

NEOLIBERALISM AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE CREATIVE SUBJECT

NEOLIBERALISMO Y CONSTRUCCIÓN DEL SUJETO CREATIVO

NEOLIBERALISMO E A CONSTRUÇÃO DO SUJEITO CRIATIVO

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ABSTRACT: This article aims to problematize the position of the “creative subject” category in contemporary times, as well as its relations with the standards established by market practices. Two media discourses were analyzed, one uttered in the *Saia Justa* (GNT) TV show and the other in a commercial from the *Shark Tank* (ABC) TV show, both of them focused on creativity and entrepreneurship in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis methodology was based on the French approach of Discourse Analysis. The results show a creative subject built from a neoliberal mechanism that (a) discursively silences the inequality-universality contradiction; (b) assigns value to creativity (and to the creative subject) based on the market logic (expenditure and competition); and (c) through the process of interpellation, induces the subject to identify him/herself with this neoliberal Other and regulate his/her creative volitions based on it.

KEYWORDS: Subject; Creativity; Discourse; Mass Media Communication; Neoliberalism.

RESUMEN: Este artículo busca problematizar el lugar de la categoría “sujeto creativo” en la época contemporánea, así como sus vínculos con los padrones establecidos por las prácticas de mercado. Se analizaron dos discursos mediáticos pronunciados en el programa *Saia Justa* (GNT) y en un comercial del programa *Shark Tank* (ABC), ambos enfocados en la creatividad y el espíritu empresarial en el contexto de la pandemia covid-19. La metodología de análisis se basó en el Análisis del Discurso de matriz francesa. Los resultados muestran un sujeto creativo construido a partir de un mecanismo neoliberal que (a) silencia discursivamente la contradicción desigualdad-universidad; (b) asigna valor a la creatividad (y al sujeto creativo) desde la lógica del mercado (consumo y competencia); y (c) induce, a través del proceso de interpelación, al sujeto a identificarse con este Otro neoliberal y regular sus voliciones creativas a partir de él.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Sujeto; Creatividad; Discurso; Medios de Comunicación de Masas; Neoliberalismo.

RESUMO: O presente artigo visa a problematizar o lugar da categoria “sujeito criativo” na contemporaneidade, assim como suas vinculações com os padrões estabelecidos pelas práticas de mercado. Foram analisados dois discursos midiáticos proferidos no programa *Saia Justa* (GNT) e em um comercial do programa *Shark Tank* (ABC), ambos voltados à criatividade e ao empreendedorismo no contexto da pandemia de covid-19. A metodologia de análise teve como base a Análise de Discurso de linha francesa. Os resultados evidenciam um sujeito criativo construído a partir de um mecanismo neoliberal que (a) silencia discursivamente a contradição desigualdade-universidade; (b) atribui valor à criatividade (e ao sujeito criativo) a partir da lógica de mercado (consumo e concorrência); e (c) induz, pelo processo de interpelação, o sujeito a identificar-se com este Outro neoliberal e regular suas volições criativas a partir desse.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Sujeito; Criatividade; Discurso; Meios de Comunicação de Massa; Neoliberalismo.

Introduction

The creativity discourse is recurrent in contemporary times. The texts transmitted by the different media sources (television, *internet*, printed newspapers etc.), the academic discourses (lectures, lessons, articles etc.), the literary narratives (biographies, romances etc.) are only some of the many sources in which we can observe positionings, discussions and debates about creativity. In the academic dimension, the study of creativity obtained the more interest in the scientific community from the 20th century, when Joy Guildford (1954), president of the American Psychology Association at the time, published the article named *Creativity*, in which he points to the negligence towards this theme by the researchers (Rhodes, 1961; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). Since then, a myriad of propositions and theoretical approaches emerged, including the contributions of psychoanalysis (e.g. Winnicott, 1990), of humanistic psychology (e.g. Maslow, 1968; Rogers, 1954), of the behavioral theory (e.g. Skinner, 1974), of the systemic models of creativity (e.g. Amabile et al., 1996; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Simonton, 2000; Sternberg, 2006), among others.

In spite of its multiplicity of definitions and approaches, there may seem to have a consensus on scientific literature in associating creativity with the new, with original/innovative ideas and that have value (utility) for a determined society and culture (e.g. Amabile, 1982; Boden, 2004; Craft, 2001; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Elliott, 1971). Nevertheless, recent researches have shown that such association, or even its approximation to human productive doing, is a socioculturally built and historically dated elaboration (Albert & Runco, 1999; Lan & Kaufman, 2012; Lubart, 1999; Niu & Sternberg, 2006). When reviewing literature, Weihua Niu e Robert Sternberg (2002) observed that the conceptions of creativity in the East, present different characteristics, tending to express social and cultural values, while in western territory the focus is on individual assumptions¹. In the West, the notion of creativity is exclusively assigned to the individual, and not inspired by God or gods, it is a modern conception (Dacey, 1999) from Enlightenment, which enabled the exaltation of individual rights and accompanied science and technology's growth (Niu & Sternberg, 2006). Considered by the Greeks as an attribute of the poets², creativity is now inscribed in many spheres of life (in sciences, arts, literature etc.), also including daily life (Beghetto & Kaufman, 2007; Boden, 2004; Runco, 1996). Due to its individualistic characteristic (in contrast to the collectivist culture present in the East), the western culture emphasizes an individualistic notion of creativity, still in the 17th century being driven by tributes (awardings, patents etc.) offered by some countries to individuals that obtain solutions to technological problems (Niu & Sternberg, 2006).

In this sense, the ideas of innovation, of individual prominence and of useful value of a creative product to a certain social segment are modern constructions, and will permeate the understanding of creativity of the so-called creative industry, motivating the annual investment of millions of dollars in programs of creativity training (Sternberg, O'Hara, & Lubart, 1997). For the *Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport* (DCMS) of the United Kingdom, commonly used as a reference in this area, the "Creative Industry" involves industries that have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent, having a potential for creation of wealth and jobs through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property (DCSM, 2016).

Creativity, as a generation of the new, has its contemporary legitimacy, in this context, associated with market and expenditure practices, being able to generate well-being and profit in the most diverse sectors of society. Adriana Oliveira (2016), when analyzing the governmental discourse³, points to the close connection between the injunctions to the use of creativity, the "contemporary device par excellence" (Oliveira, 2016, p. 11), and the expenditure practices. Ou-

lining what she calls the “discourse of creativity”, the author questions its mechanisms, especially the one that concerns the way in which “social inclusion” – meaning: entry into expenditure practices – comes to occupy a privileged space in governmental discourse, functioning through the representation of creativity as an economic and social asset and the market as a space where everyone is assumed to be included. One of the effects of this is the emergence of “a new mode of relationship between capital and subjectivity” (Oliveira, 2016, p. 11) (2), with knowledge, affections, experiences, desires in contemporary production and expenditure: in summary, the *living knowledge* of subjects (3). Therefore, the contemporary discourse of creativity is inserted as a facet of neoliberal productivity, reproducing, at the level of the subject, a set of values that are presented as rooted, “necessary”. As Michel Pêcheux (1975/2014) points out, each and every discourse is determined by ideological positions that are at stake in the socio-historical process, a phenomenon that is also present in the discourse of creativity. However, this author also emphasizes that every discourse, as well as every interpretation, “is the potential index of an agitation in the socio-historical affiliations of identification” (Pêcheux, 1988/2006, p. 56), that is, a possibility that is always present of displacements, beyond repetition and structure.

Therefore, we seek to problematize the place of the “creative subject” category in contemporary times, as well as the way it relates to standards established by market practices, including expenditure and competition. For this, we are based on Discourse Analysis (DA), more specifically on the analyzes proposed by Michel Pêcheux (1969/2014, 1975/2014, 1984/2015, 1988/2006) and Eni Orlandi (1995, 2007, 2009, 2017), thus seeking to glimpse the discursive materiality and the production of meanings in the discourse of creativity. This study was carried out by the Musical Creativity Research Group, through the research line “Musical Arts: creative processes and subjectivity”, linked to the Federal University of Rio Grande (FURG). The group aims to understand the relations between creativity and human (inter)subjectivity through an interdisciplinary approach. The same project recently published a research in which the way how different conceptions of creativity can lead to different self-perceptions of individuals as creative is analyzed (Nazario, Ultramari, & Pacce, 2020).

Thus, the analysis established in this work can be understood as complementary or developing in relation to that one, through a critical and integrative approach to the theme.

Analysis perspective and methodology

This research’s analysis methodology is based on the principles of DA, as thought by Pêcheux and Orlandi. From this perspective, the autonomy of the object of linguistics is relativized, making the intervention of ideology[†], history, and the unconscious appear in the functioning of the discourse, with language being the place where such instances are materialized. According to Pêcheux (1984/2015, p. 151), discursive materiality “refers to the verbal conditions of existence of (scientific, aesthetic, ideological...) objects in a given historical conjuncture”. Therefore, we question the evidence of the creative subject as a psychological category, and we seek to glimpse the discursive processes involved in its production.

According to Pêcheux (1975/2014), studies historically constituted in the field of semantics (more specifically, formal and structural semantics) are closely linked and dependent on epistemological idealism, sometimes in the form of metaphysical realism, sometimes under that of logical empiricism. Addressing a theory of discourse and seeking to oppose idealist ways of understanding meaning processes, Pêcheux supports the “material character of meaning” (p. 146) in two

fundamental theses. The first of these is that “words, expressions, propositions, etc. change their meaning according to the positions held by those who use them” (Pêcheux, 1975/2014, p. 146, author’s emphasis). This does not just mean that words, expressions or propositions do not contain their meaning in themselves or that this must be sought in extralinguistic elements. It means that, in addition to the immediate context (which is still relevant), meaning depends directly and indirectly on ideological formations, that is, on the relative positions of contradiction, domination and subordination inscribed in a social practice determined within a given socio-historical and cultural context. The discursive formations represent, within the discourse, such ideological formations, functioning in order to establish, “what can and should be said” (Pêcheux, 1975/2014, p. 147) in a given situation, as well as what must be silenced. In this sense, Orlandi (2007, p. 102) warns that the implicit discourse “is the unsaid that is defined in relation to the saying”. The unsaid is understood as a technique that consists of not assuming direct responsibility for saying something, but saying it in an implied way (Lins, 2013). The silenced discourse, in turn, “is not the unsaid that sustains the saying, but what is erased, set aside, excluded” (Orlandi, 2007, p. 102).

The second thesis addresses the work of ideology within discursive practices. It concerns the fact that “*every discursive formation dissimulates, through the transparency of the meaning that is constituted in it, its dependence on the ‘complex whole with dominant’ of the discursive formations*” (Pêcheux, 1975/2014, p. 148, emphasis added by the author). This dissimulation concerns the way in which the subject and meaning are crossed by ideology. Meaning appears as unproblematic, as something “natural”, encapsulated within words, expressions and enunciation precisely because, in the daily functioning of language, one “forgets” that the saying can always be another, that there is a gap, a flaw, in every act of discourse. This way, we speak of what Pêcheux calls forgetfulness n° 2, responsible for the illusion that there is a direct relation between thought, language and the world (Pêcheux, 1975/2014). However, according to Louis Althusser (1970/1992, p. 93), “ideology challenges individuals into subjects”, that is, the individual’s socio-historical form of existence is with and under ideology. Therefore, to be a *subject* is simultaneously to be subject, since, according to Jacques Lacan (1973/2008, p. 184), “the subject is only subject because it is subject to the field of the Other”. Here is how forgetting n° 1 works: making naturalization intervene in the space of the individual’s relationship with their speech, producing, in what we call consciousness, the illusion that the subject is the **origin**, and not the **effect**, of their speech (Orlandi, 2017; Pêcheux, 1975/2014).

From this, the notion of interdiscourse arises, the discursive formations’ complex whole with dominant (Pêcheux, 1975/2014). This concept designates “what speaks before, elsewhere, independently” (Orlandi, 2009, p. 31), that is, the set of statements, expressions or propositions already said by someone, somewhere and at a certain time. Thus, interdiscourse provides the condition for discursive knowledge, history and ideology to be present in all sayings (and all non-sayings).

Orlandi (2009) also uses the notion of imaginary formations as the set of relationships established between interlocutors in a discursive process. This notion implies that “it is not the physical subjects nor their empirical places ... that function in the discourse, but their images that result from projections” (Orlandi, 2009, p. 40). Therefore, this concept allows to establish the passage from the social place to the positions of the subjects in the discourse.

Consequently, in the process of interpellation, ideology operates by providing the subject with an imagery, a reality as a “set of perceived meanings” (Pêcheux, 1975/2014, p. 149). Thus, the subject-form of the discourse is constituted. The author uses this notion to account for the way in which the subject does not recognize his subordination to the Other, which occurs precisely because, through the functioning of the unconscious, of forgetfulness and, therefore, of the illusion of language’s transparency, the subject perceives himself/herself

as essentially autonomous in relation to exteriority and history (Pêcheux, 1975/2014). That notion indicates that the subject is so precisely because social practices constitute him/her as such, since there is no practice that is not social, and there is no existence outside the determination of the forms of historical existence (Henry, 1977/2013). Likewise, Pêcheux (1975/2014) uses the notion of subject-position, designating the relation established between the enunciating subject and the subject-form, a relation of identification.

From this perspective, it starts with a fundamental differentiation between text and discourse. The text is understood as any linguistic sequence, closed in on itself and limited to a given practice (Pêcheux, 1969/2014; Orlandi, 1995). Differently, discourse is defined as the effect of meaning between interlocutors' positions (Pêcheux, 1969/2014). Effect of meaning because it is not restricted to the text, and can occur through an image, a sound, a sign, any mark, and between positions because the meaning is always referred to and dependent on the positions occupied by the interlocutors, as well as on the image that they make up each other's position.

Thus, the notions and concepts presented allow us to build an analysis whose *corpus* is composed of two media discourses on creativity and entrepreneurship. From the perspective of DA, the scrutiny of these discourses allows us to glimpse the context that made their productions possible, since the material analyzed here carries interdiscourses present in other narratives⁵, which, through the process of interpellation-identification advocated by Pêcheux (1975/2014), have a strong impact potential in the construction of individuals' subjectivity. The first discourse is part of the *Saia Justa* program⁶, aired by the GNT channel (*Globosat News Television*), owned by Grupo Globo⁷. The second is an ad for *Shark Tank*⁸, a program aired in the United States of America (USA) by ABC (*American Broadcasting Company*)⁹ and, in Brazil, by *Sony Channel*¹⁰. Both media productions address themes alluding to the covid-19 pandemic.

Imaginary, discursive and ideological formations on the programs *Saia Justa* and *Shark Tank*

The economic importance of creativity and the creative economy in entrepreneurship has been a recurring theme in several national and international media. The *Saia Justa* program highlighted this theme during its broadcast on September 30, 2020. This broadcast was part of the preparatory event for the "Professionals of the Year Award", which annually awards the best advertisers and advertising campaigns. On the occasion, journalist Astrid Fontenelle addressed the problem of the covid-19 pandemic and its social and economic effects that have especially affected women. The journalist opened the program with the following speech, hereinafter called *Saia Justa Discursive Sequence (SJ-DS)*:

Pandemic, unemployment and the eternal search for the "turn around" moment. UN Secretary General António Guterres recently reported that the pandemic has already reversed decades of progress in gender equality and women's rights. And not only that. Women are in the group that represents an increase in the poverty rate. The creative economy [expression accompanied by hand movements indicating quotation marks], right? which already had its glory days, reappears as a possibility to increase the domestic budget. Before we discussed the subject, we went to talk to Keka Morelle, head of creation in the advertising market and honored at the *Women to Watch 2020* event. She told us about the importance of creativity to overcome the challenges of the advertising market at that moment. Better pay attention.

The theoretical basis of DA used in this article understands that “the simple words of our daily lives already reach us loaded with meanings that we do not know how they were constituted and which nevertheless signify in us and for us” (Orlandi, 2009, p. 20). This signifying process occurs through the relationship between language and ideology, making it possible to produce meanings (Garcia, Barbosa, & Vinhas, 2020).

Paul Henry (1977/2013; 1990) used the term pre-constructed to designate what “refers to a previous, exterior, but always independent construction, as opposed to what is ‘constructed’ by the enunciation” (Pêcheux, 1975/2014, p. 89). The pre-constructed is the way in which the interdiscourse is present in the intradiscourse. Thus, Chart 1 shows how certain ideological formations are discursively materialized, producing certain meanings and, at the same time, silencing others. We have: (a) the discourse itself, which establishes, through the link to a discursive formation, what can and should be said; (b) the unsaid, but which, through interdiscourse, builds meanings and tends to support an ideologically determined representation of reality; and (c) what must be silenced, that is, an implicit censorship that enables the production of a given discourse through an intervention of forces in the circumstances of its enunciation, and makes it impossible for it to say what it could say, but was forbidden (Orlandi, 2007):

Chart 1. The said, the unsaid and the silenced in the Saia Justa Discursive Sequence (SJ-DS)

What can and should be said	The unsaid	What must be silenced
The pandemic, unemployment and the eternal search for the ‘turn around’ moment.	There is an endless struggle of most Brazilians (poor, unemployed, working class etc.) for the sustaining and the possibility of economic upswing.	The neoliberal logics accentuates this situation. The “turn around”, that is, overcoming economic adversities is hardened in Brazil, due to the slavery inheritance and the classes division (e.g. Souza, 2018).
ONU’s secretary general António Guterres recently reported that the pandemic has already reversed decades of progress in gender equality and women’s rights. And not only that. Women are in the group that represents an increase in the poverty rate.	Beyond public health issues, the pandemic is also responsible for the retreat of the rights of gender equality acquired in the last decades.	According to Elias (1939/1990), misogyny is historically impregnated in European Western culture. Therefore, the increase of gender inequality is due to sociocultural values. Moreover, a recent study from the IWO (International Work Organization shows that, regarding gender equality, “the progress has been practically nonexistent since the beginning of the century” (ONU, 2020). ¹¹
The creative economy, right? which already had its glory days, reappears as a possibility to increase the domestic budget. She told us about the importance of creativity to overcome the challenges of the advertising market at that moment.	Creativity is an accessible tool to all and enables profit, regardless of the material and social conditions in which the individuals (and more specifically, women) are found.	There are sustaining social mechanisms of the budget that make the increase of financial gain harder or impossible. Schooling, social class, <i>habitus</i> and so on, act as social variables that directly affect the domestic budget, this one being seen by mass media and by different economists only in statistical and monetary terms (Leite, 2017).

In the clippings present in Chart 1, what is said is the meaning that is proposed to be evident and transparent. Such a meaning is sustained in the unsaid, that is, in the ideological representations produced historically and indirectly sustained in the thread of the discourse

through the said. From the point of view of creativity, the subject of our study, the discourses presented here (highlighted in bold) are naturalized, and their meanings are presented as evident to the interlocutor from their relations with the interdiscourse, from which pre-constructed discourses that associate creativity to individual talent and the creation of wealth (such as the DCMS discourse presented in the introduction of this article). In this way, creative doing appears as a tool, a skill/capacity, which the individual can use to overcome adversities and obtain success/profit, regardless of the nature of such adversities. However, in Chart 1 we show the silenced discourse, which is referenced by academic studies that contradict, subvert or question the dominant discourse, demonstrating that the sayings can always be different.

However, a first problem is imposed, which can be explained as follows: thinking of creativity as a tool presupposes: (a) a game where this tool has a value (the market); (b) a norm, on a more or less stabilized terrain, that defines the “correct” use of this tool (in this case, consumption and competition); and (c) exclusion from this game, through silencing, sometimes those subjects or discourses that do not use this tool “correctly”, sometimes those material conditions of existence that impose obstacles to the universalization of its use. In summary: conceiving creativity as a tool can only be sustained to the extent that the erasing of its universalization operates.

A similar situation, in which creativity and financial/economic productivity are represented in the media as closely related, is seen in a commercial for the *Shark Tank* program. In the commercial¹², called *The Sharks Address The Coronavirus Crisis*, the program’s members dedicate words of support and encouragement to the public, as well as guidance regarding facing the covid-19 crisis. That commercial was produced in 2020, while the whole world began to suffer from the effects of the pandemic. We present below excerpts from the speeches present in the announcement of interest in our study, their set hereinafter referred to as the *Shark Tank* Discursive Sequence (ST-DS):

Robert Herjavec: *Whether you’re a small-business owner or just trying to help your family, we’re here with some advice.*

Lori Greiner: *Don’t look at this time as a setback. Look at them as an opportunity. Start to improve your social-media presence. Improve your website. Do the things that you never had time to do before. Get active.*

Daymond John: *This is a true time to reflect on your “why”. Why did you start a business? Why are you working where you’re working? Why are you trying to change people’s lives? Now is the time that your “why” is put to the test.*

Barbara Corcoran: *These are the times that will make warriors out of entrepreneurs. It will show you what you’re made of. And once you see this through, you’ll build the confidence to know you can get through anything.*

Kevin O’Leary: *There’s no end to entrepreneurship in America. Right now, the next giant company is being invented in somebody’s basement.*

Daymond John: *There will always be some challenges in the world, but true entrepreneurs and survivors know how to adjust and become stronger, and this is what makes us unstoppable.*

Lori Greiner: *When we come out of this, know we will be more united than ever.*

Mark Cuban: *And when we get to the other side, when we get to America 2.0, we can and will make it a better place.*

As can be seen, the commercial’s discourse aims to stimulate entrepreneurship through injunctions and incentives to the US public. In the same way as in the SJ-DS sequence, but indirectly, creativity is presented as a tool to deal with adversities, either through stimuli of unprecedented achievements (Do the things that you never had time to do before), or through the ability of entrepreneurs to adapt to the problems they face (true entrepreneurs and survivors know how to adjust and become stronger) or even the creation of a future large company (Right now, the next giant company is being invented in somebody’s basement). Such discourses also silence other sayings, which point to a great inequality of economic opportunities in the US, drastically hindering individual economic growth (Bradbury & Triest, 2016)¹³.

The advertisement also moves different imaginary and discursive formations to give consistency to the meanings it reproduces. As shown in Chart 2, imagery representations of the subjects involved in the discursive process are supported, related to the *Shark Tank* presenters and those to whom they are addressed. In an imaginary formation 1, which corresponds to a discursive formation DF1, there are the subject-positions *You* and *We*. The first, marking the position of those who are experiencing difficulties and who, therefore, need or can benefit from the guidance that the presenters offer. The second is occupied by those who provide such guidelines. Thus, in this imaginary formation, a break between positions is established: there are those who can speak, who have knowledge, who have the answers, who know the way, and there are those who need to learn it, the initiated, those who must listen. Two distinct positions, hierarchically asymmetrical, which, nevertheless, make up together and simultaneously meanings that propose to be total:

Chart 2. The absorption between subject-positions in the Shark Tank Discursive Sequence (ST-DS)

Clippings	Subject-positions	Discursive formations
Whether <u>you</u> ’re a small-business owner or just trying to help <u>your</u> family, we’re here with some advice.	<i>You/your</i> <i>We/us</i>	DF1
Don’t look at this times as a setback. Look at them as an opportunity. Start to improve <u>your</u> social-media presence. Improve <u>your</u> website. Do the things that <u>you</u> never had time to do before. Get active.	<i>You/your</i>	
<i>This is a true time to reflect on <u>your</u> “why”. Why did <u>you</u> start a business? Why are <u>you</u> working where <u>you</u>’re working? Why are <u>you</u> trying to change people’s lives? Now is the time that <u>your</u> “why” is put to the test.</i>	<i>You/your</i>	
<i>These are the times that will make warriors out of entrepreneurs. It will show <u>you</u> what <u>you</u>’re made of. And once <u>you</u> see this through, <u>you</u>’ll build the confidence to know <u>you</u> can get through anything.</i>	<i>You</i>	

Clippings	Subject-positions	Discursive formations
<i>There's no end to entrepreneurship in America. Right now, the next giant company is being invented in <u>somebody's</u> basement.</i>	<i>Somebody</i>	DF2
<i>There will always be some challenge in the world, but true entrepreneurs and survivors know how to adjust and become stronger, and this is what makes <u>us</u> unstoppable.</i>	We/us	
<i>When <u>we</u> come out of this, know <u>we</u> will be more united than ever.</i>	We	
<i>And when <u>we</u> get to the other side, when <u>we</u> get to America 2.0, <u>we</u> can and will make it a better place.</i>	We	

However, as we can see in Chart 2, there is a point of division between the imaginary formations and their corresponding discursive formations. While the DF1 discursive formation presents, in its imaginary formation, the *You* and *We* subject-positions, the DF2 discursive formation only presents the *We* subject-positions. A division is established from the indefinite pronoun *Somebody*, putting in suspension the verticality and inequality between the different subject-positions involved in the process until then, leaving only one. From that point onwards, *We* includes everyone, there is no longer any gap between those who have knowledge and those who need to learn it. *We* and *You* are unified (no longer occupying distinct subject-positions in the discourse), characterizing a relationship of horizontality and universality. It is possible to observe a similar process in the imaginary and discursive formations present in the SJ-DS sequence. In it there is an impersonal and indirect speech given by the presenter Astrid Fontenelle, which can be attested by the absence of some linguistic marks (such as pronouns in the first person: I/we) and by the reference to another discourse. However, there is a “she” (the creative chief in the advertising market Keka Morelle) who offers information and guidance to the interlocutors (we/us), who are universally understood in the subject-position (through the unsaid) as capable of making a profit through their creative acts. In this case, we can establish that the said is linked to DF1 (discourse formation characterized by the inequality between subject-positions), while the unsaid is affiliated to DF2 (linked to the universality of subject-positions).

This contradiction (inequality-universality) between the DF1 and DF2 discursive formations operates within the discourses, producing meaning effects through the transparency of language. In the same way, silencing is not empty, being seen, in DA, as a horizon of interpretation. Silence is, as well as speech itself, a condition for the production of meaning, which can be seen when an authorization for saying causes the voice of the unauthorized person to have no effect (Orlandi, 2007). However, DA postulates that sayings can only produce meanings through their relationship with exteriority. Thus, the connection between the phenomena of silencing and the inequality-universality contradiction takes on a special character when we consider such exteriority, that is, its socio-historical and ideological conditions of production (Orlandi, 2009; Pêcheux, 1975/2014).

According to Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval (2019), from the 1980s onwards, by extending the logic of competition to the entire society, neoliberalism generates a new set of social norms. The authors characterize this new set and postulate that the norm of competition is universalized, surpassing the borders of the State and even reaching the subjectivity of individuals and their relationship with themselves (Dardot & Laval, 2016). Thus, the creation

of this new system produces changes in the forms of work and in the behaviors and thoughts of the subjects, resulting in the subjective introjection of the logic of competitiveness and overcoming. Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello corroborate this idea by stating that from the 1990s onwards, creativity and flexibility became the new watchwords of the capitalist system. Therefore, it is demanded that the subjects lead all their abilities to their professional performance, including the most personal ones. From this, the capital's demand, which was previously directed to dedication and technical knowledge of workers, starts to require creativity and sagacity in the work exercise. Such notions become part of the composition of the social imaginary about what it takes to be a good professional. Consequently, such conceptions start to generate a differentiation between workers, between those who are said to have such qualities and those who have not, directly influencing their employability and their opportunities within the logic of competition in the capitalist system (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2009).

Thus, the understanding of creativity as a tool has a determined geographical, sociocultural, historical and ideological place. In neoliberalism, the subject is seen as an entrepreneur of himself/herself (Han, 2017) or as a company-individual (Dardot & Laval, 2016) and, faced with the failure of his/her projects and his/her creative actions (considered in this context as non-creative or insufficiently creative), the person is understood to be solely responsible for such misfortunes. For Byung-Chul Han (2017), this is the basis of the neoliberal regime's intelligence: the use of meritocratic self-exploitation, which is able to avoid resistance against the system. From this point on, the responsibility for the effects of different political and economic conjunctures falls only on the individual subjects. Thus, the inequality-universality contradiction (DF1-DF2), present in the discourses, must be conceived as a correlate of the contradictions that permeate neoliberalism as a mode of production and form of social bond, which consist, on the one hand, of the universalization of the competition norm, and on the other hand, in the inequalities inherent to the system.

In this sense, the ST-DS and SJ-DS sequences support a particular representation, linked to neoliberalism, of the mishaps faced by individuals during the pandemic. It is about the capillarity of these difficulties, as well as the tools to face them. Abstaining from addressing the social and political issues that permeate this pandemic crisis and directing responsibility to the interlocutors themselves in their ability to use creativity to assist in the "domestic budget", the discourse engenders, as seen, the silencing of obstacles to the universalization of such a tool. This silencing works on two levels: (a) that of discourse, in which contradictory sayings are disallowed by a game of forces in the circumstances of enunciation; and (b) that of the subject, when the subject is unequivocally identified with the group of those who can and should use the "creativity" tool.

The silencing mechanism of the inequality-universality contradiction operates in a feedback system. The silencing erases inequality, universalizing the category of the creative subject; at the same time, such universalization works as a basis and legitimization for the reproduction of neoliberalism; finally, the contradictions and inequalities inherent to the system are maintained. In this way, we demonstrate how the creative subject becomes a mechanism of interpellation in neoliberal society. More than a psychological category, the creative subject is a discursive category, insofar as it works by sustaining a representation of reality (that is, of individuals, their relationships with each other and with the world) affiliated with neoliberalism. Very perceptively, Boltanski and Chiapello point out to us the contradiction that capitalism itself can impose on this discourse of creativity. If, on the one hand, creativity is an important piece of the board that makes it possible to justify economic accumulation¹⁴, on the

other hand, artistic criticism has accused that the capitalist system itself can oppress creative manifestations, submitting them to market domination as an impersonal force, which designates desirable or not desirable men and products/services (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2009).

Therefore, in neoliberalism, it is the market (through the logic of expenditure and competition) that dictates which subject deserves or not to be considered creative, whether in the arts, whether in entrepreneurship or any other aspect of human doing. There is no recognition of a creative idea without the market, that is, without the possibility of having consumers who share similar values and who are willing to “buy” the living knowledge of the subjects, the ideas put “for sale”. In addition to an economic practice, in this context, expenditure is understood in a broad sense, involving enjoyment and usufruct in the symbolic and social spheres. These sociocultural relationships act as a bargaining chip regarding creativity and they influence the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of the subject regarding his creative act.

As argued by DA, the process of interpellation-identification occurs through discourse (Pêcheux, 1975/2014). As the first consequence of the social bond, identification is a relationship with an Other that was there even before the individual was born (Lacan, 1975/2009). Throughout their development, demands from the most varied spheres of the social body in which the subject is inserted are incorporated. This Ideal of the Self (Freud, 1914/2010), which includes values and desires, comes to the subject from the position that the Other desires him/her in (Lacan, 1973/2008, 1975/2009). According to Alex Starnino (2016), we are asked to identify with the dominant ideology, the Other being the vector of identity and identification. For Lacan (1973/2008, p. 200), “the Other is the place where the chain of the signifier that commands everything that will be able to make itself present of the subject is located, it is the field of this living where the subject has to appear”. The subject comes from their alienation before the Other, which operates on a symbolic level, challenges the subjects and submits them to a complex network of rules and assumptions, being present in every discursive process (Žižek, 2010).

Thus, in neoliberal society, whose values and norms are increasingly present in our social practices, individuals are universally addressed as a subject and identified with the category of the company-individual. In this way, the idea of autonomy, that success is exclusively in our hands and in our personal skills and abilities, drives us to seek social recognition and financial gain. Therefore, the creative subject appears as the one who, endowed with autonomy and the necessary tool, creativity, must be used to enter the neoliberal game of expenditure and competition.

Final considerations

In the course of this article, we sought to problematize the category “creative subject”, what are its conditions of production, where it is inscribed and what forces dispute its narrative and legitimacy to tell its story. The analyzes of the ST-DS and SJ-DS sequences reveal the dominant discourse, which links creativity to utility, to profit and to the market, a phenomenon that, nonetheless, is not exclusive to contemporary society. However, we show that the neoliberal company-individual logic discursively attributes to the subject the responsibility for the “value” of his creativity, silencing the conditions of production of this value. In this sense, the creative subject appears as a mechanism for maintaining and reproducing these ideological formations.

This is one of contemporary societies' marks: creativity as a form of manifestation of the subject's value. This subject is universal as we all are invited to occupy this place, and at the same time is exclusionary because only few are actually allowed to speak from this place and to identify with it. The presented discourses (ST-DS and SJ-DS sequences) omit this logic, attributing to the subject a creative responsibility that would enable him/her (or not) to obtain success.

However, our journey provides more questions than answers. What are the effects of neoliberal rationality on creative products? What impacts does this have on the forms of (r) existence of these subjects? Is it possible to think of a new creative subject within neoliberalism? These are provocations for which we have only a prelude, but which can certainly lead to very enriching discussions that may enhance future reflections on this subject.

T. N. - Translator's notes:

All quotes were directly translated from the Portuguese original quotation, as referenced below, by the article's translator. Moreover, the word "subject" throughout the text, directly translated from the concept "sujeito" in Portuguese, refers to a person not looked upon by an individualistic perspective, but otherwise usually by a social and collective perspective. The word in Portuguese in no way refers to an inferior position, nor a citizen in a country with a king or queen. It concerns the one who has subjectivity.

Notes

1 However, the authors point out that, currently, due to being influenced by contemporary Western conceptions of creativity, the East integrates the characteristics of both traditions into its noosphere (Niu & Sternberg, 2006).

2 For the Greeks, poetry was above all arts. Plato refers the term poetry (in accordance with the etymological sense of the word *poiesis*) to the very concept of creativity. According to him, everything that passes from non-being to being is poetry (Plato, 2012/2017).

3 Due to the polysemy of the term “governmental”, it is worth mentioning the work of Michel Foucault. For him, governmentality is the “set constituted by the institutions, procedures, analyzes and reflections, calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific and complex form of power, which has the population as its target, as a way of knowing the political economy and for essential technical instruments, security devices” (Foucault, 1978/2017, p. 429). Oliveira’s analysis (2016) develops from this perspective, which, however, is not ours, since we start from the Pêcheuxian perspective on discourse. Even so, Oliveira’s work remains a necessary reference for dealing specifically with the discourse on creativity, a theme that we develop here.

4 The concept of ideology used in the text is the one proposed by Louis Althusser. Ideology has a material existence and always exists in an apparatus, in its practice. Ideology here is not seen in a negative sense, as a denial of reality. Ideology is an essential structure of the historical life of societies (Althusser, 1970/1992).

5 Similar discourses are recurrent in our contemporaneity, being present in television programs, advertisements, biographies, novels, educational documentaries, scientific production, etc. As an example, we can mention the narratives present in the documentary *Brazil criativo.DOC: economia criativa do Brasil* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NfuiJDpfn4>) and in the reportage of *Fala Brasil* made available by the broadcaster *Record TV* (<https://recordtv.r7.com/fala-brasil/videos/criatividade-e-diferencial-no-mercado-de-trabalho-saiba-desenvolver-essa-caracteristica-02102021>). In the same way, Teresa Amabile has been developing an extensive research about creativity facing the optics of production and performance in organizational environments (Amabile, 1988; Amabile et al., 1996; Amabile et al., 2005).

6 <https://globoplay.globo.com/v/8906032/>

7 Both GNT channel and *portal Globo.com* belong to Grupo Globo, the biggest media and communication network in Brazil and in Latin America.

8 *Shark Tank* is a television show in which entrepreneurs present themselves to big investors, aiming to obtain financing from them for their ideas and products.

9 *American Broadcasting Company* (ABC) is a US multinational network of television broadcast.

10 *Sony Channel* belongs to *Sony Entertainment Inc.*, entertainment company based in New York, US.

11 Directly translated from the Portuguese quotation by the article's translator.

12 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jK4kmhjweUw&feature=youtu.be>

13 According to these studies, economic inequality would be related to family income, education, vulnerability of (black, sons and daughters of single mothers etc.) subgroups, to the geographical location, among other factors (e.g. Chetty, Hendren, Kline, & Saez, 2014; Corak, 2013; Mazumder, 2011; Bradbury & Triest, 2016).

14 According to the authors, the “Cidade inspirada” (“inspired city”) – one of the six “cities” (that is, conventions) that have universal character, facing common well, and that justify the spirit of capitalism – having creativity as one of the manifestations that validate the greatness of those who have it (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2009).

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