

WHAT DISCOURSE FOR CAPITALISM?

FABIO MALCHER 

Fabio Malcher ¹

Professor adjunto do Instituto de Psicologia da
Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, UFRJ.
Professor colaborador do PPGTP/UFRJ.

¹ Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro. Rio
de Janeiro/RJ, Brasil

Abstract: Freud emphasizes in his works how much subjectivity and culture affect each other, something that Lacanian theory allows to explore more rigorously. The present article intended to consider some discursive effects of capitalism using as a reference Jacques Lacan's discourse theory, moving forward in the debate on which matheme describes best such effects: the discourse of the university, designated in 1970 as the modern master's discourse with its capitalist style, or the discourse of the capitalist, proposed in 1972 in Milan. Instead of exclusively choosing between the two, our bet is that both can provide rich contributions to the exploration of the discursive effects of capitalism.

Keywords: psychoanalysis; discourse; capitalism; science.

Resumo: Qual discurso ao capitalismo? Freud demarca em sua obra o quanto subjetividade e cultura se afetam mutuamente, algo que a teoria lacaniana dos discursos permite explorar com rigor. Pretendemos abordar alguns efeitos discursivos do capitalismo a partir da teoria dos discursos de Jacques Lacan, avançando no debate acerca de qual matema melhor expressaria tais efeitos, o discurso universitário, denominado em 1970 como discurso do mestre moderno com seu estilo capitalista, ou o discurso do capitalista, proposto em 1972 em Milão. Apostamos que não se trate de uma opção exclusiva, mas que ambos possam fornecer ricas contribuições para a exploração dos efeitos discursivos do capitalismo.

Palavras-chave: psicanálise; discurso; capitalismo; ciência.

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INTRODUCTION

When addressing the effects between civilized sexual morality and modern nervous illness, Freud (1908/2015) demarcates how much culture and subjectivity affect each other. The Lacanian indication to analysts of “Renounces first, therefore, who cannot reach in their horizon the subjectivity of their time” (LACAN, 1953/1998, p. 322) follows the Freudian trail, making it inevitable for the analyst to address the subjectivity aspects of his time. A little more than fifteen years after such an indication, Lacan elaborates a refined contribution to this mission with the theory of discourses (LACAN, 1969-1970/1992). In this article, we highlight the discursive effects of capitalism as a point to be addressed in this relationship between culture and subjectivity, assessing how much the theory of discourses allows a valuable exploration of such effects, with emphasis on the question about which discursive modality – the discourse of the university or the discourse of the capitalist – would better express them.

From the point of view of the theory of discourses, Lacan associates the emergence of modern science with the matheme of the discourse of the university, with the advent of capitalism associated with this discursive modality. About two years later, Lacan presents the matheme of the discourse of the capitalist, at a conference in Milan (LACAN, 1972/1978), raising a delicate and relevant question. Would the discourse of the university be the discursive modality that would best articulate the discursive impact of capitalism or would that be up to the discourse of the capitalist proposed in 1972? The formulation of this question in the form of an “either ... or” is not what we take as a direction, as we understand that the discursive effects of capitalism can be explored from the two mathemes without this representing discarding one of them.

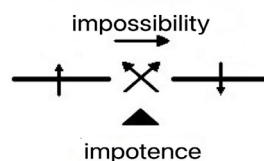
Discourse: subjectivity and culture

The Lacanian theory of discourse brings a masterly articulation between discourse and the significant advents of culture, without, however, constituting a historical theory of the social bond. The four discourses presented in *The reverse side of psychoanalysis* (LACAN, 1969-1970/1992) do not represent a chronology of the social bond, at the same time that they are not discursive modalities that remain absolutely indifferent to significant changes in the economy of *jouissance* in culture, the same being true for the discourse of the capitalist presented in 1972.

With his mythical hypothesis about the origin of civilization, of the social bond, in *Totem and taboo*, Freud (1912-1913/2012) locates as its condition a drive renunciation which is translated in Lacanian semantics as renunciation of *jouissance*, irreparable loss that pfrom four terms (S_1 , S_2 , a and $\$$) and four places, defining some rules (LACAN, 1969-1970/1992, p. 43). The first of these rules refers to the order between the terms, which does not change even when they change places: S_1 , S_2 , a and $\$$. The places are also fixed and each one of them, with the exception of the place of truth, receives more than one name throughout Lacan’s elaborations. We highlight its two main assemblies:



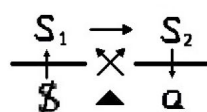
In addition to terms and places, there are essential operators in the structure: the bars, the arrows and the barrier. There is the repression bar, the impossibility at the upper level (LACAN, 1969-1970/1992, p. 166) and the impotence barrier at the lower level (LACAN, 1969-1970/1992, p. 101):



An essential point to be highlighted is that in any of the four discourses, a remains separated from $\$$, either by the bar, by the impossible or by impotence. The subjective division remains, the index of castration, and object a remains as aimed at, however, never reached.

Each discursive modality arises from a quarter turn of terms across places. Among the four discursive modalities, the discourse of the master appears as a canonical form, inaugural of the discourse. Not by chance, it is from the discourse of the master that Lacan analyzes the discursive turns.

Discourse of the master

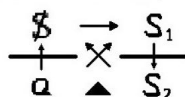


Modernity: the alliance between capitalism and modern science

In the break in culture that inaugurates Modernity, modern science emerges as a response to a radical questioning in relation to the Father, which Descartes incarnated in an emblematic way, a hysterical questioning that puts the master

to work in search of answers: “What leads to knowledge is [...] the discourse of the hysteric [...] How did the philosopher [Descartes] come to inspire the desire to know in the master?” (LACAN, 1969-1970/1992, p. 21; our brackets). In the discourse of the hysteric, the subject as agent commands the master to work, to produce answers:

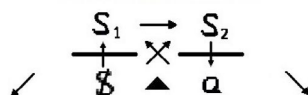
Discourse of the hysteric



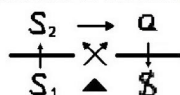
The destitution of the master is characterized by a movement – which is established in this break and consolidates itself until the Enlightenment – of the refusal of any authority over thought. Reason proposes itself as sovereign, trying to free itself from the yoke of religious dogmas or the master signifiers of tradition. The Cartesian subject – in a hysterical position, as a divided, non-univocal subject – interrogates the Father, summoning the master to produce some knowledge to deal with the growing helplessness.

The less the knowledge produced by the master alleviates the subject’s helplessness in the face of the fall of the Aristotelian worldview (KOYRÉ, 1957/2006), the interrogation becomes more fierce and radical, increasingly undermining the hegemony of the discourse of the master as a prevalent mode of treatment to *jouissance*. Starting from the discourse of the master, we have a clockwise turn that generates the discourse of the hysteric, Descartes’ position with his radical interrogation. Faced with the silence of the Father, knowledge based on Reason – different from the slave’s knowledge in the discourse of the master – begins to occupy the dominant position, as illustrated by the discourse of the university:

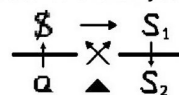
Discourse of the master



Discourse of the university



Discourse of the hysteric



By not getting an answer, the hysterical interrogation intensifies the subject’s helplessness, and favors, at the same time, the counterclockwise turn of the discourse of the master to the discourse of the university, in an attempt to respond to helplessness through scientific knowledge: “No matter how paradoxical the assertion may be, science gains momentum from the discourse of the hysteric.” (LACAN, 1970a/2003, p.436). In any case, the visceral alliance between science and capitalism stands out:

It is the so-called science that it is about, for us, to appreciate the contribution to the discourse of capitalism [...] We see there, in the measure of the *two opposite quarter turns with which two complementary transformations are engendered*, that science, if we trust in our articulation, would dispense with the discourse of the university in order to be produced, which, on the contrary, would be confirmed in its role as a watchdog to reserve it for those entitled to it. (LACAN, 1970b/2003, p. 307, emphasis added).

The amplification of helplessness in Modernity also feeds the functioning of capitalism, whose primordial mark in the field of *jouissance* is the attempt to *foreclose castration* (LACAN, 1971-1972/2011, p. 88), promising a satisfaction no longer in one beyond the life, but within reach, on the shelves, in the market, in consumption.

From the point of view of the theory of discourses, capitalism is first approached by Lacan through the visceral alliance between science and capitalism. The concomitance between the advent of capitalism and modern science is not pure chance; there is a symbiosis between both, which leads Lacan to indicate in the discursive turn from the discourse of the master to the discourse of the university the *capital mutation* that gives the discourse of the master its *capitalist style* (LACAN, 1969-1970/1992, p. 159-160).

Marie-Jean Sauret indicates that the break operated by modern science does not occur without a *panic crisis*, which causes a *subjective mutation* (SAURET, 2009, p. 225), discursively affecting culture. One of the most evident discursive effects of the discourse of the university is the fact that knowledge occupies the place of dominant, of agent, removing the master signifier from this function: “[...] what operates between the discourse of the old master and that of the modern master, who is called capitalist, is a shift in the place of knowledge” (LACAN, 1969-1970/1992, p. 29-30). With each change of place in the discourse, there is a change in the status of the moving term. The subject who moves from the place of truth in the discourse of the master to that of product in the discourse of the university is no longer the same, nor is knowledge, when moving from the place of labour to that of agent (LACAN, 1969-1970/1992, p. 33). Two significant points, certainly articulated, result from this change in the field of knowledge: the spoliation of the worker’s knowledge, which Karl Marx denounces as *work alienation* (MARX, 1867/2013), and the increasingly quantitative, mathematical bias, devoid of qualities, of knowledge, indexes of a dehumanization of the subject’s relation to knowledge (TEIXEIRA, 2007).

Work alienation has as a correlate in the structure of the discourses the change of S_2 from the place of work to that of agent. There is a difference between the slave, who had knowledge, and the proletarian, who lacks it, a process that Marx does not fail to relate to the advancement of science:

[...] all means for the development of production become means of domination and exploitation of the producer, mutilate the worker, making him a partial being, degrade him to the condition of an appendage of the machine, annihilate the content of his work, by transforming it into torture, *alienate the worker from the spiritual powers of the work process to the same extent that science is incorporated into such a process as an autonomous power*, disfigure the conditions in which he works. (MARX, 1867/2013, p. 720, emphasis added).

The shift from the feudal mode of production to the capitalist mode of production favors the overcoming of artisanal production by manufacture and, subsequently, by industry. High productivity becomes an imperative to which manufacturing offers itself as the first solution, especially due to the significant increase in productivity provided by the division of labour, which entails something unusual, that is, “The part-time worker does not produce commodities.” (MARX, 1867/2013, p. 429). The worker becomes a machine at the service of production, or rather, a piece of machinery, no longer producing commodities, but parts or parts of parts.

If in the discourse of the master, knowledge operates in the place of labour, in the discourse of the university, the proletarian is robbed of knowledge about its labour, leaving labour and knowledge not only separated, but in such a relationship that knowledge begins to command labour, establishing a *new tyranny of knowledge* (LACAN, 1969-1970/1992, p. 30). Such tyranny expands itself in the shift from manufacturing to large industry, intensifying even more the alienation of labour, with the worker being transformed into a mere *self-conscious accessory of a partial machine* (MARX, 1867/2013, p. 554). The enormous increase in productivity that industry consolidates increases the efficiency of the great objective of the capitalist mode of production, the production of surplus value, surplus produced by the worker and not paid for by the capitalist, which works as the cause of the entire process.

Two questions guide Marx’s investigation, which culminates in the writing of *Capital*: how does value arise? How is equivalence established between different goods? Answer: by labour. However, labour has two dimensions: use value – with the *quality* of generating use value from the action on the means of production – and exchange value – devoid of qualities, measured by *quantity*, its unit being time. It is in this second dimension that labour is taken as *abstract human labour*, a mere expenditure of energy for a certain period of time. Qualitatively different goods can be quantitatively compared based on the labour time each of them takes to produce. Well then, if the labour force becomes a commodity, the same logic applies to it, that is, the labour force is worth the labour time necessary to be produced. How is labour force produced? For the subsistence of the worker, giving him the minimum necessary to survive and return the next day to sell his labour force again. This is how wages are defined for the most part. However, the salary represents only a portion of the labour time performed by the worker, the other portion is a surplus that is destined to the capitalist who bought his labour force: the surplus value.

Economy mainly refers to the production and distribution of commodities. The point is that commodities, once produced, should not remain immobile, they are a surplus to be eliminated, sold, consumed. Economy is, then, a way of dealing with an excess, an attempt to regulate this excess. The psychic economy described by Freud is a way of dealing with drive excess, while Marx’s political economy deals with the excess of commodities. When dealing with the economy of *jouissance*, Lacan replaces the reference to energy with a reference to political economy, proposing a homology between *plus-de-jouir* and surplus-value (LACAN, 1968-1969/2008), both being *surpluses that operate as a cause*. *Jouissance* presents itself as an excess that generates work for the psyche, but which, once excluded as a loss, remainder, starts to operate as a cause, *plus-de-jouir* that incites the discursive apparatus to work, while the surplus value is a surplus produced by the worker and which constitutes the ultimate cause of the capitalist mode of production.

By stating that “[...] *capital, when puts science at its service*, always constrains the rebellious arm of labour to docility” (MARX, 1867/2013, p. 509, emphasis added), Marx concedes a certain dominance of capitalism in relation to science, which is not consistent with the Lacanian conception – with which we agree – that locates the advent of modern science as a discursive event, and not as a mere result of capitalist interests. On the other hand, the capitalist style that Lacan attributes to the discourse of the university indicates that capitalism generates discursive impacts. The machinery of the capitalist mode of production and the discursive machinery affect each other.

We highlight the impact on the field of knowledge. Deprived of knowledge about what is done, a mere cog in the gears, the worker performs, makes real, the erasure of the singular, with alienation of labour being the expression of a change – which is not restricted to technical labour knowledge – in the field of knowledge and in the subject’s relationship with knowledge.

Another very significant impact refers to the status of knowledge itself, which changes when moving from the place of work to that of agent, based on a world of pure mathematical truths, aiming at accounting for everything. One of the bases of the alliance between capitalism and science is the quantification of reality, whether in the field of knowledge or in the mercantile field, the urge to do math being a mark of the *curious coupling* of capitalism with science (LACAN, 1969-1970/1992, p. 103), which means that the capitalist reality does not get along so badly with science (LACAN, 1968-1969/2008, p. 38). The placing of reality in numbers by science is masterfully articulated with the capitalist accounting

thrust. Science is interested in placing knowledge in numbers to sanitize its transmission from any subjective contamination. In capitalism, merchandise is not produced to be useful, but to be sold, it is not produced for its use value, but for its exchange value, which brings the surplus value to be extracted. Labour as a commodity, as abstract human labour, is the finest flower of this movement in the productive field, workers falling into the homogenizing vortex of quantification, also becoming mere figures in capitalist accounting.

Another essential aspect to be reflected upon when thinking about the discursive effects of the alliance between science and capitalism refers to the subject itself. Faced with the helplessness that intensified in the advent of Modernity, science tries to respond through its own knowledge – numerical, mathematical – no longer referred to tradition, for which the singularity of the subject tends to be erased, in an operation that Lacan calls as *foreclosure of the subject* (LACAN, 1965/1998). Paradoxically, what occupies the place of product in the discourse of the university is precisely $\$$, that is, by not wanting to know about the division of the subject, in its attempts to buffer it through knowledge, science produces even more division in the subject, a consequence of which it wants nothing to know. Since the division is not sutured, what we witness clinically is the malaise that returns, before which, opportunely, scientific knowledge offers itself as capable of buffering it, in an incessant movement in an attempt to remedy the irremediable.

The dimension of *jouissance* is the one with which science does not want to deal in any way, since *jouissance* is refractory to accounting, breaking the scientific ideal of absolute knowledge by not allowing itself to be captured by knowledge, escaping from the significant plot, therefore, from calculations.

The attempt to capture *jouissance* in accounting is an aspiration shared by both science and capitalism. While science seeks it through knowledge that aims to put reality in numbers, in capitalism, this search is for surplus value, which does not escape accounting, returning to the system, remaining homogeneous with capital. Although Lacan proposes a homology between surplus-value and *plus-de-jouir*, there is an important difference regarding the way in which the psyche operates with *plus-de-jouir* and the way in which the capitalist mode of production takes the surplus-value. In the discursive functioning, the *a* locates the *jouissance* that escapes accounting, that resists symbolization, not being covered by the signifier. In its eagerness to do math – a point of agreement with modern science – capitalism also aims to account for *plus-de-jouir* in order to carry out its accumulation, as Lacan indicates when referring to the discourse of the university: “Something has changed in the discourse of the master from a certain moment in history [...] from a certain day, the plus-de-jouir is counted, calculated, totalized. There begins what is called capital accumulation” (LACAN, 1969-1970/1992, p. 169). Surplus-value is, then, a capitalist attempt to account for *plus-de-jouir*, it is *plus-de-jouir accounted for*.

Could we assume, then, that capitalism succeeds where science fails, namely, in capturing *jouissance*? We understand that not, because just as knowledge is no longer the same when changing places, the same happens with *plus-de-jouir*: “Passing a stage above, plus-de-jouir is not plus-de-jouir, it simply registers as a value to be registered or deducted from a totality of what accumulates.” (LACAN, 1969-1970/1992, p. 76). *Jouissance* remains refractory to accounting in the face of the capitalist and scientific accounting thrust, which does not prevent the commodity from trying to occupy the place of cause of desire, *latusas* (LACAN, 1969-1970/1992, p. 153-154) that populate the windows and screens of televisions and computers, travestying its exchange value in a use value disguised as an urgent need, as that which will give the subject what he/she lacks. However, something escapes both use value and exchange value, a *jouissance* that does not allow itself to be apprehended, which remains impossible, inaccessible.

In addition to the change in the field of knowledge and the subject, the mutation of the discourse of the master that generates the modern master’s discourse with its capitalist style – the discourse of the university – still produces two interesting consequences, the emptying of the barrier of impotence, and the master signifier as anonymous, more unassailable:

Don’t you fell in relation to what I said a moment ago about impotence making junction between the plus-de-jouir and the master’s truth, that here the step wins? I am not saying that the latter is the decisive one, but *the impotence of this junction is suddenly emptied* [...] What is shocking, and which does not seem to be seen, is that from that moment on the master signifier, because the clouds of impotence have been dissipated, it appears as more unassailable, precisely in its impossibility. (LACAN, 1969-1970/1992, p. 169, emphasis added).

In the discourse of the master, impotence separates – at the lower level – *a* and $\$$, representing a barrier to the subject’s access to *jouissance*. With the rise of *a* to the upper level, this barrier loses consistency, it is emptied between $\$$ and *a*, which, however, remain separated by the bar. The impossibility ceases to refer to the command of the master signifier over knowledge, and starts to express the non-completeness of the scientific mission of encompassing *jouissance* through knowledge. The master signifier gives way to scientific knowledge and passes to the place of truth, becoming more unassailable, that is, anonymous, which seems very congruent with the idea of capital as a master signifier in capitalism, capital that has no name, nationality, religion or ethnicity, not by chance being the S_1 in the place of truth a point of coincidence between the mathemes of the discourse of the university and the discourse of the capitalist, which we will see below.

Discourse of the capitalist

In a conference in Milan, in 1972, Lacan proposes a matheme proper to the discourse of the capitalist, and a question arises. Would Lacan be substituting the discourse of the university for the of the capitalist as the one that best represents the discursive effects of capitalism?

Between the formulation of the discourse of the university and its association with capitalism in 1970, and the proposition of the matheme of the discourse of the capitalist in 1972, Lacan indicates that “*A little thing of nothing that turns* and your discourse of the master turns out to be all that is most transformable in the discourse of the capitalist” (LACAN, 1971/2009, p. 47, emphasis added). Does the turn indicated in 1971 refer to the capital mutation mentioned in 1970, that is, the turn from the discourse of the master to the discourse of the university? Difficult to say precisely. In early 1972, Lacan refers to the discourse of capitalism as follows:

But history shows that it lived for centuries, this discourse [of the master], in a profitable way for everyone, until a certain deviation in which, due to a *tiny slipping*, which went unnoticed by the interested parties themselves, it became the discourse of capitalism, of which we would have no idea if Marx had not endeavored to complete it, to give it its subject, the proletariat [...]. What distinguishes the discourse of capitalism is this: the *Verwerfung*, the rejection out of all the symbolic fields, with the consequences I already mentioned – rejection of what? Of castration [...]. It was precisely for this reason that, *two centuries after this slipping* – let’s call him a Calvinist, why not? –, castration finally made its irruptive entrance, in the form of the discourse of the analyst. (LACAN, 1971-1972, p. 88, emphasis added).

The indication that the discourse of the analyst emerged *two centuries after this slipping* means that it can be understood as the DM → DU quarter turn, concomitant with the birth of modern science. On the other hand, Lacan proposes the matheme of the discourse of the capitalist itself only four months after the quote above, which could suggest that by dealing with *slipping* and, above all, the foreclosure of castration, it would already be anticipating the inversion of places between S₁ and \$ which configures the following mutation:



It is evident that it is not easy to define a univocal position in relation to this theme. A possible interpretation would be that, when referring to the discursive impact of capitalism, Lacan started from the idea of the discourse of the university as a capitalist discourse (1970) until he later concluded (1972) that the capitalist discourse would have its own matheme. This is Sauret’s position: “[...] this [the capitalist discourse] corrects the discourse of the master and it is this correction that Lacan substitutes for the discourse of the university” (SAURET, 2009, p. 277, our translation and brackets). Of course, this does not mean that the discourse of the university ceases to operate, but that its matheme would no longer best represent the discursive effects of capitalism.

Another possible interpretation would be that the matheme of the discourse of the capitalist cannot be sustained as a discourse, therefore, it cannot represent the discursive effects of capitalism. In fact, this matheme appears as a *hapax legomenon* – a word or expression that appears only once in the records of a language, without any subsequent record – in Lacan, as indicated by Carlos Faig (2000) and Néstor Braunstein (2010). We disagree with this interpretation, believing that, although the discursive status of the discourse of the capitalist is debatable, its exploration proves to be quite rewarding.

We understand, above all, that this is not an exclusive option between the discourse of the university and the discourse of the capitalist, as both mathemes can provide important contributions to reflection on the discursive effects of capitalism. Let us follow more closely the matheme of the discourse of the capitalist.

This matheme appears in a conference given in May 1972 at the University of Milan, when Lacan points it out as a substitute for the discourse of the master, paradoxically locating in its functioning the opening of a crisis at the same time that it indicates its success:

[...] the crisis, not of the discourse of the master, but of the discourse of the capitalist, *which is its substitute*, is open. It’s not that I’m telling you that the discourse of the capitalist is bad, on the contrary, it’s something *extremely astute*, huh? Extremely astute, but *doomed to collapse* [...]. Anyway, it’s all that has been done as astute as a discourse [...] It’s just that *it’s unsustainable* [...] because, the discourse of the capitalist is there, you see it [...] a small inversion simply between the S₁ and the \$... which is the subject ... will be enough for this to go as if it were on wheels, this cannot go better, but precisely this goes too fast, it is consumed, it is consumed so well that it consumes itself. (LACAN, 1972/1978, p. 48, translation and emphasis added).

Four months before writing the matheme of the discourse of the capitalist, Lacan highlights the *foreclosure of castration* as what the discourse of the capitalist aims at. Could this be a turning point that led Lacan to formulate the matheme of the discourse of the capitalist?

Other points that already appear in *Seminar 17* also seem to find an echo in the matheme of the discourse of the

capitalist: the emptying of the impotence barrier and the master-signifier as unassailable. Finally, in view of Lacan's later silence on the subject, there is no sure answer to this question, leaving us with a bet, which we will not shy away from.

For this, we turn to Marx. Book I of *Capital* addresses the capital production process, a colossal effort to unveil the *only secret* of capitalism: the *formation of surplus value* (MARX, 1885/2014, p. 426). Book II addresses the process of capital circulation, which occurs after the production of the commodity, which brings in itself the surplus value that needs to be realized with its sale. We dare an interpretation.

The discourse of the university seems to be more appropriate for understanding the *capital production process*, where surplus value appears as accounted for, highlighting the figure of the subject as a proletarian deprived of knowledge and *producer* of surplus value. This discourse makes it possible to explore very well living and pertinent issues of capitalism, such as the alienation of labour, and the visceral alliance between capitalism and science, with the paradox that science aims to buffer the subject at the same time that it produces a divided subject, together with the capitalist promise to give the subject what he lacks through consumption, merchandise.

We understand, on the other hand, that the discourse of the capitalist provides rich means to address the capitalist promise of foreclosure of castration and the *process of capital circulation*. In circulation, the way in which surplus value is realized to the capitalist through consumption stands out, with the figure of the subject as a *consumer* gaining prominence, a barred subject to whom the promise of rejecting castration is addressed through the commodity, *a*, of consumption.

Circulation comprises the part of the capital cycle that takes place outside the sphere of production. In production, merchandise *fertilized with surplus value* is generated (MARX, 1885/2014, p. 120), but for the rotation of capital (production + circulation) to be complete, it is necessary that the merchandise, *pregnant with surplus value* (MARX, 1885/2014, p. 110), be sold, consumption being the delivery room that provides surplus value to the capitalist, who must reinvest it in the system. In the current context of capitalism "Men must no longer come to terms with transcendent symbolic values, they must simply bend to the game of infinite and expanded circulation of merchandise." (DUFOUR, 2005, p. 13). Continuity is established as an imperative, structural mode of functioning of the capitalist mode of production. We understand that this continuity, this feedback is presented in the discursive structure by the circularity, by the lack of cut, of enough point, that the matheme of the discourse of the capitalist presents.

The mutation on the left side of the discourse of the master, with the inversion of places between S_1 and $\$$, in addition to changing the order of the terms, generates a radical change in the operators. The arrow of impossibility – typical of the social bond at play in the discourse – disappears, as well as the barrier of impotence at the lower level.

In any of the four discourses, production has no direct relationship with the truth (LACAN, 1969-1970/1992, p. 166), preventing the circuit from closing, keeping the discursive apparatus at work in the search, impossible to be fully realized, of recovery. Impotence tries to hide this impossible, having a *protective* function (LACAN, 1969-1970/1992, p. 166). The dissipation of the clouds of impotence, which begins in the discourse of the university, is radically consolidated in the discourse of the capitalist, disappearing the barrier of impotence. The place of production/loss is separated from the place of truth only by $\$$, a barrier crossed by consumption, making the subject as a consumer a mere means of passage from surplus value to capital: $a \rightarrow \$ \rightarrow S_1$.

This leads to the foreclosure of castration, a distinctive mark of capitalism in the field of *jouissance*, engendering a promise to the subject to avoid lack through consumption, merchandise, establishing an imperative of excessive and incessant consumption.

Marx denounces that the proletariat is robbed not only of knowledge about labour, but, above all, of what they produce, which becomes integrally owned by the one who bought their work force, the capitalist. Here falls the promise of foreclosure of castration, whose fulfillment has in the commodity – which is sold as *plus-de-jouir* to the subject – its privileged means. However, *plus-de-jouir* does not return to the subject, it always escapes, leaving him in the thirst for the next commodity; what is produced is lack and not satiety: "Because of this, surplus value, is the cause of the desire from which an economy makes its principle: that of extensive production, therefore insatiable, of *manque-à-jouir*" (LACAN, 1970a/2003, p. 434). The fabrication of lack is a specialty of the capitalist mode of production, whose structure does not produce satisfied subjects, but thirsty ones, therefore, open to consumption. Capitalism produces, at the same time, the commodity and the subject as a *manque-à-jouir*, cunningly generating supply and demand at the same time. The foreclosure of castration may not even be successful, carried out, but the discourse that conveys it undoubtedly is. We see its *astuteness* there, because it is precisely because it does not fulfill its promise that the movement is immediately relaunched, in a cycle that approaches *perpetuum mobile*.

Access to commodities does not bring the desired satisfaction, leaving behind the bitter taste of malaise, which does not prevent the emergence of a new remedy on the market that promises to assuage it. Although *a* is directly linked to $\$$, this does not mean that the subject is able to access the *plus-de-jouir* supposedly contained in the commodity, because as soon as the subject buys the commodity, the *plus-de-jouir* jumps to the next commodity, inciting incessant consumption.

It is worth reflecting, however, that the promise of foreclosure of castration is only sustained because there is something on the subject's side that echoes it: "[...] the discourse of the capitalist succeeds in transforming the constitutive dissatisfaction of human desire into a market-driven dissatisfaction" (LUSTOZA, 2009, p. 47). The *constitutive dissatisfaction of human desire* echoes the capitalist promise of foreclosure of castration, and the astuteness of the discourse of the

capitalist is to offer merchandise as a source of supposed satisfaction.

In this discourse, the subject occupies the place of agent, but does not command anything, being, on the contrary, commanded by the commodity, $a \rightarrow \$.$ The subject either works producing surplus-value for others, or consumes, seeking a *plus-de-jouir* that does not arrive, with the dimension of *jouissance* prevailing over the desiring dimension. Capital as S_1 occupies the place of truth and puts scientific knowledge, S_2 , to work incessantly, well illustrating the *endless* and *unmeasured* movement (MARX, 1867/2013, p. 227-228) of capital.

What the discourse of the capitalist aims at is a relationship between the subject (consumer) and the object (merchandise) not through fantasy, $\$ \diamond a$, but through a direct and immediate connection, literally without mediations, $a \rightarrow \$.$ However, the contingency of the drive object opposes the massification of merchandise, leaving the subject unsatisfied.

AFTER ALL, WHAT DISCOURSE FOR CAPITALISM?

From the mutation of the discourse of the master that generates the discourse of the university, the modern master's discourse with its capitalist style, the impacts on the field of knowledge and on the status of the subject are evident. By passing to the dominant, scientific knowledge is no longer the same as that of the slave, it is quantified, accounting, mathematically equipped knowledge, which also results in alienation of labour, the worker being dispossessed not only of the means of production, but also of the knowledge about of their job. The subject appears as emptied of qualities, effect of the signifier, $\$,$ but science strives to try to suture it through knowledge, intensifying its alliance with capitalism.

The mutation from the discourse of the master to the discourse of the capitalist, with the inversion of the places of S_1 and $\$,$ entails different consequences, such as the disappearance of the arrow at the level of the impossible, as well as the impotence barrier. With that, a circular operation is established, without stumbling blocks, which is in line with the excessive, continuous character, without an end point of the capitalist mode of production. Another important consequence is the direct link between a and $\$$ – which does not occur in any of the other four discourses –, something that represents well the distinctive mark of capitalism in the field of *jouissance*, the foreclosure of castration.

Thus, regarding the question of which discursive modality would best represent capitalism, we understand that both the discourse of the university and the discourse of the capitalist contribute in an essential way to the exploration of discursive effects of capitalism, the former being closer to the capital production process, while the second represents better the process of capital circulation, a process that is increasingly in evidence with the advance of neoliberalism. It seems to us, strictly speaking, that it is possible to understand the matheme of the discourse of the capitalist as well expressing the discursive effects of the advance of neoliberalism, in which “The commodity, like capital, in fact, must be able to *circulate without hindrance* across borders and if possible, without borders [...] The narrative of the commodity wants itself without borders” (DUFOUR, 2005, p. 75-76; emphasis added). However, this last reflection deserves to be carried out more carefully in future research.

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Fabio Malcher
fabiomalcher.rj@gmail.com