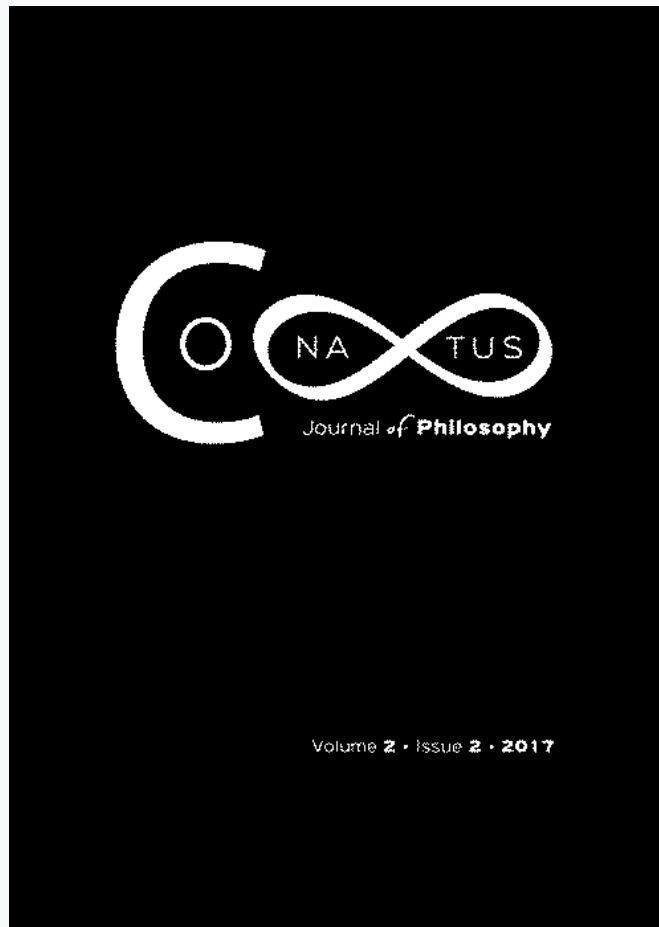


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Debt and sad affects in the society of control¹

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Abstract

The article presents an analysis of the notion of debt in the context of Deleuze's philosophy of affect. The interpretation presented on the following pages is "indebted" to Lazzarato's conception of the notion of debt as a figure of subjectivity typical for capitalism. Debt is understood as an assemblage of sad passions and considered in relation to social transformations, that have led to contemporary societies of control. The article shows the connection between the concept of debt and the process of individualization characteristic for contemporary society. Firstly, the concepts of control, debt and affect in the philosophy of Deleuze are put into consideration. Secondly, their relation to the forces and assemblages typical for contemporary societies is discussed. In order to grasp the social significance of the philosophical analysis, the article involves a sociological excursion that demonstrates sociological interpretation of the processes that were described in terms of philosophical analysis in the main body of the text.

In *The Making of the Indebted Man*, Maurizio Lazzarato claims that the subject of late capitalism is the indebted man. On the one hand, liabilities shape class relations, while on the other hand indebtedness is a tool for making subjectivity appropriate to class relations. Following Friedrich Nietzsche, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Lazzarato stresses that debt became infinite with the beginning of Christianity. The shift to infinite debt or 'guilt' occurred because of the emergence of despotism and monotheism, which are new forms of social and religious life: "The particularity of Christianity lies in the fact that it places us not only within a system of debt, but also within a system of 'interiorized debt'."² Sin is the main concept that underlies the mechanism of guilt, which cannot be redeemed since the creditor belongs to the sphere of the sacrum. The infinite relation of indebtedness was inherited by capitalism, which made debt immanent through its "secularization" on the economic level.³ The concept

¹ The following text is revised version of the author's presentation given at the Deleuze and the Passions conference, Rotterdam, 17.05.2014.

² Maurizio Lazzarato, *The Making of the Indebted Man: An essay on the Neoliberal Condition*, trans. Joshua D. Jordan (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2012), 78.

³ Ibid., 77–78.

of debt refers to the power that captures people's capacity to act. This capture happens on two levels: on the level of political and market institutions, where the state acts as an apparatus of capture, and on the level of individualization, where it is connected to the passionnal regime as the main mode of subjectification in capitalism.

On the following pages—"indebted" to Lazzarato's interpretation—the notion of debt is understood as an assemblage of sad passions and considered in relation to social transformations that have led to contemporary societies of control.⁴ Unlike Lazzarato's essay, the main topic of this chapter will be the connection between the concept of debt—encompassing varying assemblages of affects and passions—and individualization. Firstly, I consider the concepts of control, debt and affect. Secondly, I discuss their relation to the forces and assemblages typical for contemporary societies. In order to grasp the social meaning of the philosophical analysis my discussion will involve a sociological excursion, demonstrating the social processes that previously were described in terms of philosophical analysis.

Control and subjectification

Deleuze uses the notion of "society of control" in an interview with Antonio Negri⁵ and in a short article entitled: "Postscript on the Societies of Control."⁶ Control is the latest mutation of power and can be seen as a further development of Michel Foucault's concept of modes of power characteristic for modern societies. Control operates through 'soft' (i.e. they do not recall threat of physical coercion) and open assemblages, unlike the enclosed spaces of the panopticon, factory or prison, which are characteristic of disciplinary power.⁷

*Confinements are molds, distinct moldings, while controls are a modulation, like a self-transmuting molding continually changing from one moment to the next or like a sieve whose mesh varies from one point to another.*⁸

*Control is short-term and rapidly shifting, but at the same time continuous and unbounded, whereas discipline was long-term, infinite, and discontinuous. A man is no longer a man confined but a man in debt.*⁹

⁴ Here, stress will be put on a less obvious and compelling aspect of control than cyber technology. For sociological descriptions of changing assemblages of technology and (institutional) power see Michalis Lianos, "Dangerization and the End of Deviance: The Institutional Environment," *British Journal of Criminology* 40, no. 2 (2000): 261-278.

⁵ Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations: 1972-1990*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 169-176.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 177-182.

⁷ This does not imply that in societies where the power of control dominates the disciplinary power and its typical machines disappear. The notion of control (or discipline, or any other) refers to the predominant type of power in a particular time and space.

⁸ Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 178-9.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 181.

The power of control operates through cybernetic machines which facilitate constant modulation of individuals and appropriation of singularities. However, as Deleuze points out, what counts are the collective assemblages that the machines enter. In other words, what creates control is not the usage of cyber technology, but rather assemblages of power which are typically continuous and flexible. This means that control recognizes and connects with the processes that take place in society. Control, being *a sieve with a transmuting mesh*, operates through an open system. It is infinite in the sense that it does not divide one's life (or social roles) into closed entities, but "transmutes" it over the course of time; from school to work, and from work to retirement (think of lifelong learning). Control is much harder to perceive and oppose, since power has become immanent, whereas in disciplinary society power used to be external, exercised by disciplinary institutions.¹⁰ Therefore, the term "power of control" is to some extent misguiding. For Deleuze, society is not external to the individual, but rather a necessary milieu and a condition for human beings to live. This is why notions of individuality, originality, and authenticity belong to the dictionary of the very same social assemblage which creates subjects free from external influences. On a second, theoretical level, control refers to the creation of subjectivity, for which "infinite" means "immanent". Power needs to be understood twofold: as the power to act or to "affect and be affected"—that is, as potentiality (*puissance*)—, and as an external relation of forces, or social power (*pouvoir*).¹¹ Besides visible power relations, there is always another factor, namely *socialization*. Socialization is the manner of creating subjects in a specific time and place. In the latest mutation of capitalism, control is accompanied by a specific mode of subjectification which in *A Thousand Plateaus* is called the *passional regime of signs*.¹² A regime of signs is "*any specific [linguistic] formalization of expression*"¹³ that is related to other fields and practices that are non-linguistic: "*there is always a form of content that is simultaneously inseparable from and independent of the form of expression, and the two forms pertain to assemblages that are not principally linguistic.*"¹⁴ The discursive content is strongly related to social and political structures, with technology and techniques used in a particular time and place (*dispositif*). A semiotic system is never pure; it is always a mixture of various semiotic regimes. Deleuze and Guattari, however, extracted traits characterizing four types of semiotic regimes: *presignifying*, *signifying*, *postsignifying* and *countersignifying* semiotics. Semiotic regimes creates a different regime of signs (paranoid and *passional* are of higher importance here as they refer to subjectification in modern societies). The *passional* regime, which is connected to *postsignifying* semiotics, is described as follows:

¹⁰ For example, prisons, schools, factories, all of which based on system of penalties and function according to strict rules.

¹¹ Brian Massumi, "Notes on the Translation and Acknowledgements", in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), xvii.

¹² Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 120.

¹³ Ibid., 111.

¹⁴ Ibid.

There is no longer a signifier-signified relation, but a subject of enunciation issuing from the point of subjectification and a subject of the statement in a determinable relation to the first subject. There is no longer sign-to-sign circularity, but a linear proceeding into which the sign is swept via subjects.¹⁵

Subjectification is a key process here. Deleuze and Guattari see the Cartesian *cogito* (the reasonable, accountable and -what is even more important- individualized and professing one) as an example of the kind of subjectivity that is created in the passionnal regime. At the same time the individualized ego is an outcome of a strange socialization which subjects it to the society in which it does not believe. In other words, regimes of signs as part of a semiotic system are modes of socialization, which means that they can be interpreted as another attempt made by philosophical duo of Deleuze and Guattari- after *Anti-Oedipus*- to describe the social. The first one, made in *Anti-Oedipus*, based analysis on the notion of social machines.

Semiotic regimes can be arranged in a series: presignifying-signifying-postsignifying-countersignifying. In the case of social machines, these are series of territorial-despotic-capitalist machines which correspond to the series of regimes of signs.¹⁶ The series do not coincide, however, because they do not exhibit the same phenomena, but rather present alternative manners of conducting a philosophical analysis of society. In the case of semiotic regimes stress is put on the psychological dimension of socialization (modes of subjectification), whereas social machines refer also to a dimension of this process different from the psychological one, i.e. the historical, structural dimension. Hence, these are two models of analysis: the one based on semiotic regimes refers to language as an important subjectifying factor, while the other one uses the notion of social machines. The latter can be called a Marxist model of analysis, because desire is conceived here in terms of production and its relation to the *socius* (the social and its structure). The birth of society is at the same time the birth of the subject, because of which the notion of socialization—and individualization as its type—can be understood as a synonym for subjectification.

Both series of semiotic regimes and social machines present the genealogy of subjectivity inspired by Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*. The first, "primitive" machine corresponds to presignifying semiotics: the sign does not have the power of enunciation of a subject nor is it fixed and stable. Moreover, the inscription on the body (mnemotechnics) and the establishment of the subject-debtor, as was shown in the *Genealogy of Morals*,¹⁷ takes place in a collective which is not yet organized in a form of State. Signifying semiotics is initiated when the State overcodes the

¹⁵ Ibid., 127.

¹⁶ They can be compared with Foucault's sovereignty-discipline-biopolitics/security.

¹⁷ According to Nietzsche painful inscriptions on the body were the preliminary condition for establishment of individual as a subject who can remember and make promises. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, ed. Walter Kaufmann, trans. Walter Kaufmann and Reginald J. Hollingdale, published together with *Ecce Homo*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 60–64.

presignifying semiotics. That means that on the level of social organization human position in the group is now dependent on ones social and “economic” functions, features of his or her work (specialization). The political regime takes shape of despotic, aristocratic one. In *Mille plateaux* this shift is consider from a poststructuralist point of view where modes of subjectification are having semiotic character. Presignifying semiotics becomes signifying which leads to a despotic regime that can be read as a genetic basis for modern socialization. In the despotic social machine, the signifying regime of signs is characterized by circularity and infinity (every sign belongs to a chain that creates circles of interpretation; it is possible for a sign to change a chain—to be subjected under another center—but not to escape the system). The center is transcendent: “*the infinite set of signs refers to a supreme signifier presenting itself as both lack and excess (the despotic signifier, the limit of the system's deterritorialization) [...]*”¹⁸ Signifying semiotics function along the lines of sovereign and disciplinary power in which the state apparatus is equal to (the body of) the sovereign-despot. At the same time it is the machine/regime where capitalism proceeds and develops. The instantaneous accumulation and expansion characteristic for capitalism comes to fruition in the next regime: the postsignifying regime. Here also the State is an important figure of power, although it acts as an outside axis supporting capitalist machine. For the capitalist machine, the State is still an apparatus of capture and a mode of actualization. The State appropriates the labor force and turns subjects into fixed identities (citizen, teacher), whose functionings are simultaneously deterritorialized, questioned and changed by capitalism. As Deleuze and Guattari state, postsignifying semiotics:

*is defined by a decisive external occurrence, by a relation with the outside that is expressed more as an emotion than an idea, and more as effort or action than imagination ('active delusion rather than ideational delusion'); by a limited constellation operating in a single sector [...].*¹⁹

Socialization operates here through interpellation,²⁰ i.e., subjectification now implies the establishment of the ‘ego’ as a subject and a synonym of a human being. This is the most individualizing and abstract regime and because of the lack of a hierarchical point of subjectification, it is the most immanent one as well. In this sense it has a lot in common with capitalism as a machine operating through control:

A transcendent object that is more and more spiritualized, for a field of forces that is more and more immanent, more and more internalized. This describes the evolution of the infinite debt through Catholicism to the

¹⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 117.

¹⁹ Ibid., 120.

²⁰ Ibid., 130.

*Reformation. The extreme spiritualization of the despotic State and the extreme internalization of the capitalist field define bad conscience.*²¹

The relation of indebtedness that accompanied capitalism and socialization along the very beginning changes with the transformations of its machines and semiotic regimes. Before clarifying the meaning of the above quotation that forms the core of this essay, other ‘actors’—the seer, the priest, and the prophet—corresponding to those machines, need to be introduced, being key ‘elements’ of semiotic assemblages and figures of affects.

Affect and debt

The divide between affect and emotion and between subjective becoming and a subjective feeling is a new Deleuzian element in the philosophy of affects.²² Without delving into the issue, it may be said that this definitional change allows the philosopher to write a general philosophy of nature, grasping the metaphysical postulate of the univocity of being (a human being is also a part of nature) and the multiplicity of its ‘actualizations.’ For social philosophy, this change in definition has equally important consequences. Firstly, a human being as a part of nature consists of multiple relations that cannot be reduced to the unity of self-consciousness. This move does not establish the individual as an emotional rather than a rational subject. On the contrary, it exceeds the opposition of emotional–rational. Secondly, an appropriate description of contemporary society needs terms that allow us to express the complexity and immanence of power²³ relations. Although it is tempting to straightforwardly call relations of power in society “control”, this notion covers only one of multiple dimensions. Control is an element of one of the possible series of assemblages that enables us to think about contemporaneity. In order to bring the question of passions to the assemblage of control, the figures of the priest and the prophet need to be introduced as the names of those passions that connect with the mutations of debt in different social assemblages. Let us back to previously introduced problematics of regimes of signs in order to investigate the connections between them and the notion of control.

The figure of the priest came onto the scene with infinite debt, both introduced by the despotic regime (i.e., the despotic machine or the signifying regime of signs). The previous machine or regime of signs is characterized by territoriality and collective “identification”. In this assemblage, however, socialization begins. Debt, the mode of creating a subject, is finite: it can be repaid, and re-established because

²¹ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 268.

²² Jason Read, “The Affective Economy: Producing and Consuming Affects in Deleuze and Guattari”, in *Deleuze and the Passions*, ed. Ceciel Meiborg and Sjoerd van Tuinen (New York: Punctum Books, 2016).

²³ Here: *pouissance* and *pouvoir*.

there is no signifying center to which it may be assigned. For the same reason the priest does not operate here. The situation changes with the establishment of a State that consists of a two-fold apparatus of capture: the despot embodies a direct filiation with transcendence (the center of significance) and the priest interprets God's words.²⁴ Accordingly, the multiplication of these "attractors" (the State and the temple) enables the establishment of the subject, which is individual and related to the infinite and transcendent. The debt also becomes infinite: it cannot be paid off, as it is incurred to God (like in the idea of the original sin). According to Nietzsche, infinite debt, the debt that cannot be repaid, was God's creation as he was the creditor who sacrificed himself for his debtor, making the debt unrepayable.²⁵ The role of the priest is to invoke this infinite indebtedness through interpretation of God's words and human actions. The modern psychoanalyst is the last type of priest, according to Deleuze and Guattari.²⁶ He or she endlessly gives interpretations that always follow an internalized and spiritualized Oedipal triangle. The specificity of the psychoanalyst-priest lies in the fact that the true interpreter is the client herself/himself and the process of interpretation never ends.²⁷ The descriptions above refer to the signifying semiotics.

There is, however, another regime of signs which functions in contemporary capitalism in a mixture with signifying semiotics: postsignifying semiotics. These semiotics and machinic assemblages follow another figure: the prophet who stands against the State apparatus, because in creating a new community²⁸ he does not need to *interpret* God's will, as he already *incorporates* it. This means that the prophet anticipates and obeys his will, even when he avoids doing what God commanded.

Unlike the seer [priest], the prophet interprets nothing: his delusion is active rather than ideational or imaginative; his relation to God is passional and authoritative rather than despotic and signifying; he anticipates and detects the powers (puissances) of the future rather than applying past and present powers (pouvoirs).²⁹

The difference between the two types of spiritual figures lies in their relationship to power. The priest is an executor or transmitter of established relations, while the prophet does not create new ones but confines himself to changes initiated by others. In this sense, the prophet is a figure of control that does not repress in a strict sense but operates like *a sieve with a transmuting mesh*. It seems that the figure of

²⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 116.

²⁵ Ibid., 217.

²⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 114.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 360, 383.

²⁹ Ibid., 124.

the prophet coincides with the transformation of debt into capitalist debt, due to the indefinite postponement accompanied by the anteriority of the indebtedness in relation to the debtor. According to Deleuze and Guattari, in capitalism the desire turns against itself similarly as it happens with relations of forces under the postsignifying regime of signs.³⁰ The death instinct in the subject is a “negative” desire. If desire is understood in terms of forces and relations of powers (*puissances*), then the aversion of desire may be interpreted as the domination of sad affects, that is of passivity.

The priest and the prophet are the names for particular and multiple organizations of forces and their relations. In the case of the priest the relation between powers is passive, as he can only capture already existing powers. The prophet, however, has the ability to anticipate and detect future relations of forces, which gives him the power to reverse the relation of power between forces. In this sense, the term “capturing of powers to act” can be understood as describing a manner in which control and semiotic figures function in capitalism. Contrary to the priest who acts “from without”, the prophet operates “from within”. In other words, higher abstraction is followed by incorporation. Hence, the prophet does not belong to the State apparatus, which can only capture singularities and becomings. The prophet, as a figure of capitalism, does not capture, but plugs into actual processes, which contributes to the immanentization of debt in capitalism.

Individuality and class relations (a sociological interlude)

Lazzarato distinguishes three kinds of debt that simultaneously penetrate political and individual lives. Private, sovereign and social debts correspond to the spheres of operation of governmentality and the making of different kinds of subjects,³¹ such as juridical and economical, which refer to the spheres of state and market respectively. However, these figures could not cover the multiplicity of relations between those to be governed. In 1970s there was a danger of a “split” of governmentality into separate branches, which necessitated the invention of another sphere: the social. The emergence and existence of the social is strictly related to liberal governing³² and encompasses both political and economic subjects.

Nikolas Rose makes a similar diagnosis of the social sphere. However, this sociologist uses the term “governing through communities”³³ to point out the changes which occurred in the social sphere. The characteristic for contemporaneity is division, dislocation and relocation of the “social” functions performed

³⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 217.

³¹ Lazzarato, *The Making of the Indebted Man*, 122-125.

³² Ibid., 125.

³³ Nikolas Rose, “The Death of the Social? Re-figuring the Territory of Government”, in *Economy and Society* 25, no. 3 (1996): 328, 352 [reprinted in: *Governing the Present. Administering Economic, Social and Personal Life*, ed. Peter Miller and Nikolas Rose (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 85-113].

³⁴ Ibid., 339.

previously by the state. Society was a correlate of the welfare state, capturing individuals with the notions of social: protection, rights, justice, and solidarity.³⁴ At the end of the twentieth century, liberalism underwent a mutation and a new “idea” gained dominance: the community. Community brings three major changes: fragmentation (now the “point of attachment” of individuals is local and limited, but not necessarily located in particular space); the growing importance of identity discourse (identification with communities and having one’s own identity is an obligation and a calling for every individual); and the introduction of moral language and valorization (one’s social position, economic status health or lifestyle is judged ethically). The subject is seen as responsible, self-creating and reflexive as her/his bonds with the community are emotive and elective. The individual is both rational and emotional, making her/his morally responsible for herself/himself and the community.³⁵ An important attribute of the community is that it “exists and is to be achieved, yet the achievement is nothing more than the birth-to-presence of a form of being which pre-exists.”³⁶ The status of the community in contemporary society is linked to the process of individualization. According to sociologist Ulrich Beck, individualization is a mode of socialization, which is characterized by the privatization of risk in people’s lives because of the withdrawal of the nation state from its protective functions.³⁷ The individual is thought to be free in making decisions (choosing from many options) and responsible for the outcomes. Moreover, risk becomes the internalized risk of life itself (e.g. the risk of being old) and comes “from within”.³⁸ In the same manner, community time is strangely curved in the process of socialization as it is the anticipation of the future (risk, creation of identity, etc.), not the sedimentation of the past (through memory, blood ties), whereas this future is already in the past. This is a time scheme similar to that of functioning of a prophet: the future relation of forces is anticipated and “overtaken” by the prophet. For Rose, and similarly in Deleuze’s theory the anticipation of the future somehow squeezes the past, present and future in a manner that results in annihilation of the past and present. Community is always “in the making”—the prophet detects the future wishes of God. Everything takes place in the immanence of the subject. As Rose’s analysis shows, subjects need to “catch” and “stick to” the communities that will accept and support them, in order to prove and announce their social legitimization through narration about the self. Constant communication helps subjects to anchor and stabilize themselves when the symbolic reality starts to become distorted³⁹ with the “end of the social”.

³⁵ Ibid., 334.

³⁶ Ibid., 336.

³⁷ Ulrich Beck, “Loosing the Traditional: Individualization and Precarious Freedoms,” in Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, *Individualization: institutionalized individualism and its social and political consequences* (London: Sage, 2002), 1–21.

³⁸ Ibid., 2.

³⁹ Małgorzata Jacyno, “Digital technologies and technologies of the self,” in *Youth and Media. New Media and Cultural Participation*, ed. Jacek Wasilewski (Bern: Peter Lang, 2013), 87–92.

The glaring feature of contemporary capitalism is that socialization does not coincide with the structure of the society in which it takes place. Put differently, needs and aspirations are detached from the capabilities of individuals.⁴⁰ This phenomenon, where one's (structural) possibilities are detached from one's capabilities, reveals a certain passionnal subjugation to the mechanism of labor, salary and consumption, thereby securing the endurance of the employer–employee relationship.⁴¹ The Marxist-Spinozist clarification of this mechanism gives an insight into modern class relations but does not explain them fully. On the one hand, there is a constant moral valorization of social position, health, etc. These are seen as a matter of choice (of a level of education, doing sports, taking a job) and judged as good or bad decisions according to cultural patterns. For example, bad health is considered an effect of bad nutrition choices and a lack of physical activity, not as the outcome of working conditions or the lack of possibility to get specialist medical diagnosis and treatment.⁴² This kind of judgment is moral in this sense that it establishes the subject as exclusively responsible for her/his health condition and—as an effect—guilt if this condition is different from the culturally accepted pattern. On the other hand, social differences are being “culturalized” as patterns of consumption that are seemingly dependent on individual taste and creativity, whereas in fact taste and creativity are manifestations of one's class position, meaning they depend on the amount of economic and cultural capital that one has.⁴³ In individualizing societies the power of class distinctions still operates, which specifies who is and is not legitimized as a fully-fledged human being.

The aforementioned insights were reached drawing on the theory of Foucault, which resonates with the analysis of Deleuze and Guattari. Moreover, similar ideas can be discerned in the field of social sciences: Anthony Giddens' diagnosis of reflexivity, Christopher Lasch's “narcissistic personality”, or Beck's idea of individualization. Their research resonates with Lazzarato's and Rose's diagnoses of the transformations of liberalism in the second half of the twentieth century. In contemporary society responsibilities, risks and chances, which used to be assigned to the state, are increasingly being immanentized and privatized. The point of reference for individuals becomes the social and communities. The domain of the social and communities crosses the domains of the economical, political and juridical. That creates new a

⁴⁰ The lack of possibilities - membership of the lower classes - is conceived as a moral defect. Dunn's - see Elisabeth Dunn, *Privatizing Poland: Baby Food, Big Business and the Remaking of Labor* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2004), 144, 170–172) - and Lazzarato's research shows the disagreement for such categorization from those to whom it is applied. Disagreement, however, does not mean that counter discourses can easily (or ever) gain advantage.

⁴¹ Frédéric Lordon, *Willing Slaves of Capital: Marx and Spinoza on Desire*, trans. Gabriel Ash (London, New York: Verso, 2014), 30–31.

⁴² Barbara Cruikshank showed that the term “empowerment”, used in welfare programs, suggests that social exclusion or poverty are a matter of “believing in oneself” and making choices. Barbara Cruikshank, “Revolutions within: self-government and self-esteem”, in *Foucault and political reason: Liberalism, neo-liberalism and rationalities of government*, ed. Barry Andrew, Thomas Osborne and Nikolas Rose (London: UCL Press & Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 231–251.

⁴³ See Małgorzata Jacyno, “Cultural omnivorousness?”, in *Youth and Media: New Media and Cultural Participation*, ed. Jacek Wasilewski (Bern: Peter Lang, 2013), 141.

“social subject”, a figure that combines the economic subject with political and juridical ones, that were dissociated at the previous stage of liberalism. On the one hand, society seems to evaporate in the amalgam of free, diverse individuals who are not bound to any ‘higher’ entity. On the other hand, these individuals act within the frames of the actions of others. What is experienced is not the death of society but the birth of new modes of socialization and governing, such as individualization.

Debt and control

Debt is an assemblage of sad affects in the society of control. This implies that sad affects reduce body’s (individual’s) vital power. When transposed onto the psychic level, sad affects are those that set the frames of actions and individuation of human beings (subjectification). These boundaries are not predominantly good or evil; the functioning of a human entity is only possible within certain limits. At stake, then, is the manner in which they are established and what the resulting field within the boundaries is like. This process does not happen without a society, i.e., the sphere of relations surrounding the subject, such as hierarchy, language, law. Nietzsche, Foucault and Deleuze investigate the mutual processes of interiorization/exteriorization of subjectivity and society. They stress that society is conditioned by subjectification (the creation of ego or the self as it is plugged into a transcending structure) because of which, in this case, writing about affects necessarily involves writing about the psyche. Debt actualizes itself in the indebtedness of the individual very literally nowadays, but more importantly, it is a mode of subjectification. Debt is a mechanism enabling the settlement of subjectivity—“ego”—in relation to society, whilst simultaneously creating relations of power where the subject is guilty, that is, responsible for her/his indebtedness. The guilty subject is alone, because the debt is infinite, it can never be repaid, and at the same time individual and secularized. The subject cannot appeal to any transcendent or historical entity (law, fate, descent or society).

Debt changes according to the transformations of capitalism. Deleuze maintains that the never-ending expansion of capitalism runs twofold: outside, by broaching other terrains, modes of production, etc, and inside, through subjectification and incorporation. Hence, different modes of socialization and of social assemblages are necessary. Here, semiotics plays the role of the condition of possibility and the milieu of action for socialization. Semiotics is not transcendent nor does it impose a mode of functioning, but rather is an (analytically distinguishable) assemblage. Put differently, the regime of signs is a mode of socialization and an internal structure of thinking. Contemporary debt functions according to mixed semiotics, where the traits of signifying and postsignifying regime coexist. This coexistence can be recognized in the example of debt itself: the indebtedness to banks (loans incurred by individuals and states) and the way residues of the welfare state function are paradigmatic for

the external power of the despot. At the same time, however, there is another kind of indebtedness rising: immanent, with a disturbed order of time, where no one speaks about debt or obligation, rather the jargon of guilt and authenticity leads here. “You should” is not said to the subject indebted by an agent of power (state or religious), but is uttered by the subject herself/himself instead, like in the passionnal regime. The second kind of debt is of special interest here, as it is strictly connected with the society of control. Although the first kind of indebtedness is specifically linked and suited to the image of control, the second kind is more interesting and analytically more important. Although long-term loans and credit cards also establish a never ending cycle of borrowing and repaying debt as an apparatus of socialization results in immanent-infinite debt in a strict sense. It concerns individuals and creates specific subjects and a particular mode of power.

How is this possible? The answer was given by the aforementioned sociologists and should be translated into the notions used in Deleuze’s description: Control is a power that, because of debt, operates on the level of affects as an internal, “incorporated” force: it does not capture, it hooks. Sad affects do not operate from without, but become internal. This means that the subject will act according to this affect as if it was a joyful one. The specificity of control does not lie in this process, as it is a typical mechanism of *ressentiment*, but in the fact that the subject is “hooked” by control and simultaneously detached through the mechanism characteristic for the passionnal regime of signs. There is not one fixed point of subjectification. The individual is being “interpellated” to be a subject, but the “point of subjectification” turns out to be the very self. Therefore, existence of the “self” (ego) enables power of control to anticipate and attach to the process of individuation. Control, however, similar to the despotic regime of signs, requires something external other than the ego anchoring points. These points can be Rose’s “communities”⁴⁴ based on identification. A community does not have to call itself a community, it may be a kind of defined and shared identity (such as sexual or national) or a lifestyle (also attached to sexuality, hobby or religion), but it has to be created and supported. A community cannot replace the ego as the point of subjectification, but can “absorb” it. While the ego is subjugated to the community, the subject does not internalize the community; it is rather an emanation of subjectivity outside the individual. This is one of the series of control: mixed semiotics that operate through subjugation and “interpellation”; ego as a point of subjectification; community which enables attachment and narration; narration on the self (communication) as another point of fixation; debt is a particular assemblage of sad affects which attaches to individual forces, rather than capturing them. The game is no longer played outside, in society or the system. But has it ever, or has it just lost the character of semblance?

⁴⁴ Nikolas Rose, “The Death of the Social? Re-figuring the Territory of Government”, in *Economy and Society* 25, no. 3 (1996): 328, 352 [reprinted in: *Governing the Present. Administering Economic, Social and Personal Life*, ed. Peter Miller and Nikolas Rose (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 85–113].

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