation of self on the web is not just about expressing one's identity but also about constructing and negotiating it within the context of digital platforms. Online self-presentation involves a complex interplay between personal agency and the affordances and constraints of the digital environment, so that individuals engage in various

strategies to manage their online identities, including self-disclosure, self-presentation, and impression management. These strategies are influenced by social norms, cultural practices, and the technological features of the platforms they use. News anchors and journalists, for example, "brand" themselves in social media in order to reach wider audiences, but there is also a "push" from their companies to do so. When on-line, journalists often struggle with keeping their accounts more professional or more personal, dilemma which is easier to solve by free-lance journalists, who have the chance to engage more deeply with audiences (Brems, et al., 2017).

AS A CONCLUSION

From an analytic point of view, capitalism and morality are two separate conceptual accounts which has their own traits. However, historically speaking, they are intermingled: market society was only possible by the combining forces of capitalism and morals, as, for example, individualism. Contemporarily, it is not possible to give a reliable explanation of capitalism without taking individualism into account and *vice versa*, individualism historical development is intertwined to market economy. Capitalism is not, and perhaps never was, merely an economic system. In that sense, the difference between previous economic arrangements, as Karl Polanyi notes, is that the latter were subdued to other social spheres, as religion of kinship, whereas capitalism puts that relation upside-down. Then, capitalism does not expel morality from its functioning, but reshuffles it: it becomes, as Nancy Fraser aptly puts it, a new institutionalized social order, but "new" in the sense of "other" or a modern one, that replaces older ones.

Morality, accordingly, in a market society, rearranges to such institutionalized order. In modern in-

dividualism, I argue, we can find such coupling: individual property was regarded as natural right, an alleged individual tendency to commodify supported a new form of production and consumption, individual hard work and material retribution were increasingly deemed as God's blessings, paired with the ideal of a detached self from society and personal a professional progress as moral improvement, up to the point that the very self, not only one's work and property, is considered a product, just as happened to land and labor centuries ago, and even contemporary media platforms expedite and facilitate that process.

Capitalism, thus, as every other social order, encompassed the rest of society spheres, including politics and morals. In the historical and conceptual development of individualism, as I tried to show, we can find how a market society has taken place and how capitalism steers contemporary humanity fate.

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