

# Pathoanalysis of the subject of capitalism

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**Funding information**

National Research Foundation of South Africa

## Abstract

Freud remarked that, by analogy with petrology, just as one can discern the structure of a crystal from fragments that are broken off from larger pieces, so, too, one can discern the 'structure' of society from individuals who suffer certain pathologies. Philippe van Haute proposed that on this basis, a project of 'pathoanalysis' is possible as a contribution to a philosophical anthropology of the present. It is as if the overall structure of society is condensed in its pathological fragments. Hence, it makes sense to scrutinise some of the most promising 'pathological fragments' - that is, those which, judging by extant literature, seem to resonate with Freud's claims - in an effort to come to grips with the overall 'structure' of contemporary society, which is that of neoliberal capitalism. The pathological 'fragments' examined in this article are obsessional neurosis, perversion, and schizophrenia, the first of which was selected in the light of Ian Parker's claim, that the exemplary capitalist subject is the obsessional neurotic. The second was chosen because Freud's characterisation of sadism as a form of perversion resonates with the insights of a number of contemporary thinkers on capitalist practices, and the third - schizophrenia - was selected in the light of the work of Deleuze and Guattari, in which the contemporary subject was described as typically 'schizoid', given the schizophrenising effects of capitalist flows. Against this background one can draw certain conclusions about the direction psychotherapy could take in contemporary capitalist society.

*Consider the difference between the study of minerals and of rocks in mineralogy. The minerals are described as individuals, no doubt on the basis of the fact that they often occur as crystals, sharply separated from their environment. Rocks consist of aggregation of minerals, which, we may be sure,*

*have not come together by chance but as a result of what determined their origin. In the theory of the neuroses we still know too little of the course of their development to produce anything resembling petrology. But we are certainly doing the right thing if we start by isolating from the mass the individual clinical entities which we recognize and which are comparable to the minerals. (Sigmund Freud, New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis)*

In Lecture XXXI of the *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis* of 1933 Freud provided an important clue to the understanding of what is here referred to as “pathoanalysis.” In the course of a transition from dwelling on what he here referred to as “foreign territory to the ego” (Freud, 1933/2011c, p. 4666), namely, that of the repressed as represented by symptoms (the investigation of which marked the beginning of psychoanalysis), to that of the ego (which one might expect to be much better known and more easily accessible), he remarked:

*the ego can be split; it splits itself during a number of its functions—temporarily at least. Its parts can come together again afterwards. That is not exactly a novelty . . . . On the other hand, we are familiar with the notion that pathology, by making things larger and coarser, can draw our attention to normal conditions which would otherwise have escaped us. Where it points to a breach or a rent, there may normally be an articulation present. If we throw a crystal to the floor, it breaks; but not into haphazard pieces. It comes apart along its lines of cleavage into fragments whose boundaries, though they were invisible, were predetermined by the crystal's structure. Mental patients are split and broken structures of the same kind. Even we cannot withhold from them something of the reverential awe which peoples of the past felt for the insane. They have turned away from external reality, but for that very reason they know more about internal, psychical reality and can reveal a number of things to us that would otherwise be inaccessible to us. (1933/2011c, p. 4667)*

Freud proceeded by illustrating what he had in mind; he executed what one might call a brief pathoanalysis of a certain kind of delusional patient, who believes him- or herself to be constantly observed and pointed out that this is not “yet” identical to hallucinations of persecution. Significantly, however, these “insane people” focus our attention on the possibility that “in each of us there is present in his ego an agency which observes and threatens to punish, and which in them has merely become sharply divided from their ego and mistakenly displaced it into external reality” (Freud, 1933/2011c, p. 4668). What he was talking about is that “observing agency” which he labelled the “super-ego” as something distinct from the ego, and which announces itself characteristically in the guise of pangs of conscience (1933/2011c, p. 4668). Here one has a fine example of what (Freudian) “pathoanalysis” means (Van Haute, 2013, p. 31–47): an analysis and understanding of “normal” states of mind and kinds of behaviour in the light of modes of suffering, or of pathological conditions, conceived of in terms of the metaphor of “fragments” split off from the “crystal” of psychical normality (which means that there is no hermetic distinction between so-called “normality” and pathology, to begin with—humans are all crazy; some just more so than others). In the present paper I intend taking Freud's example, above, as methodological and heuristic point of departure.

Given the complexity of human social and economic relations, society at any stage of historical development is arguably “overdetermined” in the sense Freud (1895/2011d) gave the term where, regarding the aetiology of the neuroses, he claims that they are overdetermined insofar as “several factors must come together to produce this result” (p. 232). By analogy one might therefore claim that the pathoanalytical approach to what might be called a philosophical anthropology of the present is legitimised in its employment of several pathoanalytical “fragments” as perspectives on the subject in overdetermined social life, each of which will resonate with, and highlight, different social topographies. I propose to approach the subject of capitalism from three pathoanalytical perspectives, treated as “fragments” torn from the “crystal” of human existence: those of obsessional neurosis, perversion, and schizophrenia, given the fact that—as the analysis and interpretation below will show—these three perspectives resonate with aspects of capitalist society encountered in, or suggested by, the works of Freud himself, Jacques Lacan, Ian Parker, and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Because of the structural differences among these perspectives, one might

expect that each one will highlight a different aspect of living under conditions of capitalist society, although, together, they cannot claim taxonomical comprehensiveness in light of the overdetermined character of society.

## 1 | CAPITALISM, PSYCHOANALYSIS, AND THE ROOTS OF OBSESSIONAL NEUROSIS

To direct the path of thinking it seems productive to start with something that already suggests some kind of explanatory connection between life under capitalism and obsessional neurosis as “fragment” of this overdetermined social condition. Ian Parker, a practising Lacanian psychoanalyst, provided a perspective rich in pertinent suggestions:

*Within the very texture of capitalism as an ostensibly rational system of production and consumption and as terrain on which each individual is free to enter into different kinds of commercial and interpersonal contract with others, there are moments of unbearably excessive irrationality when relations between subjects break apart. This aspect of alienation which haunts everyday reality breaks the trust which glues market trading and the civil community together, and this alienation is “real” as that impossible point at which the subject is torn, divided between commodity exchange and the labour process. Here the subject as such is vaunted in ideology as the psychological individual—perceiving, cognising and electing between alternative courses of action—but, in its pathological condition of obsessional neurosis, it is the subject as product of capitalism. Uncertainty, procrastination, powerlessness, resentment and secretive victories over a world that renders it guilty at its heart for its failure and complicity with exploitation: this is the condition of the subject which may be crystallised in a symptom taken to analysis, and then this structure of the subject can be laid bare as obsessional “clinical structure” and the subject can speak something of the truth of the alienation that forms it. (Parker, 2011, p. 88)*

Parker singled out what is most apposite for the present investigation by isolating the two cardinal areas—capitalist “production and consumption”—where one might anticipate encountering signs of the kind of behaviour or activity that might resonate with the pathological signature of obsessional neurosis, and would hence be indicative of what human existence under capitalism amounts to. Neither of these is dispensable for capitalism to function successfully, although different stages of capitalist development are marked by a dominance of the one over the other. Parker (2011) listed some of the constitutive symptoms of obsessional neurosis (guilt, uncertainty, procrastination, etc.) which one may regard as a kind of concentration of the features displayed by life in capitalist society, and that remind one of the connections that Freud (1895/2011a) posited between obsessional and anxiety neuroses.

The point here is not that everyone working under conditions of capitalism is an obsessional neurotic, “clinically speaking. Rather, the present investigation is predicated on Freud's (anthropological) belief, alluded to above in terms of the metaphor of a broken crystal, that by scrutinising pathological conditions such as hysteria and obsessional neurosis and examining their constitutive features one learns something about the human condition as such. To be able to explore obsessional neurosis as a pathology that may throw light on a society pervasively structured by capitalist “production and consumption,” the peculiar structure of this pathology has to be scrutinised. Again, Parker is helpful. There is a name in psychoanalysis, he observed, for someone who, paradoxically, resists “the progress of the analytic work precisely because they are so compliant with the analyst, ‘obsessional neurotic’” (2011, p. 41). The key term qualifying obsessional neurotic behaviour here is “compliant,” which means obedient, acquiescent or submissive.

Admittedly, it seems unlikely that subjects' actions under capitalism would merit the description of obedience, but it certainly chimes with what Foucault (1995, p. 195–228) observed about subjects in panoptical, disciplinary societies being economically productive but politically impotent. It also resonates with psychoanalytical investigation in a different context, where Freud elaborated on the roots of “obsessional (compulsion) neurosis” in *Totem and Taboo* (1919). Here he remarked that “the study of the psychology of the neuroses is important for the understanding of the development of culture” (p. 122). Specifically, Freud observed, the neuroses of paranoiac delusion, hysteria, and compulsion

(obsessional) neurosis display a significant, albeit distorting, “correspondence” with philosophical systems, artistic creation and religion, respectively. Obsessional neurosis, according to him, was a “caricature” (1919, p. 122) of a religion—a cultural practice where, more conspicuously than anywhere else, obedience to certain precepts is demanded from adherents (the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament probably being the best-known instance of such precepts).

Tracing back psychic grounds of “compulsion neurosis” to a “pre-religious age,” Freud (1919, p. 31) elaborated on the prevalence of prohibitions among primitive races known as “taboo”:

*We may say ... that we deal with a series of restrictions which these primitive races impose upon themselves; this and that is forbidden without any apparent reason; nor does it occur to them to question this matter, for they subject themselves to these restrictions as a matter of course and are convinced that any transgression will be punished automatically in the most severe manner. There are reliable reports that innocent transgressions of such prohibitions have actually been punished automatically. For instance, the innocent offender who had eaten from a forbidden animal became deeply depressed, expected his death and then actually died. The prohibitions mostly concern matters which are capable of enjoyment such as freedom of movement and unrestrained intercourse ... Something like a theory seems to underlie all these prohibitions, it seems as if these prohibitions are necessary because some persons and objects possess a dangerous power which is transmitted by contact with the object so charged, almost like a contagion. (1919, p. 36)*

*It may be surmised that the taboo of Polynesian savages is after all not so remote from us as we were at first inclined to believe; the moral and customary prohibitions which we ourselves obey may have some essential relation to this primitive taboo the explanation of which may in the end throw light upon the dark origin of our own “categorical imperative.” (p. 38)*

To be sure, the Kantian categorical imperative (to act in such a manner that the maxim of your action can function as a universal law for all rational beings), which is, after all, purely formal, may appear to be too strong to apply to cultural/social imperatives, but it serves to emphasise the ostensibly binding prohibitive force of the taboo, as well as of comparable contemporary obligations under capitalism, as I shall try to demonstrate. Freud's remark, that “something like a theory” (1919, p. 36)—concerning the nature of taboo objects, related rules, and of the consequences of transgressing them—seems to be implicated, suggests that, if one can indeed claim for the hegemonic economic system of the 21<sup>st</sup> century a force comparable to that of a primitive taboo, and hence perceive in subjects' actions *vis-à-vis* capitalist imperatives a comparable obsessional-neurotic structure, something akin to an implicit theory must be operative in the latter case too.

This impression is strengthened when one considers Freud's (1909/2011b) reflections on the so-called “rat-man's” obsessional neurosis, which, according to him, was similarly rooted in what the subject internalised as prohibitions, which conflicted with his sexual desires (the sphere of enjoyment), giving rise to obsessive guilt-centred behaviour as symptom of a palpable tension between conscious affection and countervailing hatred towards the authority figure representing the source of the prohibitions. Even the element of superstition is present, as well as asceticism, as a kind of self-punishment (Freud, 1909/2011b, p. 2194). But is there any indication that the pathological characteristics of obsessional neurosis casts light on “normal” subjects in capitalist society? It would depend on the way people behave under these social (and economic) conditions.

## 2 | CAPITALISM AND RELIGION

In this respect sociologist Max Weber helps one understand the similarity between subjects' behaviour under capitalism and under conditions governed by a belief in taboo (and by implication by religion, to the degree that religious dogma proscribes certain sorts of behaviour and encourages others). As already noted, this reverberates with the psychological traits associated with obsessional neurosis. To approximate the “spirit” of capitalism in terms of what he

called the notion of a “calling”—ultimately having its roots in the complex history of Protestant practices (Weber, 1930/2001)—Weber quoted Benjamin Franklin formulating, in Freud's words (1919, p. 36), “something like a theory” concerning appropriate behaviour of employees under capitalist conditions:

*After industry and frugality, nothing contributes more to the raising of a young man in the world than punctuality and justice in all his dealings; therefore never keep borrowed money an hour beyond the time you promised, lest a disappointment shut up your friend's purse for ever.*

*The most trifling actions that affect a man's credit are to be regarded. The sound of your hammer at five in the morning, or eight at night, heard by a creditor, makes him easy six months longer; but if he sees you at a billiard-table, or hears your voice at a tavern, when you should be at work, he sends for his money the next day; demands it, before he can receive it, in a lump.*

*It shows, besides, that you are mindful of what you owe; it makes you appear a careful as well as an honest man, and that still increases your credit. (Franklin, cited in Weber, 1930/2001, p. 15)*

The moral of these observations is clear: under capitalist conditions everyone who has to earn a living (i.e., most people) should behave in such a way that they are perceived as keeping their noses to the grindstone and as servicing their debt conscientiously and punctually; in the absence of this, one's indispensable credit-worthiness collapses. As pointed out above, Weber regarded Franklin's exhortation to workers as a formulation of nothing less than a “calling,” that is, what one might describe as an injunction to labour with unfailing conscientiousness, resonating with Freud's investigation of primitive people's ostensibly infantilistic or irrational, but nevertheless “conscientious” or obedient observance of rules governing behaviour in the face of what is taboo. In passing, it is illuminating to compare Weber's insights with Freud's (1919, p. 116), where he remarked that “the character of compulsion neurotics shows a predominant trait of painful conscientiousness which is a symptom of reaction against the temptation which lurks in the unconscious, and which develops into the highest degrees of guilty conscience as their illness grows worse.”

The reference to conscientious labour echoes another relevant insight on Weber's part, namely his claim that, while elements of what may legitimately be regarded as capitalist economic practice (intent on accumulating wealth in various ways) have existed in a wide variety of Eastern and Western societies throughout history, what distinguishes modern Western capitalism has to do with its character of a vocation or calling, and with the rational organisation of “(formally) free labour” (Weber, 1930/2001, pp. xxxi–xxxvii), something that resonates with Parker's remark, above, concerning capitalist production, consumption being its other constituent practice.

Contrary to what one might expect, it is striking that Weber described the behaviour of individuals which he saw as exemplifying the capitalist ethos encapsulated in Franklin's advice in terms resembling the irrational, but punctilious actions of “primitive” people in relation to taboos: “He gets nothing out of his wealth for himself, except the irrational sense of having done his job well” (Weber, 1930/2001, p. 33), and “We are here particularly interested in the origin of precisely the irrational element which lies in this, as in every conception of a calling” (p. 38).

What Weber regarded as being peculiar to what he called a “philosophy of avarice” (1930/2001, p. 17) is particularly the notion that individuals have a duty to increase their capital; in other words, it assumes the proportions of an ethical obligation. As he put it: “It is not mere business astuteness, that sort of thing is common enough, it is an ethos” (p. 17). This was what interested Weber—whence this quality of moral obligation in Franklin's practical advice on “proper” behaviour under capitalist circumstances? Recall that Weber ultimately uncovered such punctilious labouring as having its roots in Protestant sources. He conceived of the link between capitalism and religion as follows:

*In fact, the summum bonum of his [capitalist] ethic, the earning of more and more money, combined with the strict avoidance of all spontaneous enjoyment of life, is above all completely devoid of any eudæmonistic, not to say hedonistic, admixture. It is thought of so purely as an end in itself, that from*

*the point of view of the happiness of, or utility to, the single individual, it appears entirely transcendental and absolutely irrational. Man is dominated by the making of money, by acquisition as the ultimate purpose of his life. Economic acquisition is no longer subordinated to man as the means for the satisfaction of his material needs. This reversal of what we should call the natural relationship, so irrational from a naïve point of view, is evidently as definitely a leading principle of capitalism as it is foreign to all peoples not under capitalistic influence. At the same time it expresses a type of feeling which is closely connected with certain religious ideas. (1930/2001, p. 18)*

Recall that Freud was quoted, above, on taboo prohibitions among primitive peoples as stating: “The prohibitions mostly concern matters which are capable of enjoyment” (1919, p. 36). This chimes audibly with Weber's observation that the capitalist ethic entails “the strict avoidance of all spontaneous enjoyment of life.” Weber was quite aware that people who are born into the capitalist universe do not necessarily “consciously” accept these “ethical” precepts (pp. 19–20); at the same time, if one does not assimilate and live according to them, he pointed out, one will be ruthlessly excluded from the economic system. He made this quite explicit:

*The capitalistic economy of the present day is an immense cosmos into which the individual is born, and which presents itself to him, at least as an individual, as an unalterable order of things in which he must live. It forces the individual, in so far as he is involved in the system of market relationships, to conform to capitalistic rules of action. The manufacturer who in the long run acts counter to these norms, will just as inevitably be eliminated from the economic scene as the worker who cannot or will not adapt himself to them will be thrown into the streets without a job. (Weber, 1930/2001, pp. 19–20)*

In fact, Weber formulated this situation in a manner that makes it conspicuously pertinent for (Lacanian) psychoanalysis, conceived of as being resolutely opposed to “adaptation” (see also Parker, 2011, pp. 35–36).

*At present under our individualistic political, legal, and economic institutions, with the forms of organization and general structure which are peculiar to our economic order, this spirit of capitalism might be understandable, as has been said, purely as a result of adaptation. (Weber, 1930/2001, p. 33)*

In sum, Weber's characterisation of capitalism revealed the extent to which the pathological structure of obsessional neurosis—with its guilt, anxious conscientiousness, and obedience—functions as heuristic “model” of this social and economic state of affairs.

### 3 | “NORMAL” BEHAVIOUR AS ADAPTATION

If one conceives of adaptation to the demands of capitalist society, as refracted through the pathological lens of obsessional neurosis, as the “normal” state of affairs, the question of what such normality amounts to bears some scrutiny. Michel Foucault (1995) has demonstrated at length that subjects in modern society are pervasively subjectivised by and through “mechanisms” that tend to reduce them to “docile bodies” (1995, pp. 138, 170–193). Chief among such “disciplinary mechanisms” are “hierarchical observation,” “normalizing judgment,” and the “examination,” in which the two former mechanisms are combined. Broadly speaking, “normal behaviour” is conceived of in this investigation in accordance with Foucault's understanding of the concept, namely a way of behaving, acting, or being which embodies conformism or adaptation in relation to a discursively established “norm” of sorts, whether pertaining to economic behaviour—such as consumer “obedience” to the practice of excessive spending, or workers keeping their noses to the grindstone for the sake of sustained company profits—or to political conformism.

The notion of “adaptation,” while not synonymous with “normalisation,” is related to it insofar as someone subjected to the latter may be said to “adapt” to the criteria applicable to the norm in question, unless he or she demonstrably resists mechanisms of normalisation, in the process claiming a measure of autonomy for himself or herself (Olivier, 2010). More specifically, by “adaptation” is meant that mode of social and psychic being which Lacan's

psychoanalytic work was intended to subvert (Parker, 2011). Van Haute (2002, pp. xxvii–xxviii) drew attention to Lacan's claim, that orthodox psychoanalytic practice (let alone mainstream psychology) has promoted a “reinforcement of the ego” at every level, to equip it with the strength to “manage” conflicts and “adapt itself to reality,” and calls the answer to the question concerning the specific “reality” that the subject must adapt itself to “surprising”: it is none other than “the given social reality in which the analysand exists” (Van Haute, 2002, p. xxviii). Why surprising? Even at an intuitive level one has to admit that there are several historical instances of societies where the “given social reality” was patently an unjust order that could be described as pathological, or pathologising insofar as it gave rise to pervasive suffering in the societies concerned—Nazi Germany and apartheid South Africa are obvious examples. To assist subjects in “adapting” to life under those circumstances could hardly be described as a laudable aim of psychoanalysis or of psychology in general (Olivier, 2009a).

However, not only such exceptional cases are involved here; it appears that every kind of society is implicated. Nor should this surprise one, given that, at least since the ancient Greeks' (self-)conception of humans as “rational” animals, human beings have thought of themselves as facing the task of adjusting themselves to social or material circumstances in a rational manner, with no fundamental reason to regard this as being problematical—the saying, “when in Rome, do as the Romans do,” captures this succinctly. Considering that some schools of thought, from antiquity (the Stoics, for instance) to today, have affirmed the rational character of reality—a claim that culminated in the absolute idealism of Hegel—it is understandable that the thought of the subject living in accordance with the demands of social and natural reality did not pose a problem for philosophy. It was Freud who upset the applecart, according to Lacan (Van Haute, 2002), by insisting on the inescapable alienation of the subject from reality, in stark contrast to the image of “adaptable” human beings encountered in traditional philosophy and psychology. Commenting on the psychoanalytic aim of ego-strengthening, Lacan observed:

*If what is called strengthening the ego exists, it can only be the accentuation of the fantasy relation that is always correlative of the ego, especially in the case of the neurotic with a typical structure. As far as the latter is concerned, the strengthening of the ego moves in exactly the opposite direction from that of the dissolution, not only of symptoms, which are strictly speaking within their own meaningfulness but may when the occasion arises be mobilized, but also of the structure itself . . . . What is the sense of what Freud contributed with his new topography when he stressed the imaginary nature of the ego's function? It's precisely the structure of neurosis. (1997, p. 174)*

Lacan called attention here to the fact that the ego, as opposed to the subject triangulated across the three registers of the imaginary (where the ego or *moi* is located), the symbolic (where the subject of the enunciation, or the *je* is located) and the real (which marks the limits of linguistic intelligibility), is the agency which is burdened with the task of adaptation to social reality, a process shot through with imaginary (fantasy-) identification—where “identification-with” is commensurate with “adaptation to.” Hence, in the case of neurotics any strengthening of the ego at the level of fantasy would exacerbate the already excessive, albeit ostensibly “rational” and conscientious adjustment to normative societal demands, which typically takes the form of “obsessively managing” such compliance (Parker, 2011, p. 147). Nor should this be surprising; as Parker reminded us, the “enactment of fantasy—when the subject becomes the instrument of the Other's *jouissance*—is the hidden underside of obsessional neurosis” (p. 146).

#### 4 | “TO BE OR NOT TO BE”

Whatever the specific modes of “normality” may be that one encounters in neoliberal capitalist society, the trail of investigation leads back to the phenomenon of obsessional neurosis as pathological paradigm for understanding such “normal” social conditions, so that one might say this particular pathology constitutes a clue to a philosophical anthropology of the present—that is, to understanding what being human amounts to in the age of (inescapably) living



according to capitalist demands and expectations. This calls for a more nuanced appropriation of obsessional neurosis in relation to the human condition, and in this regard a remark of Freud's seems to be a promising point of departure:

*The language of an obsessional neurosis—the means by which it expresses its secret thoughts—is, as it were, only a dialect of the language of hysteria; but it is a dialect in which we ought to be able to find our way about more easily, since it is more nearly related to the forms of expression adopted by our conscious thought than is the language of hysteria. Above all, it does not involve the leap from a mental process to a somatic innervation—hysterical conversion—which can never be fully comprehensible to us. (1909/2011b, p. 2128)*

Considering that a dialect is usually regarded as being subordinate to a formally distinct language from which it is derived, it appears that hysteria is, for Freud, in the position of such a putatively “more primary” language. Moreover, if obsessional neurosis is more intelligible than hysteria, it seems to be because the latter, in his judgment, involves the body in its aspect of what Lacan calls the real (which is not symbolisable). At any rate, obsessional neurosis appears to be subsumed under hysteria as a kind of “primordial language”. Importantly, however, Freud acknowledges the somatic aspect of hysteria, which implies that there is a limit to what language can reveal about its relation to the body.

No doubt Freud was speaking metaphorically here, but it does seem to me to be significant for the attempt to understand the structure of obsessional neurosis, which I am also using as a (“crystal”) metaphor for the pattern assumed by working and living under the regime of capitalism. More light is thrown on the matter by Lacan's contention, that:

*I spoke to you of the Other of speech as being where the subject recognizes himself and gets himself recognized. This, and not the disturbance of some oral, anal or even genital relation, is the determining factor in a neurosis ... The issue here is a question that arises for the subject at the level of the signifier, of the to be or not to be, at the level of his being. (1997, p. 168)*

The symbolic sphere (the social register *par excellence*), in other words, is where (obsessional) neurosis manifests itself, and Lacan's allusion to Hamlet's “to be or not to be” soliloquy alerts one to what might be termed the “existential” significance of this form of suffering. It is as if the symptoms of obsessional neuroses—anxiety, doubt, repetitive behaviour, depression—are a broadly symbolic or discursive code in which the subject's search for some form of reassurance regarding the meaning, or justification, of their existence is registered. Comparatively speaking, Lacan's conception of hysteria reminds one of Freud's, insofar as the former, too, focuses on the limits on the part of language as far as the “singularity” of the individual subject is concerned—a singularity that ultimately bears on the incommensurability between language and the (body as) real. Lacan put it this way:

*There is, in effect, something radically unassimilable to the signifier. It's quite simply the subject's singular existence. Why is he here? Where has he come from? What is he doing here? Why is he going to disappear? The signifier is incapable of providing him with the answer, for the good reason that it places him beyond death. The signifier already considers him dead, by nature it immortalizes him. As such, the question of death is another mode of the neurotic creation of the question—its obsessional mode. (1997, p. 179–180)*

What Lacan said here pertains to what Van Haute described as the fundamental “ontological dualism” (2002, pp. xv–xvi) in his work, that between language and the body. From the moment the subject acquires, or “enters” language, he or she cannot return to the unassimilable “real” (of the body in its “pure” organicity; Silverman, 1983). The neurotic in hysterical mode therefore embodies the question, as Lacan indicates, of sexual differentiation in the singular individual. Through a discussion of hysteria in relation to Freud's Dora case, Lacan (1997) arrived at the formulation of what he called “the hysteric's question”, namely “What is it to be a woman?” (p. 171), or alternatively, “What is a feminine organ?” (p. 172). This contrasts with what he identified as the obsessional neurotic's question (which chimes with his reference



to Hamlet's paradigmatic question about the sense of human existence, "To be or not to be, that is the question"), in the last quotation, above: "Why is he here? Where has he come from? What is he doing here? Why is he going to disappear?" (Lacan, 1997, p. 179). In a word, given the dualism between the body—which is subject to individuation through reproduction—and the symbolic, the latter cannot furnish the answers to these questions, no matter how anxiously the obsessional dwells on them, if not explicitly, then symptomatically. Hence the only option open to obsessional neurotics is to justify their existence somehow, or to attempt to do so, for example through incessant (obsessive) work (Evans, 1996, p. 129).

In passing, one may note that there is another (patriarchal) side to obsessional neurosis as well, as Lacan indicated where he remarked: "paternity and death are two signifiers that Freud links in relation to obsessionals" (1997, p. 293). This explains the fact that Lacan alluded to Shakespeare's eponymous character, Hamlet, whose "existential crisis," encapsulated in his remark, "To be or not to be, that is the question," is situated in his agonising about his father's death, and whether or not to avenge him. Put differently, the obsessional's subjectivity, like Hamlet's, is structured by the "Name of the father" as transcendental signifier.

In his discussion of obsessional neurosis in relation to capitalism, Parker (2011) cast more light on Lacan's insights, and simultaneously situated it in a broader historical and social context. It is telling that Parker reminded us of the hallmark of psychoanalytic patients who are described as "obsessional neurotics," namely "compliance" (alluded to earlier). In their eagerness to cooperate with the therapist, they nevertheless, by clinging to a kind of "protected private space of thinking," subvert the salutary effects of "the impossible task of free association," and unwittingly throw up a barrier of resistance between them, surreptitiously constituting the analyst as a "moral master." This is related to the "system of rituals that inhabit and imprison the mind of a particular kind of individual" (Parker, 2011, p. 42), which Freud regarded as being symptomatic of obsessional neurosis. Parker's elaboration on this pathological condition in capitalist society is comprehensible if one recalls that Lacan reconceptualised obsessional neurosis in structural terms:

*Those who suffer in obsessional mode under capitalism are subjects who buy into the separation of intellectual and manual labour, the separation of thinking from being, and live out the predicament of a puzzle about the nature of being as if false consciousness really did operate only at the level of the individual. Lacan argues that the question that haunts the obsessional neurotic concerns being, existence, their right to exist and whether they are alive or dead .... The 'obsessions' are repetitive ideas manifested in a series of actions from which the subject seems unable to escape. Even though this eventually may result in suffering that is too much to bear, enough to bring someone to ask for help, it is still stubbornly tied to personal administrative strategies that contain an unbearable surplus of satisfaction—"jouissance" is our name for this excess—within the domain of the "pleasure principle" (Parker, 2011, p. 42)*

The "personal administrative strategies" that seem to guarantee the obsessional neurotic in the capitalist domain his or her singular *jouissance* resonates with Paul Verhaeghe's (2014) exposure of the distinctive features of work in this domain, such as regular self-assessment, (constantly repeated) preparation for work-audits, and so on. Moreover, Parker reminded us that it is illusory to believe in the ability to escape into a hermetic space of thinking where one is protected against the toll that manual labour takes on one's health; the "intellectual" worker is no less exposed to "false consciousness" than the labourer—not in the Marxist sense of "some kind of mistaken or imaginary view of reality" (Althusser, 1970/1984), but precisely as consciously traversing a "false," albeit normative social reality (that of neoliberal capitalism) which presents itself to one as the only "true" social reality (so-called "liberal democracy") that all of history had been preparing humanity for (Fukuyama, 1992), and to which one must adapt.

If one considers that psychoanalysis is predicated on what is arguably the originary "modern" philosophical gesture, on the part of René Descartes, to split human beings into mind (*res cogitans*) and body (*res extensa*), it comes as no surprise that the modern subject is always already, in principle, an obsessional neurotic in Lacanian terms, given

Descartes's preoccupation with the nature of the subject's being (Parker, 2011). This psychic structure is replicated ("writ large") in capitalism, given the element of mastery (mind) over nature (body), anticipated by Descartes (1972), as well as the hierarchical management–labour relation (the contemporary counterpart of the master–slave relation) that seems inseparable from it.

It may seem absurd to find in an economic regime which imposes an inexhaustible work-burden on workers—from which not even those at the top of the hierarchy, like company executives, are exempted (Verhaeghe, 2014)—the ultimate, quasi-oracular source of the answer to the obsessional's subliminal question concerning his or her being and the meaning of their existence, in the form of an imperative: "Work!" And yet, in the light of the work, ostensibly tirelessly performed by workers and executives alike, one must admit that this imperative is, by and large, obeyed, accompanied (as Parker indicated, above) by the *jouissance* peculiar to the obsessional neurotic, which therefore functions as pathological paradigm or archetype in this situation, in the process giving one pathoanalytic access to a salient attribute of contemporary capitalist society.

## 5 | PERVERSION: CAPITALISM'S DIRTY LITTLE SECRET

Recalling what was argued earlier about human society being "overdetermined" at any given time as far as the (historical, cultural, political, social, technological, and collective, as well as individual, psychic) "causality" underpinning its constitutive characteristics is concerned, additional pathoanalytic angles of intelligibility can be added to the category of obsessional neurosis. The second such perspective I want to direct at extant capitalist society is that of so-called perversion, which assumes different guises. The one among these that seems to me to lend itself best to a pathoanalytic approach is sadism, of which Freud observed (1905/2011f, p. 1484) that it consists in "the desire to inflict pain upon the sexual object", which is biologically explicable by the need (specifically on the part of most men) "for overcoming the resistance of the sexual object by means other than the process of wooing," and therefore appears to be connected with an "aggressive component of the sexual instinct." The distinctive attribute of sadism in the sense of perversion proper, however, is that, instead of only comprising a constituent of the "normal" sexual instinct or drive (already highly significant for a pathoanalytic contribution to a philosophical anthropology of the present), it has become dominant and, in a sense, "independent." For my present pathoanalytic purposes the following remark by Freud is most significant:

*In ordinary speech the connotation of sadism oscillates between, on the one hand, cases merely characterized by an active or violent attitude to the sexual object, and, on the other hand, cases in which satisfaction is entirely conditional on the humiliation and maltreatment of the object. Strictly speaking, it is only this last extreme instance which deserves to be described as a perversion. (1905/2011f, p. 1484)*

Freud's insistence that, in a less extreme form, sadism is always already perceptible in "normal" (male) sexual behaviour, strengthens and justifies the pathoanalytic principle, that by scrutinising the pathological phenomenon one may arrive at a firmer and more accurate grasp of the so-called "normal" condition, in this case conventional, "normalised" capitalist society—or, to be more exact, normal, valorised, neoliberal capitalist practices. To the question, what specific capitalist practices come into clearer focus when placed under the lens of sadism, the first thing that strikes one is the relentless competition or rivalry for material resources by which it is marked, and which has given rise to extreme inequalities, regardless of the "optimism" that has always accompanied the theory underpinning this economic model (Marx, 1887; Piketty, 2014; Parker, 2011). One might go as far as saying that capitalism, as an economic principle for the organisation of societies, of necessity has to promote—in fact, assume—an anthropological model of human beings as being inescapably locked into an internecine, aggressive rivalry, where (in quasi-Darwinian fashion) the fittest will not merely survive, but survive best, and even flourish. Needless to stress, this putatively endemic competition and supposedly ineradicable competitive nature of the individual subject is held up as the true,

unalterable state of affairs, on the one hand, and axiologically valorised, on the other, so that a society of ruthlessly competing individuals and companies—and on a larger scale, countries—turns out to be the result of a self-fulfilling prophecy, or self-reproducing ideology.

How does the crystal fragment of sadism function as condensation of a social sphere marked by such unadulterated, merciless economic rivalry? Although people working for companies locked into competition for “market share” would probably deny it at a conscious level, the tacit aim is unavoidably to maximise economic “pleasure” by inflicting optimal economic and financial “pain” on competitors. Perhaps one could even go as far as claiming that, as in the case of outright sadistic perversion, what companies “get off” on—that is, the prerequisite for their extreme economic pleasure—is the economic “humiliation and maltreatment” (Freud, 1905/2011f, p. 1484) of their rivals in the economic arena, and the closer to their own economic stature the competitor is, the greater the pleasure gained from an economic drubbing on the stock market.

A better grasp of such a claim is facilitated by recalling the connection that Lacan posited, on the basis of psychoanalytical evidence, between aggressivity and the act of identification with one's own mirror-image. The lived-body experiences of the subject prior to the (spurious) “unity” perceived in its own mirror image, assume the shape of fragmented body-images, according to Lacan. These so-called imagos represent aspects of what he described as:

*aggressive intentions ... the images of castration, mutilation, dismemberment, dislocation, evisceration, devouring, bursting open of the body, in short, the imagos that I have grouped together under the apparently structural term of imagos of the fragmented body. (1977a, p. 11)*

This means that aggressivity manifests itself in images of fragmentation and mutilation. These images must be understood as being the result of retrospective imaginary reconstructions of recollected somatic experiences preceding the mirror stage and its “unifying” function regarding the emergence of the *moi* or ego. It makes sense if one recalls that the infant who (mis-)recognises its mirror image narcissistically as “itself” experiences a disharmony between the fragmentation and awkwardness of its own uncoordinated body, lacking motor control, and the hypnotising, “unitary” mirror-image with which it identifies, and which is (as Lacan indicated in “The Mirror Stage”; 1977b), simultaneously alienating. It is significant for my present purposes that Lacan regarded such alienation as implying the “otherness” of the mirror image, which imparts to the subject a structural rivalry with him- or herself (1977a); hence the aggressivity. From this disharmony within the subject (between the unitary visual *Gestalt* and a fragmented body), it is but a small step to the infant subject's relations with others being modelled on it. After all, on the basis of the primordial mirror-image identification, she or he subsequently identifies with the iconic appearance (that is, body-images) of other subjects. And rivalry, accompanied by “aggressive competitiveness” (Lacan, 1977a) is an integral thread of the subject's relations with others. Lacan therefore posited a correlation (which may seem unlikely at an intuitive level) between this aggressivity and the process of narcissistic identification:

*Thesis IV: Aggressivity is the correlative tendency of a mode of identification that we call narcissistic, and which determines the formal structure of man's ego and of the register of entities characteristic of his world. (1977a, p. 16)*

In Lacanian terms the aggressive rivalries and competition between human beings and others may therefore be understood as deriving from an originary conflict of this kind within the subject itself—an insight that elaborates on Freud's into sadism as corresponding “to an aggressive component of the sexual instinct” (1905/2011f, p. 1484). The originary aggressivity towards oneself (in the guise of the image which is ambivalently experienced as being oneself and being alien at the same time, and with which one enters into rivalry precisely because of it being experienced as “other”) is therefore displaced to “other” others in various social relations, including economic ones. To be sure, this is the “normal” state of affairs, which is arguably exacerbated by subjects living under capitalist conditions where “aggressive competitiveness” is encouraged, indeed, posited as a norm to be emulated in economic

behaviour. The precise nature of neoliberal capitalist competitive rivalry, however, is cast in stark psychoanalytic relief by the characteristic attributes of sadism as described by Freud, insofar as he uncovers the disconcerting truth about this “normal” social and economic condition, that the *jouissance* peculiar to it consists in inflicting pain and humiliation on others, albeit indirectly via financial losses and gains. The principle of approaching the human condition from the perspective opened up by pathological conditions (in this case sadism as one of the so-called perversions), taken as index of characteristically human predispositions, has proved to impart significant intelligibility to neoliberal capitalist society.

If sadism as extreme pleasure imparted by others’ pain and suffering provides an entrance to neoliberal (market-centred) capitalism’s dark soul (if it has one) by way of the notion of competition, then Naomi Klein’s (2007; see also Olivier, 2009b, 2013) account of what she dubbed “disaster capitalism” certainly offers another, perhaps even more revealing key. In brief, “disaster capitalism” denotes the latest phase in capitalist development, which amounts to concentrated, sustained attempts at privatising large areas of a country’s economy that used to be part of the public domain in the wake of some natural or political trauma, in the interest of profiting significantly. Typical examples include: the privatisation of school education after Hurricane Katrina swept through New Orleans in 2005 leaving the city in disarray, when profit-driven charter schools were established to replace the previous public schools before the traumatised population could regroup; the aftermath of the tsunami in Sri Lanka in 2004, when private developers moved in and built resorts as playgrounds for the rich along the beautiful coastline that had been the home of fishing communities, before the latter could recover (Klein, 2007). Klein quoted security operative Mike Battles, commenting on the profitability of the chaotic situation in post-invasion Iraq, as saying: “For us, the fear and disorder offered real promise” (p. 9). (His security company profited from federal contracts in Iraq worth around \$100 million). Klein continued: “His words could serve just as well as the slogan for contemporary capitalism—fear and disorder are the catalysts for each new leap forward” (2007, p. 9).

Succinctly put, what Klein called the “intersection between superprofits and megadisasters” (p. 9) comprises an aspect of the latest phase of capitalism’s relentless drive for dominion over global societies—an aspect, moreover, that reverberates conspicuously with sadism as psychoanalytic key to the distinctive traits of extant society, in this manner contributing to a philosophical anthropology of the present era. One might say that the extreme enjoyment (*jouissance*) of “disaster capitalists” literally depends upon the pain and suffering of others. From the perspective of sadism as perversion this is bathed in the light of comprehensibility.

That neoliberal capitalism may be perceived as being “perverse” becomes even clearer when Jacques Lacan’s “revision” or reformulation of Freud’s notion of perversion is considered (Evans, 1996). Lacan formulated his stance on perversion (which he saw as a clinical structure) differently from time to time, and in one of these articulations he claimed that, unlike the hysterical subject, who questions the symbolic order of society, the perverse subject is the personification of this symbolic order—metaphorically one might say that it is a matter of being “more Catholic than the Pope”. Put in different terms, the perverse subject—someone who is subject to the clinical structure of perversion—identifies fully with what Lacan called the “phallus” (not the penis as male organ, but its symbolic counterpart, which represents fullness of being), as a way of denying the “lack” that characterises every subject. However, because the phallus is unattainable, the pervert has to make do with a fetish of some kind to hide the gap where the phallus should be—small wonder Lacan regarded fetishism as the “perversion of perversions,” as Evans (1996, p. 142) reminded us. In so doing, the perverse subject—here, the subject under capitalism—becomes the representative of the “full” symbolic social order, whereas the hysterical subject questions and challenges it precisely as being lacking. Neoliberalism exemplifies this perverse stance insofar as its endless production of commodities in a manner where nothing can claim long-term value but has to be incessantly replaced by “new models,” amounts to a perverse disavowal of lack (ironically, despite being predicated on it). These commodities, therefore, function metonymically as fetishes that cover up the gaping hole signifying the absence of the phallus, and consumerism, as a kind of compulsive consumption of commodities, may consequently be understood as a form of perversion on the part of subjects under capitalism.

## 6 | CAPITALISM AND THE KALEIDOSCOPE OF SCHIZOPHRENIA

The third and perhaps most encompassing pathoanalytic “fragment” which seems promising as a heuristic perspective on capitalist society is schizophrenia. I shall not restrict my use of the notion of schizophrenia to the clinical sense of “dissociation” that Emil Kraepelin gave to what he termed *dementia praecox*, nor of a kind of “autism” that Eugen Bleuler attributed to it. Nor shall I give priority to Freud's own conception of schizophrenia, although all of these contribute to the more general sense in which I employ the concept here. Freud (1914/2011e, p. 2932), for example, characterised schizophrenia (or what he called “paraphrenia”) in terms of megalomania and a “turning away” from the external world, or, more precisely, a withdrawal of libidinal investment from individuals and objects in the external world. This explains the megalomania: having turned the libido inward towards the ego, the result is a kind of megalomaniacal narcissism. Although not identical, this chimes with Kraepelin and Bleuler's conceptions. Lacan, in turn, appears to subsume schizophrenia (like paranoia) under the aegis of psychosis where he alludes to “the psychotic's exteriority in relation to the entire apparatus of language . . . . They never enter the game of signifiers, except through a kind of external imitation” (1997, pp. 250–251). In all of these cases schizophrenia, clinically speaking, denotes a condition where a “distance” of sorts obtains between the subject and social reality, as it manifests itself, among other symptoms, in an inability to use language “normally” in relation to what it signifies. What this means in terms of psychotic suffering (which would include schizophrenia), becomes clearer when Ian Parker reminds one that “the construction of an alternative universe may turn out to be as unbearable as the one neurotics inhabit” (2011, p. 92).

Turning to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, schizophrenia appears to be associated with the endless production of divergent meanings and “flows,” with no regard for coherence, referential or otherwise—something that they linked firmly with life under capitalism. They posited a generative relation between capital as a process and schizophrenia, and simultaneously explained the source of absurdities to which one is privy in contemporary society in terms of the tension between capital's “schizophrenizing” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983, p. 34) tendency and its need for laws and restrictions. Think of the outright contradiction between the promotion of cigarette smoking (by commending a brand's unique flavour and aroma, for instance) and the legal obligation to print an explicit warning against the lethal dangers of smoking on cigarette cartons. Deleuze and Guattari (1983, p. 34) elaborated on the relation between capitalism and schizophrenia as follows (compare p. 176 about schizophrenia being the “absolute limit”):

*The decoding of flows and the deterritorialization of the socius ... constitutes the most characteristic and the most important tendency of capitalism. It continually draws near to its limit, which is a genuinely schizophrenic limit. It tends, with all the strength at its command, to produce the schizo as the subject of the decoded flows on the body without organs—more capitalist than the capitalist and more proletarian than the proletariat. This tendency is being carried further and further, to the point that capitalism with all its flows may dispatch itself straight to the moon: we really haven't seen anything yet! When we say that schizophrenia is our characteristic malady, the malady of our era, we do not merely mean to say that modern life drives people mad. It is not a question of a way of life, but of a process of production. ... Nor is it merely a question of a simple parallelism, even though from the point of view of the failure of codes, such a parallelism is a much more precise formulation of the relationship between, for example, the phenomena of shifting of meaning in the case of schizophrenics and the mechanisms of ever increasing disharmony and discord at every level of industrial society.*

*What we are really trying to say is that capitalism, through its process of production, produces an awesome schizophrenic accumulation of energy or charge, against which it brings all its vast powers of repression to bear, but which nonetheless continues to act as capitalism's limit. For capitalism*

*constantly counteracts, constantly inhibits this inherent tendency while at the same time allowing it free rein; it continually seeks to avoid reaching its limit while simultaneously tending toward that limit. Capitalism institutes or restores all sorts of residual and artificial, imaginary, or symbolic territorialities, thereby attempting, as best it can, to recode, to rechannel persons who have been defined in terms of abstract quantities. Everything returns or recurs: States, nations, families. That is what makes the ideology of capitalism "a motley painting of everything that has ever been believed." The real is not impossible; it is simply more and more artificial. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983, p. 34)*

Hence, for Deleuze and Guattari the very structure of capitalist social life exhibits the features that are constitutive of schizophrenia as they understand it—instead of tending towards conclusive “territorialisation,” or consolidation of social and individual identities, capitalism constantly “deterritorialises” such identities, in the process releasing “schizzes” which subvert all Oedipal “unities.” Ironically, if schizophrenia is conceived of as the proliferation of meanings and significations, the character of this social condition is exacerbated by capitalism’s countervailing inclination, to posit limits to the very process of releasing schizophrenising energy. The perpetual, deterritorialising expansion of markets is limited by juridical reterritorialisation, such as trade regulations, and the release of schizophrenising energy via virtual social sites like Facebook is reined in by legislation protecting privacy, for example.

Moreover, in pathoanalytic terms Freud and Lacan’s clinically oriented conceptions of schizophrenia make capitalist society, as depicted by Deleuze and Guattari (1983, p. 34), comprehensible as being no less of a “motley painting” (or kaleidoscope) than capitalist ideology. In the first place, the Freudian “paraphrenic” structure of a “turning away” from social and natural reality, and of megalomaniacal narcissism is paradigmatic of the endless production and diversification of consumer goods, amounting to the construction of a veritable artificial reality. Secondly, this exemplary structure is replicated on a larger social scale in a general quasi-megalomania and quasi-narcissism perceptible in the shift towards individuals’ immersion in virtual realms such as Facebook and MySpace and the paralyzing proliferation of multiple options that one has to choose from, or what Renata Salecl referred to as the “tyranny of choice” (2010, p. 76), which goes hand in hand with the proliferation of quasi-subjectivities (Turkle, 1995)—in Deleuze and Guattari’s language, subjects are to be thought of as “assemblages” (1987, p. 88) rather than psychoanalytic “split subjects.” Similarly, there are echoes of Lacan’s claim that the link between the psychotic and language has been severed in the experience afforded by capitalist-engendered technologies. What is known as cyberspace, for example, gives one access to a virtual realm removed from the spatial and temporal characteristics of the human lifeworld, such as the phenomenon of light being accompanied by shadow. In cyberspace there is no shadow, except when it has been programmed into virtual land - and cityscapes (Germain, 2004), and hence the language game of light and shadow in this context would only be a kind of “external imitation” of the cogent use of signifiers. In short, in the words of Ian Buchanan, “We live in a society—in the West, at least—in which many of the pathological symptoms of schizophrenia are lived as the normal condition of everyday life” (2014, p. 2).

Another quasi-schizophrenic perspective on contemporary (“postmodern”) capitalist society—a visionary one, given its time of provenance—came from Søren Kierkegaard’s articulation of the “aesthetic” model of existence in *Either/Or* (1971a), where, via a variety of examples (communicated under different pseudonyms), the structure of “aesthetic” living was uncovered. This included the method called the “rotation of crops” (p. 281), which serves the purpose of keeping life interesting and keeping boredom at bay by means of the tireless engineering of novel appearances, situations, interesting new approaches, adaptations, facades, for the sake of combatting the boredom caused by the repetition of the same. It amounts to the fragmentation of time and of personality which accompanies the generation of the optimal degree of variety in the interest of being interminably interesting. It is clear that the aesthetic model rests on the assumption that any chronological continuity between the various fragments comprising the space of “rotation of crops”—which includes the art and practice of seduction, with its typical “distance” from the object of the seduction (1971a)—would compromise the novelty of each component by infusing a moment of sameness into those that are perceived as being linked in one way or another. As far as the identity of the aesthete (or of the seducer, who is a variation

of the aesthete) is concerned, this endless succession of masks entails its disintegration. That is, in an effort to escape from the suffocating boredom of repeating the same things endlessly, the aesthetic agent subjects him- or herself to an inventive fragmentation *sans* integration. The result: identity evaporates.

The rejoinder, on Kierkegaard's part (1971b), to the implicit claims made by the pseudonymous character, A, in praise of the aesthetic model came in the guise of a series of letters from another pseudonymous character, a certain Judge William, to A, in which the judge reminded the latter that his endless quest for variation, invention, diversion, and rotation, in the aesthetic interest of warding off any and all hints of boredom, came at a high price—nothing less than the sacrifice of being someone. In fact, the judge reminded A, the more one strives to be “novel” in every successive situation, the more it becomes apparent that one is no one (1971b, p. 229).

How does this illuminate the pathoanalytic category of schizophrenia, one might wonder. The answer should be obvious and can be summarised by means of several associated words, namely “fragmentary,” “unconnected” and “disjointed,” which are related, in turn, to the philosophical notions of “flux” and “becoming.” It is well-known that postmodernist art and culture display structural features of becoming, flux, and fragmentation (Harvey, 1990), and that these traits, in turn, are causally linked to the phase of capitalist development known as “flexible accumulation” (Harvey, 1990). Kierkegaard's characterisation of the “aesthetic” (as opposed to the “ethical,” represented by Judge William, which does not concern me here) seems to me to adumbrate the clinical attributes of schizophrenia, such as detachment or distance, exteriority and withdrawal (for the sake of aesthetic enjoyment and interest, in Kierkegaard's work), which correspond with fragmentation and flux. And, as in the case of the clinical features referred to earlier, these attributes cast a revealing pathoanalytic light on contemporary (postmodern) capitalist society. To this may be added that Angela Woods' reading of Bret Easton Ellis's novel, *Glamorama*, provided literary-theoretical confirmation of the pertinence of schizophrenia as pathoanalytic paradigm for the capitalist society of the present. It is worth quoting her at length here:

*My concern here is not to stage a recuperative reading of the novel but to examine in detail its schizophrenic logic. The mildly psychotic jet-setting College student of Ellis' second novel, The Rules of Attraction, has become, by the opening of Glamorama, a clearly schizoid New York celebrity. Victor more than fits the symptomatological profile of a postmodern schizophrenic: he is irreconcilably fragmented, subject to affective fluxes, overexposed to the sensory stimuli of postmodernity, and immersed in its perpetual present—in short, a figure lacking in self-definition and thus incapable of political action as it is traditionally conceived. (2004, p. 1)*

Moreover,

*Action, for models and for terrorists, appears to be predicated upon their failure to be 'touched' by its consequences; an autistic, affectless detachment from the world not unlike that which is characteristic of schizophrenia (p. 3)*

*In Glamorama, the schizophrenic does not signal the death of subjective agency, nor the death of capitalism, but the birth of a new kind of fragmented subject whose disintegration is not a private, pathological affair, but a spectacular collapse symptomatic of the consumption-driven, media-dominated, digitally manipulated hyperreality of the postmodern. In this subjective mode, fashion and violence are indistinguishable and indeed, interdependent (p. 4)*

Woods concluded her paper with this (rather ominous) observation on the continuity between capitalism and schizophrenia:

*Glamorama is a striking literary portrayal of how a commitment to dispassionate superficiality makes the postmodern schizophrenic an obscene and anarchic agent of the capitalist system. And once that commitment is made, no alternative political subjectivity within or beyond it can be envisaged. (2004, p. 6)*



## 7 | CONCLUSION

Together, these reflections on schizophrenia comprise a pathoanalytic prism for the refraction of the constituent attributes of postmodern capitalist society, and as such it is arguably the most encompassing of the three pathoanalytic perspectives enlisted here. The illuminating power of the other two—obsessional neurosis and perversion in the shape of sadism—notwithstanding, the very fact of their heuristic value regarding a philosophical anthropology of the present contributes to the overall impression of schizophrenia being the most apposite crystallisation of extant society. This is particularly the case in respect of the fragmentation, divergence and proliferation of meanings, narcissism, detachment, and an “exteriority” of the subject in relation to linguistic signifiers, as if language has lost its capacity to name things.

Nevertheless, readers may wonder what consequences the preceding pathoanalysis of the subject under capitalism may have for psychotherapy, if indeed any. The most obvious implications for therapy can be inferred from Parker's indication, that what he called the “revolution in subjectivity” (2011, p. 6), brought about by psychoanalysis in the clinic, prepares one for social revolution outside the clinic by bringing the subject face to face with his or her relationship with power. In his words:

*It is precisely because psychoanalysis breaks from everyday conversational procedures—because it refuses the ‘relational’ dimension of interaction and the attempt to forge an intersubjective space between speakers—that the analyst is able to provoke a questioning of what power is for the subject. (2011, p. 196)*

Parker stressed, however, that there is no guarantee that the subject will take the next step, as it were, in social reality, even if he or she reconfigures their relationship with power in psychic terms. Nevertheless, Parker insisted,

*The kind of revolution in subjectivity that occurs inside the clinic makes of the clinic a quite specific site of refusal—one that is extimate [exterior to, yet intimately conjoined with], implicated in the social at the moment it refuses it—but even then it is the site of refusal of the very capitalist world that made it possible. (Parker, 2011, pp. 198–199)*

Hence, whichever of the three pathological conditions considered pathoanalytically in this article may “crystallise” a heuristic therapeutic angle of approach to analysands or patients, the fact that the latter are always, ineluctably, inscribed or involved in relations of power (including the hegemonic power of a given era), constitutes a kind of knot that invites therapist and analysand (or patient) to engage in an unravelling or disentangling of the interlaced threads of interactional force.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The financial assistance of the National Research Foundation of South Africa, which has contributed to making this research possible, is hereby gratefully acknowledged.

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**How to cite this article:** Olivier B. Pathoanalysis of the subject of capitalism. *Psychother Politics Int.* 2018;16: e1467. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ppi.1467>