

**Hegemonic Neoliberalism & Democracy:
A Postmodern (neo)Marxist Approach to Democratic
Amelioration**

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RESUMO

A presente tese visa explorar maneiras pelas quais as condições democráticas contemporâneas podem ser melhoradas para benefício das gerações futuras, distinguindo-se sobretudo das abordagens predominantemente liberais dos estudos intergeracionais. Para tanto, desenvolve uma abordagem (neo)marxista pós-moderna particular. Primeiro, estabelece-se o atual contexto histórico pós-moderno, caracterizado pela hegemonia neoliberal. Após discutir desigualdade, opressão e exploração, bem como postular um ideal de democracia substantiva, é divulgada uma posição teórica precisa, a qual não apenas se afasta das abordagens liberais, mas também evita o marxismo clássico por o contexto histórico assim o exigir. Conceitos como hegemonia, ideologia, antagonismo e posições de sujeito no neo e pós-marxismo prestam-se a reflexões sobre o futuro porque caracterizam fenômenos inerentemente transtemporais. Um quadro de antecipação para a articulação de antagonismos é então delineado e usado para analisar elementos e questões específicas derivadas da hegemonia neoliberal, para identificar posições diferenciais e posições de sujeito correspondentes, e para decretar um processo de articulação que defina momentos antagônicos. Posteriormente, a tese argumenta que as posições alteradas do sujeito, com características radicais, democráticas e igualitárias, são o provável resultado desse processo de articulação. A tese conclui sugerindo que, ao fomentar essas posições de sujeito radicais, democráticas e igualitárias no presente e no futuro imediato, as condições democráticas de gerações futuras melhorarão, aumentando a probabilidade de benefícios futuros.

PALAVRAS-CHAVES: Hegemonia, Ideologia, Democracia, Neoliberalismo, Pós-modernismo, neo-Marxismo, pós-Marxismo

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ABSTRACT

The following thesis aims to explore ways in which contemporary democratic conditions can be improved in order to benefit future generations. It proposes to do so by distinguishing itself from the predominantly liberal approaches to intergenerational studies. To this end, a particular postmodern (neo)Marxist approach is developed. First, the present postmodern historical context, characterised by neoliberal hegemony, is established. After discussing inequality, oppression and exploitation, as well as positing an ideal of substantive democracy, a precise theoretical position is divulged. Not only does this position move away from liberal approaches, but it also eschews classical Marxism because the historical context requires it. Additionally, concepts such as hegemony, ideology, antagonism and subject positions in neo- and post- Marxism lend themselves to thinking about the future because they characterise inherently cross-temporal phenomena. An anticipatory framework for the articulation of antagonisms is then outlined and used to analyse specific elements and issues derived from neoliberal hegemony, identify differential positions and corresponding subject positions, and then enact a process of articulation to define antagonistic moments. Subsequently, the thesis argues that altered subject positions encompassing radical, democratic and egalitarian characteristics are the likely outcome of this process of articulation. The thesis concludes by suggesting that by fostering these radical, democratic and egalitarian subject positions in the present and immediate future, the democratic conditions of other future generations will improve and, thus, they will benefit from these improvements.

KEYWORDS: Hegemony, Ideology, Democracy, Neoliberalism, Postmodernism, neo-Marxism, post-Marxism

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Introduction

In contemporary society, numerous problems exist which will almost inevitably affect the generations to come. The climate crisis, war, economic precarity and exacerbating inequality only scratch the surface of the magnitude of identifiable issues today that are likely to affect future generations, tomorrow and beyond. Indeed, the manner in which contemporary democracies meet these challenges is a matter of paramount importance for both intergenerational studies and democratic theory but also the very shape of the future itself. The current state of democracy today, however, is lacking in numerous ways for addressing these temporal issues.

The following thesis aims to explore ways in which contemporary democratic conditions can be improved in order to benefit future generations. It proposes to do so by distinguishing itself from the predominantly liberal approaches to intergenerational relations. To this end a particular postmodern (neo)Marxist approach is developed. There are several central claims that this thesis addresses. First, contemporary Western liberal democracies are insubstantive due to the hegemony¹ of neoliberal capitalist economics and ideologies. A neoliberal capitalism fundamentally affects liberal democracies today, having produced what will be referred to as neoliberalised democracy. Second, neoliberalised democracies are insubstantive because they engender socio-economic and political inequalities that undermine the quality of democracy. Third, in order to improve the substantive quality of contemporary democracy in ways that are beneficial to present people and future generations, the function and (re)production of hegemony and ideology must be understood. Through such an analysis, an anticipatory framework will be developed for articulating antagonisms, as well as corresponding shifts in subject positions, in order to see how a democracy might increase its cross-temporal substantive quality². The methodology and framework developed in this thesis hopes to provide an original and comprehensive means by which contemporary democracy might be improved with eye towards ameliorating the democratic conditions for the generations to come and thus eventually benefitting them.

¹ Hegemony is defined precisely in section three of chapter two. For now, it suffices to note that hegemony designates the domination of a ruling ideology or power, reproduced by consent and relations civil society (Gramsci, 1971).

² 'Substantive quality' denotes the depth of substance of a democracy, in particular, how far formal principles of equality are embodied and enacted in actually existing democratic conditions.

As a global society, we are in the midst of a unique period. Neoliberalism's ascendance marks a point in history which has coincided with a shift in critical perceptions of society, culture and capitalism: a tide of postmodern conceptions of the contemporary world. A discussion of postmodernism is particularly important since many of the conditions and assumptions which underwrite the theories to be drawn on along the course of this thesis are entwined with postmodern conceptions. Introducing postmodernism here lays the ground for developing a precise understanding of what a postmodern (neo)Marxist approach entails in the following chapters.

1. (Inter)Generational context

1.1 Assumptions and Commitments

The commitments and assumptions are first addressed because the cross-temporal scope of discussions regarding future generations requires it. Much of the existing literature on intergenerational relations and concerns focuses on obligations, duties, and some kind of cross-temporal theory of justice. Some debate is heavily centred around the nature of intergenerational relations whilst other theorists ask what rights, if any, members of non-contemporary generations possess – and what that may mean for present-day people (for example, see: Barry, 1977, for intergenerational power relations; Hart, 1955, for will theory; Parfit, 1987, for the non-identity problem; De George, 1981, for the non-existence argument). There is no space here to address all the nuanced responses to the issue of rights and (non)existence of past and future people, but suffice it to say, following Meyers (2021), that the issues highlighted above provide the foundations for the consideration of the normative significance of contingency of future people on current living persons.

For the sake of argument, it will be assumed that prospective future generations will exist and, following the “generic consistency” principle (Gewirth, 1978), we have an obligation towards the next generations of human compatriots whether they overlap with our own or not. It is only necessary to highlight here the intrinsic moral worth of future generations that is taken as a given. Additionally, it is acknowledged that the actions of present generations will have some form or degree of impact on future generations (MacKenzie, 2021: 27; Rose, 2016). Hence, this thesis also follows Hans Jonas' “responsibility principle”: act so the effects of your action permit the permanence of authentic human life on Earth (Jonas, 1990).

1.2 Temporal Focus

Identifying an overarching timescape pays heed to the vitality of temporality in holding together spatiality, materiality and contextuality (Adams, 2008). In defining the timescape relevant for this thesis, a ‘generation’ is understood as a birth cohort – those born within a certain period i.e., ‘Millennials’ or ‘Gen Z’ – as opposed to specified age groups (Gosseries, 2016: 100). When reference is made to future generations, this intends to include birth cohorts that are yet to become politically active as well as those who have yet to come into existence. Whilst drawing boundaries between generations may be arbitrary, it can still be useful in such cases as distinguishing between those of voting age at, say, the time of constitutional vote and those who were not (Muñiz-Fraticelli, 2009: 378). The inclusion of overlapping and non-overlapping birth cohorts in the notion of future generations referred to throughout this thesis reflects the need to avoid drawing exclusive (inter)generational limits. After all, generations, as Barry points out, are abstractions from a continuous process of population replenishment (1977: 268). The notion of an age cohort and continuous overlapping replenishment of people is important because it helps facilitate the understanding that improvements in contemporary democratic conditions today will have an effect on the generations to come.

The inclusion of both overlapping and non-overlapping birth cohorts in the notion of future generations implies the need for a certain methodology which takes into account both the present and the future. The framework developed throughout this thesis and finally presented at the beginning of chapter three aims to identify elements and corresponding subject positions in present groups and individuals which could also have certain democratic, egalitarian and emancipatory implications for the subject positions of future generations. By identifying these specific elements and tracing their corresponding ideological subject positions, then some possibilities for improving the substantive quality of present democracy for the benefit of future generations may be perceived.

Ultimately, the aim of the framework is to develop a future-beneficial presentist strategy – present actions can benefit future generations. Presentist here does not denote a bias towards the interests of present people. Some, like MacKenzie, suggest the need for a future-regarding approach considering the interests of the future and not subjecting them to harm (2021: 33). This thesis argues, however, that improving democratic conditions will be

beneficial for future generations, and not just a matter of taking their interests into account. A future-beneficial presentist approach implies some regard for future interests but not at the expense of present people. Also, it assumes that enriching democratic conditions in the present will benefit those in the present *and* generations to come. Ensuring ameliorated equality in economic, social and political relations as well as improving democratic agency today will contribute to better democratic conditions tomorrow and, hence, will benefit future generations.

Having the capacity to affect the future does not, however, imply that we in the present can control the future. Yet, MacKenzie suggests, present people can play a role in future-making if a future-regarding exercise of public power is adopted (2021: 42). It is posited in this thesis that future generations could benefit in some way from the improvement of contemporary democracies; an inevitably future-making endeavour. But rather than the future-regarding exercise of public power that MacKenzie proposes, a generational transfer of democratic and egalitarian subject positions is another way that this future-making could take place. Just as power relations in, for example, Marx's theory, can be transferred through generations (MacKenzie, 2021: 138), so too can other more progressive relations travel down generational lines. The shift in subject positions from those associated with antagonisms that affirm neoliberal hegemony, thus reproducing inequalities and oppressive power relations, to those subject positions corresponding to adversarial antagonisms striving for a radical democratic equality will improve the substantive quality of democracy. Furthermore, improvement along these lines for the benefit of future generations implies a greater substance of democratic thought, procedure and conscience directed towards the interests of the future, thereby improving intergenerational relations of present people vis-à-vis future people and thus eventually benefitting the generations to come. These are ways in which futures can be made by improving the substantive quality of contemporary democracies.

2. Postmodernism as Diagnosis

The hegemonic dominance - politically, economically, and ideologically - of neoliberalism calls for an understanding of the current moment of history in which society stands. The extensive reach of the tendrils of capital demand that theories and ideas about society be redressed. Neoliberalism continues to vindicate and necessitate the postmodern analyses of capitalism. Accordingly, several theorists that will be discussed later are

influenced by postmodern logics, bringing neo-Marxism and even classical Marxism into the twenty-first century (this notion is explored in greater depth in chapter 2). This section argues that, in the present era, characterised by neoliberalism's pervasive hegemony, postmodern theories and understandings are important for democratic struggles – today and tomorrow. Exploring today's postmodern context sets the scene for a survey of hegemonic neoliberalism at the beginning of chapter one.

Postmodernism and the rich body of theory that has stemmed from its proponents refers to a period of history, as well as societal and cultural relations in light of this periodization. Frederic Jameson grasps the postmodern critique's specific relation to capitalism, as the title of his chef d'oeuvre states: *Postmodernism or the cultural logic of late capitalism* (1991). What Jameson achieved was to draw together disparate cultural elements and demonstrate their influence by and from capital. Yet, there is a consistency in his work that does away with, in Jean-François Lyotard's words, the "grand narratives of modernity" (1984) whilst retaining a systemic conceptualization of these relations under capitalism.

The development of the postmodern period of history was nourished by several factors: the demoralization and uncertainty of the left of the late 1960s and early 1970s, the "epochal social change" of deindustrialization of the 1970s onwards as well as ecological concerns amplified by the oil crises of the 1970s (Therborn, 2008: 31). These moments in the latter half of the twentieth-century signalled a shift from the optimism of post-war, social democratic recovery to a period of malaise and crisis accompanying a right-wing shift of several political regimes in the West, notably in the US and the UK. Such triggers provided the opportune moment for the consensus of Keynesian economics to crumble and gradually be replaced by a nascent neoliberalism incubated in the intellectual circles of the Mont Pèlerin Society, various conservative and liberal think-tanks, and policy centres (Cockett, 1994). Jameson (1991: xix), following Ernst Mandel (1975), labels this periodization 'late capitalism' and cites many characteristic features that persist to a great extent today³. The societal features of this periodisation correspond with the dissemination and pervasion of neoliberalism and its market fundamentalism. So great has been the extent of this spread that it can reasonably be claimed that at the dawn of the twenty-first century, and even further in

³ Transnational business, a new international division of labour, new market dynamics, media and transport interrelationships, production shifting to the Third World due to deindustrialisation, the rapid development of computers, automation and increasing gentrification, to name but a few (Jameson, 1991: xix).

the present day, much of the world is subsumed under capital – echoing Marx’s perceptive claims (Mandarini, 2004: 7).

Other theorists have responded to this period of history as “[t]he world of real subsumption”, denoting the “loss of outside” from capital (Hardt & Negri, 2000: 275; Mandarini, 2004: 15-8). Real subsumption denotes “the transformation of the production process itself by capital (Mandarini, 2004: footnote 19, p. 266). The growing expansion of Empire – the apparatus of rule of global capital that Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri conceive as a decentred and deterritorialised system that progressively incorporates the world (2000: xii) – does not merely coincide with the neoliberal dawn but has been defined by it.

Naturally, grand postulates of postmodernity have their stern critiques. Marxists such as Ellen M. Wood decry “the cult of postmodernity” whilst affirming the historical materialism of classical Marxism, and reject the perceived acceptance by postmodern theories of the totalizing dominance of capitalism as the inevitable end point of history (1995: 1-2). On the other hand, it can be argued that this particular outcry of Marxists in a similar vein as Wood against postmodernist theories of Marxism is misplaced. Instead of merely accepting capitalism as given and inevitably totalising, the identification or periodisation of the postmodern, in its left-wing instantiations, is an equally radical critique of capitalism that makes use of different philosophical, cultural and political perspectives and approaches to understand the extent of capital’s dominance in various different spheres. Furthermore, the need to move beyond the periodisation of the modern partly comes from the ideological harnessing, by the (neo)liberal interests of capital, of the notion of ‘modern’. Modernising the labour market means more rights for capital and employers; modernising of social services signifies privatisation and cuts; and modernising of pensions boils down to fewer rights for the aging strata of society (Therborn, 2008: 32).

As Jacques Derrida (2006: 106) maintains, concerning the apparent triumph of capitalism and the ascendancy of neoliberalism:

it must be cried out, at a time when some have the audacity to neo-evangelise in the name of the ideal of liberal democracy that has finally realised itself as the ideal of human history: never have violence, inequality, exclusion, famine, and thus economic oppression affected as many human beings in the history of the earth and of humanity.

The need is pressing, therefore, to examine economic oppression in light of the hegemony of neoliberalised capitalism and democracy. Elements of inequality and oppression that

undermine the substantive quality of democracy are identified and applied to the articulatory framework developed in later chapters.

2.1 Postmodernism and the future

The dichotomous chasm invoked by the challenges of postmodernity to modernity demonstrate postmodernism's capacity to reassess the ontologies, epistemologies and ideologies of the modern past. But does this indicate a propensity to future oriented regards? Postmodernism eschews grand metanarratives and conceptualizations of a necessary history. It stands opposed to a "long-range historical nexus claiming universal validity and truth" (Breisach, 2003: 23-4). Moreover, the importance of the contingent formation of the social denies continuity. All except the continuity of change since change is open ended and "empty" and as such non-oppressive as opposed to dominant overarching metanarratives and laws of historical necessity (Breisach, 2003: 24). There is no end stage of history such as those proclaimed by classical Marxism or even liberal ideology that affirms liberal democracy as the ideal political regime. It is the indeterminacy of contingency which leaves the door to the future ajar. Fundamental tenets of postmodernism such as those above indicate a realm of future possibility that could be beneficial in some way for generations of the future.

In spite of postmodern conditions of contemporary society, politics today demonstrates alarming degrees of short-termism in governance and decision-making. I would argue that this results not from postmodernism itself but from the systems that characterise the conditions of the postmodern period we are in. The world of real subsumption highlights above all the priorities of capital. And the category of neoliberal hegemony that presides has a curbed foresight relative to the predictions and dictates of markets. The postmodern condition itself, on the other hand, contains the potential for future-oriented perspectives that can eventually be beneficial in certain ways for future generations.

To glean why, elements of Chantal Mouffe's analysis of the shift from modernity to postmodernity are invoked. For Mouffe, whilst the universalism of the Enlightenment was instrumental in the modern democratic revolution, it "has become an obstacle in the path of understanding those new forms of politics, characteristic of our societies today, which demand to be approached from nonessentialist perspectives. Hence, the necessity of using the theoretical tools elaborated by different currents of what can be called the postmodern in

philosophy and of appropriating their critique of rationalism and subjectivism” (Mouffe, 1989: 33). Some universal values might remain (i.e., rights) “but they enter into a new kind of articulation” of particulars under “a logic of irreducible difference” (Best & Kellner, 1998). Postmodernism’s ‘anti-universalism’, designating the privilege of difference and the undeniability of contingency, denotes future-oriented thinking. It acknowledges, for example, that future generations will be different to ours. Of course, intergenerational similarities may persist but, as will be seen in chapter two, an appreciation for difference as singularity, difference in and of itself, in an ideal of equality, shows how postmodernism can be beneficial for the democratic conditions of future generations.

Of course, the contingent nature of the advance into the future means that determining whether an open and malleable future is harmful or beneficial to generations to come is an imprecise endeavour. Nevertheless, postmodern approaches to Marxism have added new impetus and innovative concepts contributing to emancipatory aims in recent years. The notion of emancipation itself is forward looking and, from various leftist perspectives, future-beneficial as well. As Mouffe states, postmodern philosophy is an “indispensable instrument” for the ambitions of a radical democracy (1989: 48). This thesis will explore some of these notions as it crafts its unique postmodern (neo)Marxism that strives for a radical improvement in the substantive quality of contemporary democracy, thus benefitting future generations.

2.2 Democratic Futures of Postmodernity

The postmodern theory on the future of democracy relevant here is predominantly centred around the notion of the constitution of a collective political body encompassing certain values of democracy and equality. Scholte (2014) suggests a notion of postmodern global democracies against statism or cosmopolitanism to deal with contemporary globalisation and the changing face of democracy. Some overlaps with more neo- and postmodern- Marxist approaches are developed by Scholte in highlighting transnationality, transculturality, a pluralism of solidarities as well as some kind of egalitarian redistribution in postmodern global democracy (2014). The latter idea of democracy bares much similarity, then, to the radical democracy imbued in the political and philosophical project of Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau.

Mouffe and Laclau conceive a strategy for attaining a radical and plural democracy which, whilst acknowledging its foundations in Marxism, in many regards transcends key

elements of classical Marxism. They seek a democratic equivalence for the convergence of numerous struggles in a process of articulation. For them, political philosophy has a key role to play in the emergence of a new “common sense” through which this articulation could take place (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001).

Another prominent theorist on this aspect of postmodernism is Gilles Deleuze who, along with Félix Guattari (1987), conceive of assemblages, their collective subject. Any assemblages designate “constellations of singularities” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 406) capable of realizing ideals of freedom and equality. These assemblages can take the form of a number of civil society organisations co-existing but also expressing antagonisms between one another (Tampio, 2009). The specifically left assemblages of Deleuze and Guattari form the theoretical base for Hardt and Negri’s postulations surrounding the multitude.

For Hardt and Negri, the multitude designates the antagonistic subject of Empire and a political body that diverges from other left subjectivities (2000: 360). Left assemblages, however, need not be a multitude, but a multitude is always left assemblages; the main difference being that the multitude channels the collection of singularities into some kind of revolutionary commonality of decision making whilst left assemblages do not necessarily strive for any uni-directional purpose (Tampio, 2009).

Negri conceives of a fundamental temporal dimension to the collective subject. In the world of real subsumption, the “collective” designates a multiplicity of subjects, defined by antagonism (in its relation to hegemony). The collective is framed here by Negri as time itself, the (collective) substance of which is a “*multiplicity of antagonistic subjects*” (Negri, 2004: 41).

The thesis will return to these authors at various points in the second and third chapters. Their introduction here is merely a survey of a key concern for the postmodern left: a new collective emancipatory subject. However, this thesis does not intend to posit a new collective subject. It nevertheless acknowledges the validity and credibility of these positions and concurs that a new, broader, diverse and multiple emancipatory subject is necessary in order to improve the substantive quality of democracy.

The unique contribution of this thesis to the fields of postmodern leftist and intergenerational studies is rather the formation of an anticipatory framework of antagonistic articulation to trace the subject positions of those who would constitute a collective subject. Those antagonisms and the corresponding subject positions opposing structures of neoliberal

hegemony would help foster individuals, today and tomorrow, capable of acting individually and/or collectively to improve democracy.

3. Outline and Approach

The substantive conception of equality that the postmodern (neo)Marxist approach develops in the following pages involves a diversity, plurality and reciprocity distinguishing it from other conceptions. This ideal of equality stands starkly opposed to the potentially oppressive and exploitative nature of the inequalities affecting the substance of democracy today. Furthermore, the postmodern (neo)Marxist approach has the requisite theoretical breadth and capacity to analyse hegemonic structures and ideological reproduction simultaneously in order to identify antagonisms to improve contemporary democracy.

The analysis of the hegemonic (re)production of neoliberalism is critical for assessing the democratic condition of contemporary Western democracies. By concerning itself with the plane of hegemony, the approach of this thesis acknowledges the pervasive nature of the system and ideology rendering democracy insubstantive as well as its persistence over time. A conception of persistence, subject to the inevitable contingency of the passage of time, supports the notion that improvements in contemporary democratic conditions will benefit future generations.

Moreover, given the persistence of capitalism over several generational spans and its continual propensity to evolve, it is fair to claim that a critique of capitalism (neoliberal capitalism in this case) is vital in any attempt to improve democracy. Such a critique is notably absent from more moderate approaches in liberal theories of egalitarianism and democratic theory more broadly. This thesis aims to address this gap.

The first chapter begins by properly divulging neoliberalism as the hegemonic category and ideology coinciding with the postmodern context. From there the thesis contends that neoliberalism produces and exacerbates numerous inequalities which render contemporary democracies insubstantive. Some relevant inequalities are broadly divided into three categories: distributive, status, and democratic. The notion of inequality is explored, as well as the potentially oppressive and exploitative nature of various inequalities. Finally, an ideal of radical democratic equality which would underwrite a substantive democracy is explored.

Following the discussion of neoliberalism, inequality and democracy, the second chapter undertakes the theoretical groundwork needed to establish the unique hybrid position of postmodern (neo)Marxism. It initially sets itself apart from classical Marxism and explores three relevant neo-Marxist authors: Gramsci, Althusser and Negri. Then, the specific hybrid postmodern (neo)Marxism of this thesis is justified and positioned between neo-Marxism and post-Marxism. The third section of the chapter unpacks the vital post-Marxist theory and logics of hegemony and antagonism developed by Mouffe and Laclau. The final section draws from Althusser's theory of ideological interpellation and the formation of subject positions before considering the relation between ideology, antagonisms and the formation of subject positions.

The third and final chapter, after some initial considerations for the temporal phenomenon of persistence and contingency, lays out an anticipatory framework for antagonistic articulation. Within the three categories, specific issues and inequalities derived from neoliberal hegemony are explored and, through each antagonism, a corresponding subject position is identified and its potential change traced, designating a shift in subject position relating to a specific antagonism. Given a degree of (contingent) hegemonic persistence, the antagonisms analysed would likely constitute the locus of movements to improve the substantive quality of democracy.

Chapter I - Neoliberalism, Inequality & Democracy

The advent of a neoliberal capitalism, the hegemonic system disseminating its own ideologies, is a large reason for the shift from modernity to postmodernity. Some clarification and definition of the clouded theoretical and terminological waters surrounding neoliberalism is divulged below. A complex and often times all-encompassing term prevalent amongst its critics but seldom mentioned in circles of proponents and adherents, neoliberalism is undoubtedly a tricky concept (Brown, 2015: 20). So clearly the way in which neoliberalism is understood is vital to impart.

First, the distinction between neoliberalism and liberalism is made clear. Then, several key constituent facets of this concept are explained, including its economic, ideological and political parts. Neoliberalism's relationship to democracy is also considered before an analysis of inequality in section two to understand the nature and character of the inequalities perpetuated by neoliberalism that render democracy insubstantive. In doing so, a notion of radical democratic equality is introduced. Finally, this chapter concludes with a discussion of (in)substantive democracy.

1. Neoliberalism as Category

In spite of its hegemonic position (the concept of hegemony will be addressed more specifically in chapter two), neoliberalism, as a system and a term, remains somewhat vague yet simultaneously vacuous. A concept that eludes precise definitions, neoliberalism has a unique capacity to encompass many varied meanings (Peck, 2010: 16). It is at once a mode of reason producing certain subjects and conducts, and a process of economization of numerous spheres; “globally ubiquitous, yet disunified and nonidentical with itself in space and over time” (Brown, 2015: 21)⁴.

Neoliberal hegemony extends to numerous spheres, all of which cannot possibly be dealt with here. The focus, then, will be on the interrelations between the political and economic facets of this broad reaching phenomenon. As an economic system, neoliberalism can be considered a type of capitalism: neoliberal capitalism. With regards to politics, there is a process of neoliberalisation (Peck, 2010) affecting liberal democracies; *neoliberalised* liberal democracy.

⁴ See Brown, 2015: 221-23 notes for bibliography of diverse positions in the literature on neoliberalism.

The emphasis placed by neoliberalism on market structures and logics represents a market fundamentalist version of capitalism, operating under neoliberal rationality (Brown, 2015: 44). The economic facets of neoliberal hegemony are responsible for exacerbating inequality to dramatic extents. Macroeconomic policies as well as taxation and the financialization of economies, circumscribed by market fundamentalist ideology, serve the interests of capital and those who control it (Stiglitz, 2013; Piketty, 2014: 20).

Neoliberalism diverges from classical liberalism in its conception of the role of politics and the state in the organization of markets. Classical liberalism, in its separation of powers, endorses a laissez-faire approach to economics, characterised by the absence of interference by the state in the workings of the market (Hull, 2006: 154). Neoliberalism, on the other hand, must transcend the “naïve ideology” of laissez-faire in favour of a “positive” conception of state as the guarantor of market order (Friedman, 1951: 93; Peck, 2010: 42). Moreover, neoliberalism relies on the state to “encase” markets in legal and institutional arrangements in order to bypass the “disruptive” effects of democracy on market processes (Slobodian, 2018: 11-13). Whereas classical liberalism intends for a separate economic sphere where the free market operates autonomously, neoliberalism requires state support to uphold and perpetuate its marketising processes.

As opposed to rhetoric among proponents and the conception of the market as spontaneous order (Hayek, 1976; Queiroz, 2018), disseminated through various ideological apparatuses, the process of neoliberalisation has not developed organically as the inevitable evolution of society and economics - encapsulated by Margaret Thatcher’s famous phrase “there is no alternative” (Jenkins, 2007). Rather, neoliberalisation has involved continuous efforts to introduce quasi-markets, repair markets when they fail (as they are prone to do) and subsume all manner of socio-economic and political spheres under the logic of the market (Peck, 2010: xiii – 7). The prescribed policy package principally associated with neoliberalism is the deregulation of the economy and, more specifically, finance; liberalisation of trade and industry; privatisation of publicly funded institutions (Steger & Roy, 2010: 14; Stiglitz, 2013: 66; Queiroz, 2021). Whilst these (neo)liberalising policies designate a separation of state functioning from the economy, the contradictory essence of neoliberalism is that it requires states for the market to function to an unadulterated extent. Unlike the role of the state in various liberalisms that envisages a separation of economics and politics, the neoliberalised state must foster a political climate that prioritises and is

sympathetic to a fundamentalist kind of market economy. In other words, neoliberalism requires states only to the extent that they are in favour of their own depoliticisation.

The contradiction of the role of the state in neoliberalism points to a fundamental duality. There is an esoteric understanding amongst proponents of neoliberalism of the necessity of the state in the functioning of the market. But, on the other hand, there is also an exoteric ideological rhetoric insisting that markets are self-sustaining and develop spontaneously (Fink, 2016). Furthermore, the notion that ‘there is no alternative’ to the logics and structures of markets in all domains is a fundamental ideological precept of neoliberalism. This preclusion of alternatives is in and of itself undemocratic and exacerbates the gap between liberalism and neoliberalism (Queiroz, 2018).

Classical liberal conceptions of the people are usually centred on a notion of human political community (Freeden, 2015: 50; Canovan, 2005: 30-32) and this community, or society, as a “fair system of cooperation” (Rawls, 2001: 25). In contrast, neoliberalised democracy – that is, liberal democracy affected by neoliberal ideology – is more like a ‘democracy’ without the people at all, an exclusively market-oriented bureaucracy. Indeed, neoliberalism has no the concept of the people in its ideological corpus (Queiroz, 2021). Human beings in neoliberalism are construed as human capital: a presumed market actor whose political rights become fuzzy in their economisation and intrinsic human worth in the Kantian sense ceases to be a given (Brown, 2015: 37-8). Equality on a fundamentally human level is replaced by the normative precept of the market – competition (Brown, 2015: 38). This is the extension of the mantra that ‘there is no alternative’ to market structures to the ontological level. These crucial political aspects of neoliberalism show its poignant function as pervasive ideology, engendering fundamental inequalities that ultimately undermine the substantive quality of democracy.

The ideological facets of neoliberalism are characterised by a market fundamentalism. Its pervasive nature and spread in the Euro-Atlantic world is inimitably captured by Wendy Brown (2015: 35-6):

Neoliberalism governs as sophisticated common sense, a reality principle remaking institutions and human beings everywhere it settles, nestles, and gains affirmation...But neoliberalization is more termitelike than lionlike... its mode of reason boring in capillary fashion into the trunks and branches of workplaces, schools, public agencies, social and political discourse, and above all, the subject.

As a hegemonic ideology, neoliberalism burrows and settles, producing and reproducing itself ceaselessly in new subject positions, conducts and relations, amongst many other sites in civil society (Brown, 2015: 36). A vital part of this neoliberal subjectivity is its embedded inequality. On an economic level, distributive and status inequalities are systemically produced. Politically, subservience to markets in neoliberalised democracy creates political and democratic inequalities. There is a repressive effect of the subordination of democracies to the market because markets receive an unequal amount of political consideration ahead of the interests of the people. And on the ideological level, inequality inherent in market logics is imbedded into individuals' subject positions. This propagation of inequalities as a result of hegemonic neoliberalism and its neoliberalisation of democracy is what renders contemporary democracy insubstantive. As a global phenomenon, modality of governance, ideology, economic policy, and order of reason, neoliberalism is at once totalizing but also "inconstant", "differentiated" and "impure" with many contingent global variations (Brown, 2015: 20). As a contradictory mode of market governance, Jamie Peck argues that neoliberalism is best understood through the "oscillations and vacillations" that shape it (2010: 16).

It seems that neoliberalism shares some characteristics with postmodernism. Variegation and dispersion of the hegemonic form of capitalism calls for a diversification of Marxist critiques of capitalism. Thus, some form of neo-Marxist critique is indeed called for because of neoliberalism's necessary attachment to capitalism. As will be explored in the following chapter, classical Marxism is centred around modern assumptions. Revisions are needed for the present historical context. Hence the need to develop a hybrid postmodern (neo)Marxist approach. That is the work of the following two chapters. The rest of this chapter engages with the phenomenon of inequality before suggesting some principles for a substantive democracy.

2. (In)equality – Exploitation - Oppression

Undoubtedly a cross-temporal phenomenon, inequality and its persistence has long been the topic of debates about the organization of society and democracy. Inequalities in the contemporary world are unquestionably proliferating and a plethora of studies examine this phenomenon (see for example: Atkinson & Piketty, 2007; Piketty, 2014, 2018; OECD, 2008; among others). Not only have inequalities persistently been a historical feature of human

societies, they constitute relational imbalances that, in light of their intergenerational reproduction, demonstrate the past's influence on the present and, by extension, the present's influence on some future present time (MacKenzie, 2021: 143).

This section includes a discussion of inequality, in which its mechanisms and relation to exploitation and oppression are explored. What then follows is a survey of various understandings of the substance of equality. By considering both inequality and equality in this discussion, the insubstantive elements of contemporary neoliberalised democracy that are identified and articulated in the final chapter might be understood as certain kinds of inequalities. Subsequently, this section posits substantive democratic ideals of equality in order to contribute to the conception of a radical, democratic and egalitarian subject position – a vital aspect for countering the hegemonic malaise of neoliberalism, improving contemporary democracy and, hence, benefitting future generations.

2.1 The Mechanisms of Inequality

For some authors to attain an understanding of social equality, it is instructive to analyse what it is they oppose; social inequality (Wolff, 2015). Take T.M. Scanlon who, in his 2018 book, *Why Does Inequality Matter?* divulges numerous objections to inequality. He objects to “unacceptable degrees” of control resulting from inequalities and also because it creates humiliating differences in status, gives the rich unacceptable forms of power over those who have less, undermines equality of economic opportunity, undermines the fairness of political institutions, results from a violation of a requirement of equal concern for the interests of those to whom government is obligated to provide some benefit and arises from economic institutions that are unfair (Scanlon, 2018: 8-9). For an inequality to be objectionable, Scanlon's rationale goes, it must be both relational and institutional (2018: 9). But such a rationale neglects the distributive dimension.

Goran Therborn's theory of inequality, for example, whilst implicitly objecting to inequality also crafts a precise schema of the nature and operation of inequality (2013). Therborn distinguishes between three different but heavily interconnected kinds of inequality following dimensions of central human capabilities: vital inequalities as the “socially constructed unequal life-chances of human organisms”; existential inequalities denoting “the unequal allocation of personhood”, and resource inequality where unequal distribution of resources impedes an individual's ability to act (2013: 49). There is no space, it seems, for

democratic or various other political inequalities in Therborn's model. More telling, however, is the way Therborn breakdowns the mechanisms of inequality (2013: 62). Distanciation, for Therborn, refers to how people get left behind by inequalities and points to a social psychology of success or failure. Exclusion refers to discrimination of all kinds, a monopoly on social opportunities for some and the foreclosure of many chances for others. Another crucial mechanism is hierarchisation of various social relations – race, gender, power, workplace, family, etc. – and involves a type of subordination. Finally, Therborn characterises exploitation as extraction, utilisation, abuse of power relations, asymmetric remuneration, and the unfair appropriation of surplus value from labour (2013: 62). These mechanisms are certainly not exclusive. Various inequalities encapsulate different mechanisms. Nor is the list complete. But it is nevertheless a helpful conceptualisation to introduce the specific effects of the inequalities that will be identified in chapter three. They can all be considered oppressive in their respective senses and, taken together or individually, contribute to diminishing the substantive quality of democracy.

2.2. Inequality's relationship to exploitation and oppression

Building on Therborn's schemata of the mechanisms of inequality, this sub-section considers the relationship between inequality, exploitation and oppression.

Engaging specifically with concerns regarding oppression means moving beyond the individualism at the heart of liberal political discourse. Iris Young's discussion of oppression acknowledges oppression's ontological dimension which often refers to social groups. Therefore, according to Young, an analysis of oppression must broaden the individualism inherent in liberalism (Young, 1990: 39). What is more, the concept of oppression has a greater depth than traditional definitions that define it simply as tyrannical overbearing. It is also structural, rearing its faces through norms, symbols, institutional bodies and rules, social attitudes and economic relationships. Evidently these parts of oppression can affect individuals, but on a macro-scale the effects of oppression affect broader social groups.

Young outlines "five faces of oppression": exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence (Young, 1990: 39-66). All are undoubtedly important but the predominant focus of this paper will be on exploitation, marginalisation, and, to some extent, powerlessness. These dimensions of oppression are interconnected and, as such, it is important to consider them in light of other analyses of oppression and

domination. To explore this link, we return to Therborn's mechanisms of inequality and hone in particularly on exploitation.

For Young exploitation is but one face of oppression. Therborn, on the other hand, identifies exploitation as one of four mechanisms of inequality. So, it seems that one of the several facets of oppression is exploitation, but also a way in which inequality functions can be exploitative. Note, as Young does, that those who are oppressed needn't necessarily have a direct oppressor since much oppression is systemic in origin (1990: 41). Others, such as Bertram, define exploitation as the violation of fair reciprocity (2009). Bertram's intergenerational analysis of exploitation demonstrates, through a cross-temporal diagram of a cooperative system, that future people are susceptible to a violation of fair reciprocity and can thus be exploited. And, crucially, an exploitative distribution or relation can be indirect.

Structural oppression is coercive in nature. It involves a relation of force, whether physical or otherwise, compelling the person subjected to it into some position of disadvantage. Exploitation is a prime example of this relation. It is extractive, and utilising in a compulsive and potentially invasive sense, reflecting some imbalance of power between individuals. Conceptions of exploitation have traditionally been linked to work but it is not strictly limited to the labour relation - consider the proliferation of crucial and rigorous studies on racial and gender oppression, for example. Exploitation then, in its various formulations, is oppressive. And, as Therborn indicates, it is a mechanism through which inequality functions. Since inequalities can function through exploitation, and exploitation is oppressive, then some inequalities can also be considered oppressive. The triad of oppression, exploitation and inequality have many similar characteristics and function through one another. But they do not exist in a vacuum. An inequality is not necessarily exploitative (imbalances in natural endowments/dispositions, for example), nor is an inequality necessarily oppressive. For example, think of an unequal number of books that a person possesses. In itself, this is neither exploitative nor oppressive. The accumulation of books may be the result of a different inequality [i.e., income] and indeed an unequal level of income may also not be in and of itself oppressive or exploitative. But the underlying relational inequality behind a distributive pattern such as income differentials can be exploitative and oppressive in certain cases.

Perhaps the link between oppression and exploitation is clearer than that between exploitation and inequality. To clarify the latter relationship, Paul Warren (1997) examines the compatibility between liberal egalitarianism and normative Marxist theory pertaining to

exploitation. Warren highlights the causal relation of differential ownership of productive assets and wage-labour exchanges (transfer of labour from exploited to exploiter). By invoking a justice-based argument, Warren contends that wage-labour exchange itself is structured by unequal power relations stemming from unequal ownership of productive assets. Thus, inequalities resulting from that exchange are unjust. Whilst unequal power in itself is not necessarily objectionable, the gains attained unjustly through exercise of that power are. An inequality, therefore, is exploitative if it empowers those agents who own more productive assets, or, simply have more, to use those assets to take advantage of those with less (Warren, 1997).

The inequalities that will be highlighted in the following chapters – economic, status and democratic – demonstrate oppressive and/or exploitative elements to a certain extent. Furthermore, they can be characterised by other overlaps between the faces of oppression and the mechanisms of inequality. Notions of marginalisation and powerlessness, identified by Young, pertain also to the mechanisms of exclusion, distancing and hierarchisation highlighted by Therborn. Economic inequalities, such as disparities in income and wealth, can be oppressive in light of their shape and nature. They can be considered exploitative in the most straightforward understanding of exploitation as structural dispossession and/or extraction of surplus value from various processes of labour expenditure. This is not necessarily a direct relation. It can very much be considered an indirect structural relation of capital. Being indirectly exploitative, as a systemically imbalanced relation, does not mean that people who are richer than others are necessarily in a relation of exploitation with those who have less. Whilst the rich may directly exploit the poor in some regards, it is not a necessary fact of all relations of economic equality. But even in cases of direct exploitation, contentions arise since workers can supposedly freely enter into contracts on seemingly fair and agreeable terms. Marx, however, argued that exploitation can take place even if freely contracted with established rules and even if that arrangement improved the situation of each party (1976: 279-80). Furthermore, people can be exploited if the background conditions of differential ownership of productive assets from which the wage-labour contract derives are themselves unjust, even in the absence of direct coercion (Warren, 1997). Thus, structural exploitation can be present even in underlying capacities, showing its pervasive nature. Inequalities of the economic variety also contribute to and are reflective of social hierarchisation. since those with more money can typically exercise more liberty as a greater

breadth of options are available to them. Similarly, social exclusion and distancing are partly functions and effects of economic inequalities.

Status inequalities, such as inequalities in social esteem and respect can also be oppressive in nature. Not only are they marginalising, exclusionary and invoke distancing, but they can also be characterised as exploitative in the relational sense. Chapter three looks more closely at how relations of coercive force induce uneven social relations under capitalism⁵. This is exacerbated under neoliberal capitalism. Parts of one's personal agency can be extracted and/or used to support hierarchical structures, reinforce norms surrounding these structures, and thus ultimately benefit those in positions higher up the societal echelons, notwithstanding direct benefits obtained from taking advantage of productive assets to extract uncompensated labour (Warren, 1997).

Finally, democratic inequalities are oppressive in light of these disparities. Imbalances of this democratic character tend to highlight more specifically powerlessness as a facet of oppression and distancing, exclusion and hierarchisation as functions of inequality. But indirect exploitation nevertheless remains prominent. Democratic inequalities such as unequal levels of democratic agency, for example, involve significant instances of distancing from the democratic process itself: exclusion from the very mechanisms or resources (broadly defined) needed to engage democratically; hierarchisation engendered by some disadvantage derived from someone's social, professional or bare economic standing. The exploitative dimension of this particular inequality comes from an accumulation of exploitation in the other examples cited above that together contribute to these democratic inequalities. The interrelations between the three types of inequalities highlighted in this discussion culminate in the consideration of specifically democratic inequalities.

The inequalities highlighted in this thesis are some, among others, that render contemporary neoliberalised democracies insubstantive. They will be addressed in greater depth and in relation to the framework developed herein in the following chapters. But first the idea of a radical democratic equality is explored as the basis for an idea of substantive democracy.

⁵ The reader should bear in mind, in light of the above discussion on the causal dimension of exploitation, that exploitation can also occur even in the absence of coercion, through unjust background conditions of differential ownership of productive assets and power relations that entails (Veneziani, 2013; Warren, 1997).

2.3. *Towards a Radical, Democratic Equality*

What exactly is meant by equality varies for almost every discipline in political philosophy. But most, like Scanlon, as well as plenty of other liberal theorists, assume the basic moral equality of all (Scanlon, 2018).

Broadly speaking, efforts to define the substance or content of equality fall under either the distributive or relational banners. Distributive notions of equality look to decide upon some fair allocation of resources or social goods. Equality of welfare and resources in the luck egalitarian vein, represented by, for example, Ronald Dworkin (1981). Other prominent theorists adopt a distributive egalitarian ideal of equality such as Richard Arneson's equality of opportunity for welfare (1989) and Gerald Cohen's equality of opportunity for advantage (1989). In a similar vein, but reflecting a different angle, is Amartya Sen's proposal of an equality of capability (1992).

Relational theories of equality, on the other hand, are concerned with the relationship within which distribution occurs. For relational egalitarians, distribution is only an instrumental matter vis-à-vis guaranteeing certain social relations providing the distribution is also egalitarian (Lippert-Rasmussen, 2012). Social equality is a type of relational equality and shares some similarities with other positions such as: moral equality; equal respect and concern; recognition and the politics of difference; non-domination; social justice and distributive equality (Fourie et al., 2015: 1). It stands apart, however, as a substantive ideal of equality in itself and not merely as the expression of other fundamental notions of equality (Fourie et al., 2015: 5-6). Likewise, the idea of democratic equality (Anderson, 1999) shares many similarities with social equality. As another relational theory of equality, democratic equality aims to abolish socially created oppression. It is an ideal that suggests two equal individuals who would "accept the obligation to justify their actions by principles acceptable to the other", taking "mutual consultation, reciprocation, and recognition for granted" (Anderson, 1999). Moreover, democratic equality suggests that the "social condition of living a free life is that one stand in relations of equality with others" (Anderson, 1999). Anderson develops this notion of democratic equality as a response to her critical assessment of luck egalitarianism and elaborates on a notion, similar to Sen's, of equality of capabilities. The wide range of equal capabilities to "function" is separated into three aspects of human functioning: 1) as a human being; 2) as a participant in a system of cooperative production; 3) as a citizen of a democratic state. The capabilities and freedoms corresponding to each of

these functions include but are not limited to: 1) - access to means of sustenance, knowledge of circumstances and options and the ability to deliberate, think and make personal judgements; 2) – Effective access to means of production, access to education, freedom of occupation, freedom and right to contract and association, right to non-exploitation, recognition of self-worth and value of contribution; 3) – Rights to political participation (speech and franchise), free access to spaces and institutions of civil society, social conditions of acceptance (Anderson, 1999). Anderson’s democratic equality, however, is only concerned with effective access and not levels of functioning (1999). There is a minimum sufficientarian criteria of what is required to function as an equal in society over the course of one’s lifetime that doesn’t quite go far enough. Nevertheless, Anderson’s democratic ideal of equality is comprehensive and remains important for developing a radical democratic notion of equality.

In opposition to some oppressive and exploitative inequalities perpetuated by neoliberal hegemony, a radical democratic equality is the ideal at the heart of a radical democratic egalitarian subject position. For developing this kind of position, consider Pierre Rosanvallon’s (2014) principles of relational equality as supplement to Anderson’s ideals of democratic equality laid out above. Rosanvallon proposes his three new principles in the interest of reviving the left’s calling cry for equality which, he argues in the introduction to his book *The Society of Equals*, has fallen silent (2013). The ideals of equality present in the French and American revolutions – similarity (equality as equivalence), independence (equality as autonomy), citizenship (equality as participation) – are posited against new principles (Rosanvallon, 2014). Singularity, instead of similarity, cherishes diversity as the standard of equality and difference as the basis for co-existence – individuals are similarly incomparable. Singularity is a relational variable as opposed to a positional (autonomy) or constitutional (identity). Reciprocity, as opposed to independence, reaffirms solidarity between individuals. And, finally, commonality adds substance to the social dimension of citizenship – fostering “a more active and creative concept, a more complex understanding of the common, encompassing as vital dimensions participation, mutual comprehension and circulation (Rosanvallon, 2014).

Democratic equality captures the essence and aim of social equality: to abolish socially created oppression. This coincides with a radical egalitarian aim to eliminate inequality as much as possible (Baker, 2015). In the contemporary context of neoliberal hegemony, eliminating inequality and abolishing socially created oppression implies a counter-hegemonic stance opposing neoliberal capitalism and neoliberalised democracy.

Democratic equality requires, among other things, access to means of sustenance and means of production, freedom of occupation, the right to non-exploitation and the right to equal esteem, respect and recognition of worth. So, the notion of democratic equality becomes radical once there is an acknowledgement of the (neoliberal) hegemonic system in place as well as (neoliberal) capitalism's role in perpetuating inequality. This is one aspect of the notion of equality which is radical and moves beyond liberal or more moderate conceptions of equality. Another is the inclusion of Pierre Rosanvallon's principles of equality: singularity, reciprocity, and commonality. A radical democratic egalitarianism moves the horizon of egalitarian positions beyond liberalism because of its specific concern with oppression and inequalities and the hegemonic and ideological structures which reproduce them. This radical democratic egalitarianism encompasses the concerns of the postmodern (neo)Marxist approach which will be developed in chapter two. The following section addresses the implications of this relationship for the substantiveness of democracy.

3. Substantive Democracy

The previous pages demonstrate how neoliberalism creates, reinforces and reproduces fundamental inequalities on the economic, political and ideological planes. Inequalities such as these contribute to rendering democracies today insubstantive in light of their neoliberalisation. The oppressive character of such inequalities induces marginalisation as they exclude, exploit and distanciate, whilst reinforcing hierarchies of domination and subordination. The growth of inequalities such as those highlighted are both symptoms and causes of an increasingly insubstantive democracy (Rosanvallon, 2013: 2). Societies where segregation and subordination can readily occur and are permitted, such as Western (neo)liberal democracies, where inequality is rife and proliferating, can be considered repressive (Anderson, 2010).

The hollowing out of the substance of neoliberalised democracy also denies the means of self-realisation through political participation since the system is not geared towards substantive decision-making (Elster, 1989: 131). When people are construed as human capital, the political nature inherent in humans, the *homo-politicus*, is superseded by *homo-oeconomicus* (Brown, 2015: 39-42). A shift in the construal of human's fundamental existential character from political to purely economic also serves to somehow redefine the purpose of democracy. If human beings', or human capital's, best interests are served in

consumption and market competition, democracy becomes less and less the place for the expression of interests and antagonisms. In a dual denial of democratic substance, neoliberalism vacates the notion of the people from democracy so that political self-rule by and for the people becomes redundant, *and* alters the main concerns of democracy from the interests of and societal organisation for people, to the interests and directives of the market. If substantive signifies substantial engagement of people in democracy and decisions made with their best interests in mind, as well as embodying an ideal of equality, then substantive decision-making is all but completely absent in neoliberalized democracy and democratic self-realization becomes a notion relegated to the past.

3.1. An Ideal of a Substantive Demos

For the sake of argument, we presume that democracy is desirable and should be pursued as the best means to secure liberty and equality, broadly speaking. But the specific kind of democracy best suited to strive for these ambitions is certainly contentious. The signification of democracy is certainly “open and contestable” (Brown, 2015: 20). Paul Patton succinctly states that in the technical understanding of democracy purported by contemporary liberal democracies, democracy refers to a level of accountability of governments to the electorate, usually via fair elections at regular intervals. A basic set of civil and political rights are upheld on a formally equal basis under a rule of law (2008: 185-86).

In its scrutiny of neoliberalised democracy, this thesis deems that it is not enough to hark back to some idealised form of liberal democracy as some authors do (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001: 195). This is because the ideology of liberal democracy denotes some kind of unimprovable ideal as the best form of government, a one-size-fits-all model championed after the collapse of the Soviet Union leading some to proclaim the end of history and, with it, the end of ideological struggle (Fukuyama, 1992: xi). It involves a dogma of representation and the development of a professional political class as well as an inevitable link with a capitalist market economy – even more so in its neoliberalised form. Instead, the ideal of substantive democracy to be strived for among contemporaries and for the eventual benefit of future generations should oppose neoliberal capitalism (and also capitalism more broadly),

constitute an open and plural discourse for the diverse and respectful deliberation and articulation of antagonism, as well as being reasonably horizontal⁶.

An ideal of substantive democracy could draw from what Patton describes as “the broad philosophical sense of democracy”:

an egalitarian political society without privileges of class or caste and in which no person's life, beliefs or values are inherently worth more than those of anyone else. Such a political society is an association of equals in which there is no justification for the exclusion of individuals or groups from the widest possible system of basic civil and political liberties, nor any justification for the arbitrary exclusion of particular individuals or groups from the benefits of social and political cooperation (2008: 186).

This ideal of democracy relates to the liberal principles mentioned in the previous paragraph. It differs, however, in the conception of equal moral worth. Patton's philosophical sense of democracy assigns greater emphasis to equal worth and recognition of such value in the voice of every individual, opening the ways in which democratic institutions could be constituted and function (2008:186). By not permitting any justification of exclusion to civil and political liberties as well as any arbitrary exclusion, this ideal of democracy is considerably more substantive than the kind of neoliberalised democracy divulged above.

4. Conclusion

Elaborating on the postmodern context established in the introduction, this chapter has explored the concept of neoliberalism. More will follow specifically regarding hegemony after the postmodern (neo)Marxist position is established in chapter two. Neoliberal capital and neoliberalised democracy perpetuate the inequalities which fundamentally diminish the substantive quality of democracy. The dynamics of inequality have been explored in order to demonstrate this point. So too has the relationship between the triad of inequality, oppression and exploitation. Attaining this understanding of inequality allows for the positing of the particular notion of radical democratic equality. In so doing, some foundational principles for a conception of substantive democracy have been posited.

⁶ Horizontality as much as possible in the hopes of encapsulating equality to the greatest extent and eliminating relations of dominance and oppression which vertical power structures can imply. This horizontality aims to encourage a truly inclusive demos.

The next chapter's initial focus aims to establish a hybrid postmodern (neo)Marxist theoretical position distinct from other strains of Marxism. Then, it undertakes the theoretical groundwork building towards the formulation of an anticipatory framework of antagonistic articulation which follows in chapter three.

Chapter II – Forming a Postmodern (neo)Marxism

In the face of ceaselessly evolving historical mutations of market and capitalist systems and their contemporary manifestation in neoliberal hegemony, this thesis suggests that an understanding of hegemonic relations and articulations as well as an awareness of the role of ideology in subject formation, helps strive towards amelioration of contemporary democratic conditions for the eventual benefit of the future. The theoretical groundwork of this chapter supports the development of a framework to analyse and articulate antagonisms and corresponding shifts in subject positions that contribute to constructing a subject position that embodies a radical democratic equality.

There is little engagement in the field of intergenerational studies with the underlying structures and power relations of society. These form the ontological and ideological frame of the social. Such structures and relations also have a tangible impact on the democratic relations in society. To attain a fuller understanding of contemporary democratic conditions, analysing hegemonic economic, ideological, and political structures and their (re)production is key precisely because of the way in which these processes proliferate oppressive social relations and inequalities. The reproduction and development of hegemonic structures are processes that take place alongside overlapping generations and, to a greater or lesser extent, define those generations. An approach incorporating the neo-Marxism of the twentieth century and the perspectives of postmodern Marxisms that arose from the former has the theoretical breadth and capacity to analyse hegemonic structures and ideological reproduction simultaneously, and to identify antagonisms that will help improve contemporary democracy.

The chapter argues that a position beyond classical Marxism is necessary. It then navigates some typologies of various combinations of postmodernism and (neo-)Marxism in order to justify why exactly different strains of neo- and post- Marxism should be drawn together in a hybrid synthesis. Once that has been established, the discussion moves on to some key neo-Marxist precepts for this exploration. One such precept is Antonio Gramsci's theories of hegemony and civil society, from which the post-Marxist theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe draws. Another original neo-Marxist pillar informing a vital part of this paper's postmodern (neo)Marxist position is Althusser's neo-Marxist approach to ideology and its role in the formation of subject positions. Throughout the discussion of antagonisms and subject positions, Antonio Negri's neo-Marxism provides a tertiary column supporting these specific aspects of this theoretical groundwork. Ultimately, this chapter aims to show how antagonisms arising in the face of hegemonic conditions are constitutive of certain

ideological subject positions. These concepts draw from various theorists reflecting different strands of postmodern (neo)Marxism. Drawing them together shapes the theoretical foundations for the development of an anticipatory framework of antagonistic articulation with the intention of improving the substantive quality of contemporary democracy.

1. *Neo-Marxist Foundations*

1.1. *Beyond classical Marxism*

Diversifying classical Marxism's categories is vital because of the contextual changes of the twenty first century. Income inequality may be easing off slightly on a global scale, but it is increasing nevertheless within most countries and regions (World Inequality Lab, 2022). The dominance of market dynamics continues in the increasingly postindustrial West, with new means developing for accumulation and concentration of capital⁷. The columns of the classic Marxist dialectic have not risen as its proponents foresaw: Capitalism has developed and mutated but the corresponding concentration, unification and mobilization of the working classes has not developed in quite the same way as classical Marxism foresaw (Therborn, 2008: 57-8).

What is more, classical Marxism is generally oriented towards 'modernity'; a temporal orientation and dialectical understanding of the modern world bringing together the notions of technological and societal improvement, "the progressive nature of capitalism", and an inevitable historical advance towards a certain future (Therborn, 2008: 122-3). In a world characterised more by postmodernity than modernity – the world of real subsumption – most, if not all, social, political and economic relations are altered and the notion of a clear progression or direction of 'progress' towards some inevitable historical end is blurred. Thus, the horizons and categories of classical Marxism must be broadened.

The revisionist trend of Marxism refutes laws of historical necessity and class fetishism of classical Marxism. Class retains its vitality in the revisionist discourse but is recognised as part of a broader spectrum of diverse subject positions. As Bernstein notes, the category of the working class increasingly comes to include citizen, consumer and, more generally, a participant in the state (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001: 35). The working class has continued evolving into an expanded grouping with the potential to contain a plurality of

⁷ For example, see Dolan, 2021; Sharma, 2021.

positions. A plurality of positions implies a dispersion of relations, sites of confrontation, etc. (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001: 36), thus expanding the notion of a collective emancipatory subject in a broad, inclusive and intersectional manner.

Marx precluded the notion that individuals are temporally unembedded, abstract and contextually free because of the emphasis Marx places on production and the social relations (re)produced by production that constitute individuals (MacKenzie, 2021: 138-9; Sayer, 2007). There are distinct material circumstances that define the horizons available for the making of history and, although man is free to radically alter their own circumstances, the “spirits of the past” are often conjured up (Marx, 1852/2000: 329). An appreciation of intergenerational relations is evidently present in Marx’s writings, but twentieth-century neo-Marxism and postmodern currents develop the notion further. Gramsci’s theory of hegemony, for example, analyses the structures in which ideology and power relations are reproduced in space and time. And Negri develops the idea of the ontologically constitutive nature of temporality. The tide of post(modern)-Marxism strays somewhat further from Marx’s conception of the individual by embracing the notion of the abstract, floating and radically undetermined individual. But the formation of the individual in external circumstances is still paramount; the focus for post-Marxism is on social relations as opposed to strictly material concerns.

Classical Marxism is also notably concerned with a normative principle of need. This premise is founded on the perception that capitalism could never adequately provide for the needs of all. Once the revolutionary transition to a post-capitalist world was undergone, the principle of need would determine a fair distribution of resources. The postmodern and neo-Marxist currents, on the other hand, ascribe more to normative concerns surrounding equality. Capitalism, whilst clearly not providing adequately for all, has progressed to the extent that the quality of life of a great number of people has drastically improved, especially in the West. An improved quality of life relative to societal circumstance, however, does not imply the equal nature of this improved resource distribution. A deeper normative concern with equality is reflected in the postmodern (neo)Marxist position propounded below.

Neo-Marxists do not always deny a “unifying logic in the relations of production” of classical Marxism nor its insistence on the “complex variety” of “empirical reality” as some authors argue (Wood, 1995: 58). Rather, in order to make sense of this variable empirical reality, it adds different conceptual tools and logics to classical Marxism, such as hegemony

and antagonism, that help decipher the role that other spheres of life play in reproducing ruling ideologies. Furthermore, the branches of Marxism touched upon here, in spite of their differences, are not mutually exclusive. There remain overlaps and a dialogue between the varied strands. It is essential that various currents of Marxism develop together (Callinicos et al., 2021, 2), a task the remainder of this chapter undertakes.

It is impossible here to conduct a full survey of the immensely diverse and finely nuanced neo- and post- Marxisms and postmodern traditions⁸. There are, however, three neo-Marxist authors whose theories make up the base layer of the particular theoretical position developed here. Relevant aspects of Antonio Gramsci, Louis Althusser, and Antonio Negri's thought are introduced because they contribute towards a framework of cross-temporality that moves beyond the determinism of historical materialism.

1.2. Gramsci

We turn first to Antonio Gramsci's important revisionist shift. Gramsci's theories on the integral state, hegemony, civil society and ideology primarily address elements of the superstructure as the locus of ideological reproduction and the site of gradual revolutionary struggles. They are the basis for a postmodern understanding of Marxist theory, the logics of which are vital for understanding the relevant analytical categories cross-temporally.

At the heart of Gramsci's theory is the key conception of the integral state. Gramsci conceived of the state as consisting of two "superstructural levels" or societies: political and civil (1971: 12). The former represents the elements of force and coercion in the structural composite of a state (cabinet, parliament, judiciary, military, etc.) whilst the latter highlights institutional structures in civil society as the locus of ideological reproduction (church, school, journals, clubs, etc.) (Bates, 1975). What this conception essentially provided was a deconstructive lens through which a Marxist theory of state and revolution could understand the complexities of society. Gramsci's dichotomy between political/civil society, coercion/consent, effectively disperses the internal and external elements and points of antagonism beyond any a priori system of unification. As Norberto Bobbio notes, the "double inversion" in relation to the Marxist tradition of Gramsci's thought highlights: *i*) the primacy of the ideological superstructure over the economic structure; *ii*) the primacy of civil society

⁸ See Laclau & Mouffe, 2001: ch. 1 for a useful tracing of orthodox (classical), reformist and revisionist Marxism. See also Therborn, 2007.

(consent) over political society (coercive force) (Bobbio, 1979: 21-48). Political society, or the state, corresponds to elements of “direct domination” enacted by coercive measures whilst civil society is the site of “spontaneous consent by the great masses”. Those who refuse to consent either passively or actively experience the coercive apparatuses of the state (Gramsci, 1971: 12).

Consider Gramsci’s understanding of the process of subject formation: a “critical understanding of oneself...comes through the struggle of political ‘hegemonies’...culminating in a higher elaboration of one’s own conception of reality. The awareness of being part of a definite hegemonic force...is the first step towards a progressively higher self-consciousness.” (1966: 75). This quote from Gramsci provides an initial link between hegemony and the process of subject formation.

A quick note is needed here on subject positions or subjectivities before proceeding. A distinction must be drawn from the offset between human personality and subjectivity (Therborn, 1999: 15-6). A personality has an inner “psychodynamic” and a separate temporality to ideological interpellation, which acts in the process of subject formation. The formation of subject positions or subjectivity involves intersections of the psychic and the social but generally relates to the outer being of an individual – the conscious, more socially malleable aspects of their character (Therborn, 1999: 16). In a contrast, Hirst is quick to remind that the individual is the effect of a totality of psychic processes that cannot be reduced to subjectivity (Hirst, 1976). Whilst a complex human individual cannot be reduced to a subject position, the latter nevertheless remains a fundamental constituting element of that individual and certainly an element heavily affected in and by the process of ideological (re)production (amongst other elements composing the totality of the human psyche). By grasping the reproduction of certain specific subject positions in a hegemonic proliferation of ideology, then relevant elements can be highlighted and addressed for developing a subject position that embodies radical democratic equality. Such a position would form the basis for counter-hegemonic democratic movements.

1.3. Althusser

For Louis Althusser, civil society, or Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs), is the “site of subjection to the ruling ideology” (2020: 7). It is within the ISAs that ideological social relations are articulated; the site of reproduction of modes of production (Hirst, 1976). Althusser conceives ideology not as a concrete body of ideas but as a social practice

producing subjects (Althusser, 1970: 160-5). The subject, therefore, is not the source of consciousness but rather a “product of a specific practice operating through the mechanism of interpellation” (Mouffe, 1979: 171). According to Althusser, this interpellation occurs through the double constitution by ideology of individuals as subjects: “the category of the subject is only constitutive of all ideology insofar as all ideology has the function (which defines it) of ‘constituting’ concrete individuals as subjects” (2020: 45). So, ideology is conceived by Althusser as a social process, thereby marking the conjuncture with Marxist discourse on ideology (Therborn, 1999: 7). Furthermore, ideology has the dual function of recognition and misrecognition. But we are “*always already* subjects” consistently practicing ideological recognition because of ideology’s operation via this interpellation. It follows that the individual is in fact abstract with respect to their subject positions (Althusser, 2020: 45-50). The ideological formation of human subjectivity is of utmost importance when considering social relations since these are the relations that determine how a society interacts and lives. By grasping ideology and its hegemonic reproduction in individuals’ subject positions, an understanding can be obtained of how social relations and subjectivities would have to be altered in order to improve the quality of democracy today for the eventual benefit of generations to come.

1.4. Negri

Negri’s political philosophy is included in this theoretical overview for the substance it adds for any theory of antagonism. Moreover, with the aim of improving contemporary democracy, Negri’s conception of antagonism is intrinsic to the construction and constitution of collective political subjects and subjectivities otherwise referred to as the multitude in his work (1989: 127-139). Negri’s neo-Marxism does away with the classic Marxist dialectic as the defining element constituting the proletariat. Capital has progressed as far as a real subsumption of the world but no real substantial development of an emancipatory movement in the working class has followed, showing the need to transcend dialectical analyses of history. The proletariat, however, remains the central revolutionary subject in Negri’s theory of emancipation. He nevertheless acknowledges that revolutionary subjects in the world of real subsumption have indeed changed (1989: 181). The political struggle which the revolutionary subject must engage in is within itself – seeking unity between antagonisms and multiplicity of movements and the causes for expressing this antagonism (1989: 183-4). This introspective antagonistic approach is a central supposition of the anticipatory framework of antagonistic articulation developed in the next chapter.

Yet, Negri maintains a critical view of postmodernism but it is not entirely unsympathetic. Whilst he finds some postmodern strains circular, vague and ambiguous “mystified ideolog[ies]”, Negri highlights their importance for posing important questions permitting the possibility for the construction of new political subjectivities (1989: 203-6). The recognition of multiplicity of collective emancipatory subjects is central to Negri’s conception of the multitude (1989: 184; 2004: 225; Hardt & Negri, 2000; 2004).

2. Postmodern (neo)Marxism

This section now turns towards elucidating a particular hybrid position between neo- and post- Marxism. Understanding where different strands of Marxists and neo- and post-Marxists stand in relation to one another and within the postmodern terrain is no simple task. There are several typologies that have been developed to help make sense of this sometimes confusing and potentially contradicting theoretical position. Pauline Rosenau organizes Marxist reactions to postmodernism in three varieties: 1) Orthodox Marxists: who completely reject postmodernism; 2) neo-Marxists: who “maintain their essential identity and primary affiliation with a Hegelian form of Marxism, but... look to postmodernism for inspiration to reinvigorate, revive and expand Marxism” and maintain some form of class analysis; 3) post-Marxists: who partly or entirely alter their Marxism so it conforms with postmodernism, thus entailing a certain extent of acceptance of the latter (1992: 160-1). Stuart Sim (2000), on the other hand, narrows it down to *post-Marxism* and *post-Marxism*. The former, according to Sim, reject “their Marxist past” (2000:1). The latter attempt to transcend Marxism via postmodernism.

Dani Filc and Uri Ram (2014), in response to Rosenau and Sim, conceive a more nuanced typology of Marxism and postmodernism factoring different degrees of acceptance or rejection. They classify various positions into four categories: 1) Anti-postmodern Marxists, such as Ellen Wood and Eric Olin Wright, who reject postmodernism because it entirely uproots the materialist foundations of Marxism and reject any move beyond modernity; 2) Marxist postmodernism, represented by authors such as Frederic Jameson and David Harvey: partially “reject postmodernism’s view of itself as a new epistemology or philosophy, while accepting it as a depiction of some main features of the culture and consciousness of contemporary capitalism” (Filc & Ram, 2014). They do not deny the base-superstructure dialectic but see postmodernism as endowing new relevance to Marxist

critiques; 3) Synthetic Marxist postmodernism (like Nancy Fraser, for example): adopt a “dual perspective” that takes into account hierarchies of both classes and identities. The former results in material exploitation and inequality whilst the latter hierarchy points to an inequality in social standing – of estimation and respect; 4) post-Marxism (such as Laclau and Mouffe) – characterised by a radical embrace of postmodernist logics of contingency, difference and dispersion. In many ways, post-Marxism transcends Marxism completely (Filc & Ram, 2014). The foundations of typologies 2) and 3) in Filc and Ram’s classification already have their foundations in form of neo-Marxism influenced by postmodernism. It seems, too, that typology 4), exemplified by Laclau and Mouffe, draws much from earlier neo-Marxists such as Gramsci.

The postmodern (neo)Marxist position proposed here, however, does not snugly fit any one of these typologies. Postmodern (neo)Marxism refers to a hybrid position amongst the varying degrees of acceptance and/or rejections of postmodernism. The approach is not just neo-Marxist because that would not necessarily acknowledge the encompassing postmodern premises. The post-Marxism of Laclau and Mouffe, though, which is the only theory explored here self-referred to as ‘post-Marxist’, and can probably be considered the foundational text of post-Marxism, eschews to too great an extent the socialist project by endorsing an ideal form of liberal democracy (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001: 195).

Nevertheless, much value can be drawn from Laclau and Mouffe’s work. Their construction of a post-Marxist approach informs the way in which various Marxisms can and must be extracted and drawn together with other Marxisms. Anti-postmodern Marxism and Marxist postmodernism are insufficient because they retain obstinate focus on an outdated notion of the proletariat as the only emancipatory subject. The three neo-Marxisms of Gramsci, Althusser and Negri represent different degrees of distance from classical Marxism in their distinct neo-Marxist variations for the twentieth century. This thesis’ postmodern (neo)Marxism, therefore, acknowledges these neo-Marxist foundations whilst noting the departure from Gramsci’s neo-Marxism in Laclau and Mouffe’s post-Marxism. Their post-Marxism is the epitome of the postmodern intersection with Marxism. They still retain the vitality of civil society as well as the primacy of the superstructure as the site of hegemonic and ideological reproduction similar to Gramsci’s neo-Marxism. But the logics deployed in their work are distinctly postmodern.

The theoretical position established here is referred to as postmodern (*neo*)Marxism because of the synthesis in the framework of neo- and post-Marxism. By labelling it *postmodern* (*neo*)Marxism, varying degrees of oscillation with postmodernism and neo-Marxism are acknowledged. It draws together the theory of the authors discussed above and integrates the key concepts of hegemony, ideology, antagonism, and subject positions. The remainder of this chapter discusses these concepts.

3. *Hegemony*

3.1. *History and Logic of Hegemony*

Hegemony must be properly defined – no easy task given the broad and varied uses of the concept. Bates, for example, summarises hegemony as political leadership consensually dissemination of a particular world view (Bates, 1975). Laclau denotes, furthermore, that hegemony is the terrain on which a political relation is actually constituted (Laclau, 2001: 44). Butler adds to this matrix by emphasizing how the operations of power in day-to-day life affect how we understand social relations and the ways power relations are consented to and reproduced (Butler, 2000: 14). Definitions such as these build on Gramsci's fundamental theorizing.

It is worthy of note that, for Gramsci, the term hegemony has two senses. On the one hand, hegemony implies domination of a ruling ideology or power by some kind of consent reproduced in the sphere of civil society. On the other, hegemony can designate the movement of a "subaltern" or "subordinate" group to aspirations of leadership among other subaltern groups (Hoare & Smith, 1971: xiv). Gramsci wrote that the moment of hegemony is that "in which one becomes aware that one's own corporate interests, in their present and future development, transcend the corporate limits of the purely economic class, and can and must become the interest of other subordinate groups too" (1971: 181). Such an essentially political moment brings into conflict various points of antagonism until one or a constellation of interests prevail. The subsequent hegemonic reproduction (via the process of articulation, addressed below) occurs on a universal plane and marks the passage from structure to complex superstructure (Gramsci, 1971: 181-82). Hegemony is a conceptual tool for framing political struggle and ideological (re)production. It can be used effectively to rationalize and contextualise the antagonisms of the social. The logic of contingency and process of articulation inherent to hegemony are divulged next to attain a firmer grasp on the characteristics of hegemony.

In their profoundly insightful text *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Laclau and Mouffe develop the concept of hegemony of their seminal post-Marxism. Hegemony takes place in a field of articulatory practices since the concept itself “supposes the incomplete and open character of the social” (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001: 115). Consider first what a field of articulatory practices entails. It is a given for these authors that every social practice is articulatory. In their discourse, an ‘element’ has the status of a floating signifier; any ‘difference’ in identity, characteristic or belief that is not discursively articulated. An articulated ‘element’ (differential position) is only then considered a ‘moment’. This transition from element to moment is the articulating practice and affirms the fundamentally relational character of every identity. The process of articulation itself, establishing a partial yet temporarily fixed identity of relational character among elements, is a direct result of the openness of the social, underwritten by the field of discursivity of the logic of hegemony (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001: 115).

It is through the discursive operations of hegemony that collective agents become political subjects: social alliances between subaltern groups provide the space for this becoming when the particular interests of one group develop into a general interest of several others. “Corporate identities” are thus formed in this exercise of “ethico-political leadership”, and they are hegemonic if their prominence on the ideological and political landscape spreads this counter-hegemonic effort among other subaltern groups (Boucher, 2021: 369).

Crucially, what unifies identities (elements) in discursive formation is precisely their *regularity in dispersion*. What the authors successfully emphasize is an absence of any originaive founding identity (i.e., pure class identity) or an a priori subject position to be filled. The subject positions/identities themselves are floating, dispersed and fundamentally relational; in a word, contingent. This allows for a diversified way to approach political antagonisms in the social and a more profound understanding of social identities (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001: 105-15). Grasping the contingent nature of social relations and identities is also paramount to thinking about the persistence of hegemony. An inherent fixity or necessity can limit temporal developments to a uni-directional progression. Acknowledging the contingency – and impermanency - of the structures around us opens up avenues in thought and practice for change. This condition of contingency, however, could certainly be viewed as inhibiting to any kind of anticipatory thought. The position put forth in this thesis, however, rejects the assertions of “absolute contingency” of Wood (1995: 52) and hence also refutes that the notion is completely, radically unpredictable. Whilst the condition of

contingency remains fundamental for postmodern (neo)Marxism, its absoluteness that Wood asserts does not necessarily hold. There are consistencies in the social relations that mean that antagonisms today – to be elucidated in chapter three – bare similarities in origin, form, and content with those of the past. Hence the need for a hybrid theoretical position.

To complete the theoretical schemata of hegemony and establish how antagonisms can be analysed, consider the logics of equivalence and difference. Difference, Laclau and Mouffe remind us, is the foundation of equivalence. For two terms to be equivalent, they must be different. Their equivalence only exists through the subversion of difference. The contingency of equivalence (being based on a system of differences) is in fact what prevents the ‘necessary’ from fully constituting itself (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001: 128). A system of differences, within which chains of equivalence are contained, is vital for the stability of social relations. If this system fails, then it becomes impossible to establish a chain of equivalence and antagonisms proliferate. This proliferation of antagonisms and general crisis of social identities is what Gramsci calls organic crisis (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001: 131). But an organic crisis of what specifically? Of Gramsci’s historical bloc or what Laclau and Mouffe refer to specifically as a hegemonic formation: a relatively stable social and political space with partially relational identities taken from the point of view of antagonisms. Organic crisis entails the proliferation of more antagonisms compared to the relatively stable hegemonic formation, so the inclusion of the notion of crisis helps to grasp a moment where a change in subject positions (constituted by social and political antagonisms) could be possible.

Highlighting this notion of crisis is crucial. Hegemonic neoliberalism entails a world of real subsumption which, Negri points out, is synonymous with crisis (2004: 54-5). At the level of real subsumption, crisis is neither linear nor periodic but, rather, “*simultaneous and stable*” (2004: 54). And this is so because the crisis in the world of real subsumption is “entirely traversed by the antagonisms of displacement” – a displacement caused by the crisis of the law of value, whereby use-value is subsumed by exchange value⁹ (2004: 44-55). Moreover, for Negri, “[e]ven to say ‘the market’ is, in a way, to say crisis” (2004: 54). As such, the hegemony of neoliberalism’s market fundamentalism implies persistent crisis, pointing to the proliferation of antagonisms.

⁹ This thesis cannot divulge an adequate explanation of Negri’s conceptualization of the theory of value and its relation to time in real subsumption without veering too far off course. For further reference to this notion see Negri, 2004: chs. 1-3; Negri, 1999. Specifically for theory of value: Southerton, 2011

In the world of real subsumption by capital, encapsulated by neoliberal hegemony, the emergence and proliferation of antagonisms are themselves responses of “plural collective subjectivity” to the “capitalist reduction of complexity” (Negri, 2004: 59). The reduction of complexity refers to the world of real subsumption – the pervasion of capital (its interests, logics, structures and relations) via neoliberal hegemony to virtually all spheres of human life. Complexity is reduced in light of this fact. Recall from the discussion of neoliberalism the construal of individuals as human capital and, thus, the extensive marketisation of humans, politics and life itself. Conceiving all facets of life as markets and assuming that they can be organized and operated as markets designates a simplification of humanity and society’s intrinsic complexity. Contrarily, as a “*constitutive ontology*”, antagonism increases the complexity constitutive of subjects (Negri, 1989: 129). Exploring this notion of constitutive antagonisms is vital for countering neoliberal hegemony and restoring human’s political complexity.

3.2. *Considerations for Anticipating Antagonisms*

The object and form antagonisms might take will undoubtedly involve a degree of uncertainty and contingency. The idea that antagonisms can be anticipated is by no means a blanket statement about *all* antagonisms; past, present, or future. Neither does it make a claim that the only way to anticipate antagonisms is by assuming the temporal extension and application of current antagonisms in response to the hegemonic and ideological structures of the present. The intended argument suggests that the antagonisms which could be cross-temporally anticipated would be comparable to those of present generations should the current hegemonic structures – neoliberalized democracy and neoliberal capitalist economics – persist in their state of organic, stable and simultaneous crisis. But even if a crisis is not so pronounced, the persistence of hegemonic structures and corresponding ideological interpellation will entail some similar antagonisms in the face of these same structures. Yet, other conditions can certainly be said to persist. Democratic conditions, for instance. By improving democratic conditions today, a transfer to future generations of an ameliorated democratic sensibility could certainly be conceived. In fact, since generational overlap and consistent replenishment (Barry, 1977: 268) are given, this transfer of democracy from a present generation to a future generation is a necessary consequence of the robustness of democratic amelioration. Naturally, a framework for antagonistic anticipation must allow for some degree of contingency (denoted in ‘anticipation’) but it also accounts for some level of consistency by virtue of its persistence.

Further difficulties arise with the anticipation of as-of-yet non-existing antagonisms. If the individuals and groups expressing the antagonistic relation do not yet exist, how can the antagonism itself be said to exist? As noted in the introduction, it is assumed that future generations (at least in the immediate future) will exist. The political condition of humankind entails the expression of antagonisms, conflicts and disagreements. Hence, antagonisms of some colour and character will undoubtedly be a feature of the generations to come. The kinds of antagonisms this thesis addresses are those in response to economic, status and democratic inequalities resulting from neoliberalised democratic structures and neoliberal capitalism. And whilst these hegemonic elements and corresponding antagonisms (moments – discursively articulated elements [differential positions]) have resemblances, given the contingent nature of history and social relations, it is simply unrealistic to expect that they will perfectly mirror each other generation to generation. Similar forms of antagonisms may occur. Laclau and Mouffe designate that every antagonism is a “floating signifier” which does not predetermine the form in which it can be articulated to other elements in social formation (2001: 171). Whilst the level of contingency of a “floating signifier” makes it difficult to predict antagonisms of future generations with precision, an educated anticipation is still a tangible possibility.

If similar political and economic hegemonies persist, as they have done for the past several decades, then like antagonisms can be expected to be expressed by subsequent generations. Furthermore, by addressing these antagonisms in the present – antagonisms in response to inequalities hampering the substantive quality of democracy – specific elements can be identified and potentially overcome in order to benefit, indirectly perhaps, the generations of the future. A beneficial outcome for future generations consists in, to a great degree, the potential to improve their democratic capabilities by removing as much foundational inequality from the individual’s subject position.

The significance of Laclau and Mouffe’s analysis of hegemony for improving the substance of democracy for future generations is the way antagonisms are framed and can be addressed. Drawing from Negri’s conception of antagonism develops the understanding of the fundamental centrality of antagonism to the constitution of subjectivity, particularly for collective subjects. What is more, the hegemonic moment, centered around subject positions articulated equivalentially onto generalized floating signifiers, has democratic potential precisely because of the gap between the particulars of one or several subaltern groups (and

their corresponding subject positions) and the impossibility of the absolute universality of those particular demands (Laclau, 1995: 46; Boucher, 2021: 372).

The following chapter builds on this theoretical foundation and work towards developing an anticipatory framework for the articulation of antagonisms. In so doing, a counter-hegemonic, radical, democratic, and egalitarian subject position may be conceived. Tracing the articulation from conciliatory and affirmative¹⁰ antagonism drawn from hegemonic elements – various inequalities in this case – to an adversarial and counter-hegemonic antagonism (radical democratic egalitarian) will permit the perception of corresponding shifts in subject position. These shifts do not occur spontaneously, nor are they momentary. This whole process of articulation is temporal, implying an elapse from one subject position to the next. Its anticipatory character assumes a degree of persistence of the organic crisis of neoliberal hegemony, provoking a proliferation of antagonisms. In anticipating this temporal movement, the framework is oriented to some future timeframe. This may not immediately be a generational anticipation. But the potential shifts towards radical democratic egalitarian subject positions carries with it an implication of democratic improvement. Those improvements to the substance of democracy carried out in the contemporary period may persist via the transfer/fostering of analogous democratic subject positions, and therefore benefit the generations to come. This improvement is beneficial because there is an inherent value of democracy that not only allows for their expression and mediation, but also for potentially overcoming antagonisms.

4. *Ideology and Subject Formation*

Having outlined how the concept of hegemony will be deployed in this thesis, attention is now directed towards ideology. In order to fully grasp the importance of hegemonic articulatory practices/formations for attempts to thicken the substance of contemporary democracy, ideology and its role in subject formation must be included in the analysis in its own right. Thus, the (re)production of ideology, the formation of subject positions and the constitutive role of antagonisms will establish the theoretical basis of the anticipatory framework developed below. Understanding how ideology functions compliments the broader structural concerns of hegemony; taking the two concepts together

¹⁰ Discussion of Therborn's classification of antagonisms follows on page 41.

to analyse present antagonisms and subject positions will help identify what needs to change today to improve democracy.

4.1. Ideological Process and Subject Formation

Subject positions, in their numerous and diverse manifestations, are of immense importance if we are to adequately anticipate the potential antagonisms of future generations. It must be considered how the formation of certain types of subjects as a result of one hegemonic formation today might affect the social and political relations of people tomorrow. If, for example, subjects are formed in response to the dominance of capital and in the mould of capitalist relations of domination and exploitation, then inequality is likely to be inherent in an individual's subject position. The quality of democracy – in a sweeping summarization: rule by the people, for the people – will unquestionably vary depending on the kinds of individuals involved in the democratic process. And an inherent relation of inequality that is formative and foundational to a subject position inevitably undermines a genuinely fair democratic procedure (one that embodies equality). Therein lies the importance of attaining a comprehensive grasp of the site and process of subject formation and thus why a theory of ideology is included alongside the theory of hegemony divulged above to form the theoretical foundations of this exploration.

For Althusser, the basic functioning of ideology is a four-part process involving: 1) Interpellation of individuals as subjects; 2) Individuals' subjection to the Subject 3) Mutual recognition of subjects as subjects and the subjects' recognition of themselves; 4) An ideological pre-definition of the realms of reality and possibility (1970).

Ideological interpellation is an ongoing process. These "interpellations unceasingly constitute and reconstitute who we are" (Therborn, 1999: 78). And since we are, according to Althusser, *always, already* subjects, "we remain open to be positioned and situated in different ways, at different moments throughout our existence" (Hall, 1985). Part 2) of the process pointed out above expresses how "we are constituted by the unconscious processes of ideology, in that position of recognition or fixture between ourselves and the signifying chain" which determines ideological meaning (Hall, 1985). Hall provides a pertinent example of the second and third parts of this process of ideological function as well as the division between lived experience and the (re)production of ideological structures. His personal experiences in the face of racial ideology demonstrate very clearly what is meant by mutual

recognition of subjects as subjects as well as their self – recognition. The ideological structures of race that he was born into led Hall to be characterised and labelled a certain way and positioned him as a subject in relation to specific categories (race, colour, ethnicity) (1985). These racial structures are but one example of how ideological structures of previous generations affect new generations who are born into them.

Positioning of this kind occurs “by the discursive formation of specific social formations” (Hall, 1985). Ideologies operate in discursive chains and formations, meaning they are plural; highlighting any one given element of the field of ideology involves numerous other mutual connotations. Crucially, therefore, various different ideological systems or logics can constitute any social formation (Hall, 1985).

Another important process to clarify for Althusserian ideology is the concept of the *imaginary*. The *imaginary* plane is the theoretical tool Althusser uses to distinguish between experiences of social relations and their conceptualization in thought (Hall, 1985). This conceptual plane supposes recognition but does in no way connote the ‘imagination’ of a subject since the latter implies an action of the subject (Hirst, 1976). By its supposition of recognition, then, it is in fact through the imaginary that the subject exists, reinforcing the notion of ideological interpellation as an unconscious process. And this whole process makes it easier to grasp the meaning of a subject position’s constitutive role in individual character as separate from other personality defining processes in the psyche. Having broken down how ideology functions, we must consider what role antagonism(s) play in the process of subject formation.

4.2. Antagonisms Constitutive of Subject Positions

An antagonism, formed in the discursive process of articulation, to a large extent defines the political nature of a human in society. One of the origins of an antagonism is the vehement opposition to a given phenomenon in society. But the character of an antagonism will take different forms depending on its relation to hegemonic, ideological, and temporal conditions. Therborn (1999) keenly notes in his discussion of ideology that it operates through *affirmations* and *sanctions* in the material matrix of ideology. An interpellated subject engages in affirmative practice when their actions are approved in the dominant ideological discourse. Contrarily, the subject is sanctioned (marginalized, excluded, failed, fined, fired, imprisoned etc.) for acting in opposition to the dictates of dominant ideology

(Therborn, 1999: 34). But whilst Therborn is specifically highlighting a material matrix, ideological affirmations and sanctions can also be applied when thinking about how antagonisms are constitutive of subject positions.

On the one hand, an antagonism that opposes the same or similar phenomena as the dominant ideology whilst reproducing the structures characteristic of this ideology would be considered an affirmative antagonism. An affirmative antagonism reinforces subjectivisation by interpellating another subject as a Subject. An example of this process has been cited above. Additionally, from the contemporary hegemonic standpoint, postmodernity and neoliberalism denote temporal identities that constitute subject positions through affirmative antagonisms. On the other hand, an antagonism arising in response to a sanction from non-adherence to the ruling ideology might be considered an adversarial antagonism that stands opposed to the dominant ideology. An adversarial antagonism in a constellation of other such antagonisms would form the basis of a counter-hegemonic subject position juxtaposed to the ruling ideas. Antagonisms are not limited to the two forms identified here and this model must not be interpreted as a restricting mould for classifying antagonisms. It is intended more as a helpful way of characterising antagonisms and identifying how they can be constitutive of subject positions vis-à-vis hegemonic structures. In particular, an adversarial antagonism opposing effects of oppression and inequality, for example, could be anticipated in future generations if the structures and conditions of oppression and inequality continued through hegemonic and ideological reproduction.

If we assume that a hegemonic ideological structure remains largely dominant, then the interpellated subject will continue to act as the ideology predicts. It is not an overly big stretch to guess that an adversarial antagonism of a member of a future generation (let's say within three generations) in the face of a dominant hegemonic and ideological structure that is similar in character to one today, may demonstrate some continuities with past adversarial antagonisms. Whilst ideologies tend to be historically specific, it is not an unrealistic leap to suggest that an ideology can persist between several generations. Hence, the interpellated subject may exhibit pre-emptively anticipated behaviours. They can therefore be anticipated by ideological affirmation.

5. Conclusion

The hybrid, postmodern (neo)Marxist theoretical position has been laid out in the chapter above after distinguishing from other neo- and post-(modern) Marxisms and outlining elements of Gramsci, Althusser, and Negri's theory central to the thesis. Then, the specific concept of hegemony was explored before investigating the function of ideology in the process of subject formation and exploring its relation to antagonisms and hegemony.

The theoretical groundwork is now ready for the development of an anticipatory framework of antagonisms in the following chapter. It develops this framework in order to return to the contention that contemporary hegemonic structures – ideological, economic and political – of neoliberalism perpetuate inequality which, in turn, becomes foundational in individuals' subject positions. Such positioning rooted in inequality precludes a fair and equal democratic process because any form of democratic interaction will not proceed on a level playing field (disparities in wealth, well-being, education, class etc.). It is the antagonisms that are likely to arise because of these conditions of inequality and oppression that can and must be anticipated if the substantive quality of democracy is to be improve for future generations.

Chapter III – Anticipating Antagonisms

The final chapter lays out and engages with the anticipatory framework for antagonistic articulation. The framework's dual function surveys corresponding subject positions constituted by particular antagonisms and traces their shifts after the articulatory process. This chapter argues that the identified antagonisms would likely constitute antagonisms of future generations because of the contingent persistence of hegemonic structures and the relevance of these antagonisms to democratic movements. It considers specific elements which render democracy insubstantive in light of their unequal and potentially exploitative and oppressive character. Through the articulation of differential positions (elements) into antagonistic moments, this chapter highlights antagonisms that are likely to be the locus of present and future counter-hegemonic movements striving to improve the quality of contemporary democracy. The chapter suggests that developing radical, democratic and egalitarian subject positions will eventually benefit future generations.

First, the chapter defines the conceptual framework drawn from the theory divulged in the previous chapter. Then, it explores the process of articulation of hegemonic-affirmative elements into adversarial, democratic and egalitarian antagonisms along with the corresponding shifts in subject positions that accompany this articulation. Evidently it would be impossible here to analyse every antagonism arising from a such a broad range of inequalities. For this reason, the author has identified several kinds of democratic and egalitarian antagonisms, those relating to inequalities propagated by the political and economic hegemony of neoliberal capitalist democracy. They are classified in three overlapping categories of inequalities: distributive, social status and democratic.

1. Conceptual framework

As noted in the preceding chapter, hegemony is the vital tool for identifying and understanding antagonisms; their origin, form and expression. From a given hegemony, an initial element can be identified - the differential position. Since a differential position (element) has the status of a floating signifier, it can refer to any difference in identity, characteristic or belief. It thus encapsulates and expresses certain individual and group identities. Once identified, a differential position, in an act of conscious expression and/or action, can then be articulated into an antagonistic moment. Note also that in the discursive

field of hegemony, the identification of differential positions and then subsequent articulation into antagonisms is the basis for a social alliance of particular interest groups. As Boucher notes, these particular interests can become intersectional counter-hegemonic movements if their prominence spreads among other groups struggling against the dominant hegemony (Boucher, 2021: 369).

The process of articulation, where the floating signifier, identified in a particular element (differential position) becomes a defined moment (antagonism), corresponds to one or several shifts in subject positions at an individual or group level. Antagonistic articulation is constitutive of but also constituted by ideological interpellation. A subject position associated with an unarticulated element is a position interpellated by the dominant ideology of the ruling hegemony. Once that differential position undergoes the process of articulation, however, a shift in subject position follows in tandem; an interpellation by antagonistic articulation, if you will.

Furthermore, the process of articulation is not static in time; it develops through time. Antagonisms, themselves characteristic of constitutive ontology, contribute to temporal constitution: time, given as collective substance from capital's subsumption of life, is constructed as collective substance – "*a multiplicity of antagonistic subjects*" (Negri, 2004: 41). Several key differential positions, once interpellated by this process of articulation, may indeed produce corresponding subject positions of a democratic egalitarian character. Changing subject positions from those of an insubstantive liberal democracy is an essential task in the quest to improve democracy. By exploring the antagonisms that result from inequalities on the hegemonic plane today, then, if these conditions persist, the locus of movements to improve democracy can be anticipated. In this way, the people who inhabit the world today can strive towards developing a radical democratic equality reflected in a corresponding subject position (radical democratic egalitarian). Antagonisms are articulated through time and from this process, a subject position favourable to improving democracy by opposing neoliberal hegemony can develop through time and thus into the future.

This chapter's attempts to elucidate antagonistic articulations and their concurrent shifts of subject positions emphasize phenomena that proceed over time. Identifying these antagonistic moments and the ideological processes behind them will hopefully help define and express some areas that democratic movements of future generations would focus on. In this way the model is anticipatory in nature. It is vital to keep in mind the key conditions of contingency that underwrite the framework that has been established. There is a close

relationship between the temporal and spatial planes of hegemony and contingency. The dominance of hegemony comes not only from its pervasive shroud but also, crucially, from its temporal extent. And as the earlier discussion of neoliberalism highlighted, hegemony is very often characterised by contingent variation. Contingency acknowledges the variability of transient time but also allows for some degree of persistence. By definition persistence and contingency are juxtaposing notions. But if persistence is understood to have varying degrees, such that whatever is subject to persistence need not necessarily be a future carbon copy of the initial thing, it seems to have some oxymoronically complimentary relation to contingency. Both notions inherently deal with time.

Anticipation allows for potential contingent variations. Anticipation proceeds, according to François Ewald (2002), first via an acknowledgement or appreciation developing a knowing (“*connaissance*”), then by integrating this knowing – despite but also because of contingency (“*incertitude*”) – into present action. More than expectation, as prediction implies, anticipation is an act of looking forward that actively moves one into the future, “pressing forward into the future, enacting it and thereby pulling the future toward the present” (Bryant & Knight, 2019: 28). With these considerations in mind, the following section proceeds with the application of the heretofore developed framework.

2. Antagonistic Articulation

In this section, problems on the hegemonic plane of contemporary Western neoliberalized democracies that contribute to the insubstantive quality of democracy are specified. In the first chapter, problems identified that are to be used in this framework of articulation are those arising from fundamental inequalities under neoliberal hegemony. The corresponding differential positions and subject positions for each identified issue can then be discussed and articulated following the framework laid out in the section above. The elements are divided into three overlapping categories: distributive, social status and democratic. The focus on these three broad types of inequalities provides an adequate scope for the application of the framework because in their breadth, these three categories encapsulate wide enough range of antagonistic concerns contra neoliberal hegemony. Whilst not being exhaustive, they are fundamental and a good starting point for an exploration perusing ways to improve the substantive quality of democracy. Each element highlighted within these three sections relates to a form of inequality which could be exploitative in certain ways. The highlighted elements analysed in this framework follow the theory of the first chapter of the relationship between oppression, inequality and exploitation.

In the distributive category, income inequality and the unequal distribution of wealth and resources are scrutinized. However, remaining solely within the purview of distributive (in)equality when considering exploitation, as Young perceptively highlights, is insufficient since redistribution cannot by itself eliminate structural and systemic exploitation (1990: 53). Social hierarchies and oppressive social relations may still persist in spite of any potentially redistributive efforts. What is more, to achieve the most complete and radical redistributive efforts would require dramatic hegemonic and ideological change in order to create some kind of shift of the dominant systems in place today.

So, focusing solely on distribution neglects the oppressive dimensions of power and force in certain social and economic relations. A purely distributive understanding of exploitation, to cite Reiman's (1987) position, neglects the coercive structures that implicate people (by structural force) in exploitation. What Reiman highlights is precisely the lack of genuine liberty to exercise one's capacity to choose how they want to spend their time. This lack effectively results from structural constraints of force, ownership and hence unequal relations of class in capitalist society (Reiman, 1987).

Young adds to this view when she highlights how the social processes that are involved in exploitation involve a "transfer of energies [that] produce unequal distributions", effectively skewing not just social relations but institutions as well towards the benefits of a few (Young, 1990: 53). The hierarchical structure of workplace relations, for example, can be harmful to employees' wellbeing and status in society (Anderson, 2017). The hierarchical nature of some workplaces as well as a stigma surrounding some occupations can lead to an inequality of respect and status in society. Inequality in welfare resulting from stress and other mental and physical strains from precarious social positions is another issue that is highlighted here. Inequalities in social status are prime examples of how imbalances in social relation can be reproduced to future generations. Sticking with the example of hierarchical pay echelons, one of the effects of unequal pay gradients- aside from greater influence in politics, power over others and potentially harmful risky behaviour such as market speculation – is the development of a society which "worships wealth" and idolizes the consumption habits of the wealthy (Roemer, 2011). Attitudes and structures are reproduced by the next generations that come to adopt and populate them. Taking steps to mitigate contemporary distributive and social status inequalities, then, will have an impact on how future generations relate to one another. Thus, the social status category is introduced and its overlaps with the distributive concerns highlighted in this chapter are confirmed.

The third essential category of issues and inequalities relevant under neoliberal hegemony is, inevitably, democratic. One of the elements discussed in this section is the diminished democratic agency of groups and/or individuals under neoliberal hegemony. Unequal access to political mechanisms is also considered in this section. There are inevitable overlaps between the three sections. Inequalities in status, respect and esteem, encompassed in the social status section, for example, also relate to democratic types of inequality. They merit being drawn together in this analysis because of the broad yet poignant facets of democratic deficits they encompass. Unequal (intra- and inter-generational) levels and opportunity for democratic self-determination need to be addressed if the substantive quality of democracy is to be improved today and, eventually, over time for the generations of the future. The anticipation of antagonisms by the framework laid out above works toward these aims.

2.1. Distributive Concerns

For many authors, the primary focus of equality and justice is centered around a fair distribution of resources. The two elements included in this section are perhaps the most widely used indicators of inequality: income inequality and the unequal distribution of wealth. These two indicators are representative of a wider problem on the hegemonic plane: an economic and political system predominantly rigged towards the interests of the wealthy and powerful. They are thus of interest to all those concerned with justice, equality, liberty and democracy. The distinction between the two is addressed first before submitting them to the framework for antagonistic articulation. Then, a discussion of the distributive theory of exploitation follows to determine why the analysis cannot concern itself solely with distributive issues. As noted above, the categories of inequalities included here demonstrate considerable overlap. The same can be said for the elements highlighted in each section. Starting with concerns of distribution is instructive not only to show the intersecting nature of the three categories chosen for this paper but also to establish the need for a wide breadth of analysis to see which points on the hegemonic plane can be articulated into democratic and egalitarian antagonisms that, in turn, will help improve contemporary democracy. This kind of breadth is necessary to encompass the broad definition of equality the theoretical position of the thesis deploys.

The increase in recent times of disparities in income and wealth between the most well-off and the least well-off is a little concealed fact. Between the mid-1990s and 2021, the

top 1% took 38% of all additional wealth accumulated whilst the bottom 50% received only 2%. Over the same period the richest 0.1% have obtained an 11% share of all wealth on Earth (World Inequality Report, 2022: 9-22). Income and wealth are closely related but they are not the same things. Income can come from wealth but for the vast majority of people this is not the case. There is income from labour (wages, salaries, earnings from nonwage labour etc.) as well as income from capital (rents, dividends, interest, profits, capital gains, real estate, financial assets etc.) (Piketty, 2014: 18). Inequality in wealth can exacerbate unequal income levels but they are still quite different measures, in spite of their often being drawn together. Whilst it is important to distinguish between the two measures, the subject positions and process of articulation for both of these elements is rather similar. For this reason, they will be applied to the framework simultaneously.

Thomas Piketty's *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* is of great value for its exhaustive collection of empirical data of the richest countries and very insightful economic analysis. I will only draw sparingly from this mammoth of empirical research in order to justify the inclusion of the two elements in this section. In the United States, for example, since the 1980s the top decile share in national income has jumped from less than 35% to 45-50% in 2000s-2010s (2014: 24). In other wealthy countries (UK, France, Germany, for example) the tendency is less pronounced but it is still in the same direction. The trend can largely be explained by top managers and executives setting their own remuneration without external constraints and more often than not irrespective of individual productivity (Piketty, 2014: 24). Alongside these trends in income inequalities in contemporary (neo)liberal democracies today, Piketty shows the rise in value of private wealth in the UK, France and Germany between 1870 and 2010. He puts this down to "the force of divergence" where the average rate of return on capital exceeds the rate of growth of the economy; increasing wealth faster than national output or income levels and exacerbating general inequality of resources (2014: 25-26; Harvey, 2021).

Not only are inequalities in wealth and income inefficient, they also undermine the value of democracy and the ideal of political equality (Beitz, 1989; Knight & Johnson, 1997; Christiano, 2008; Roemer, 2011). Economist Paul Krugman (2011) goes even further when he states that extreme concentration of wealth is incompatible with real democracy. Stiglitz highlights how inequality undermines political processes and thus leads to voter disillusionment and lower levels of trust in political institutions (2013: 150). Additionally, the wealthy in society not only have more means but are more likely to spend money on politics

by donating to campaigns and parties, lobbying, setting agendas in collective decision-making scenarios and influencing opinion, all of which undermine democratic goals through economic might (Roemer, 2011; Christiano, 2012; Robeyns, 2019). By offering citizens parity in the process of collective decision-making, democracy is supposed to treat citizens on fundamental terms of equality. But additional spending on the political process significantly diminishes the foundational equality required for a fair democratic process (Christiano, 2012). Citizens affected by disparities in wealth and income clearly have a democratic disadvantage due to systemic causes.

Ultimately, these systemic inequalities can be considered forms of oppression. Inequalities in wealth and income are not inevitable outcomes but, rather, are engendered in socio-economic relations of dispossession. They can also be exploitative because of the uneven relational terrain that forces people of a certain class, disposition or fortune to engage in work or practices in which the amount of time and labour they expend is not reciprocated in their wages whilst those positioned higher in this hierarchy expend little labour but own more productive assets; obtaining more at the expense of others. They are thus in a position to take advantage of those who own less due to this background differential and its corresponding wage relation. These relations are perpetuated by a neoliberal capitalist economic system upheld by neoliberalized democracy. The reader is referred back to the discussion of the relation between inequality, oppression and exploitative in section 2.2 of the first chapter. Particularly to Paul Warren's analysis of that permits and understanding of exploitation in underlying distributive sense (including its causal relations) *and* the force-inclusive coercive definition. It must be borne in mind, though, that not all relations of inequality are directly exploitative, but some relations are definitely characterised by indirect, structural exploitation.

What is more, in the world of real subsumption characterised by neoliberal hegemony, the economisation of life means that all has become productive. With regards to some structural distributive inequalities in this postmodern historical period, it is important to keep in mind that the inequity of productive relations in capitalism, which themselves reflect distributive concerns such as the ones highlighted in this section, are constituted by a relation of exploitation (Negri, 2004: 44). Negri's reminder helps to understand how some distributive inequalities can be considered exploitative.

John Roemer posits his distributive theory of exploitation against the classical Marxist assertion of expropriation of value from surplus labour "at the point of production" (1982),

which is also a distributive definition of exploitation. Roemer's distributive definition, on the other hand, states that "An agent is exploited when the amount of labor embodied in *any* bundle of goods he could receive, in a feasible distribution of society's net product, is less than the labor he expended" (1982: 122). The contrast becomes between the Marxian "surplus value" definition and Roemer's "property relations" definition: agents are exploited from the disadvantage of an unequal property distribution (Reiman, 1987). Now, for Reiman (1987), Roemer's "characteristic mistake" is his conclusion. After defining exploitation in the dimensions of "property relations", he concludes that the essential issue is the notion of exploitation itself and not with his own distributive definition (Reiman, 1987).

It has been briefly noted above and will be touched upon in the following section that what is missing from the distributive definition of exploitation is the notion of force which Reiman provides in his definition. Young (1990) builds on Reiman's proposition when she broadens the definition of oppression to involve five facets, including exploitation, marginalization and violence. Force has a role to play in each of these oppressive social relations and the discussion will return to this notion in the following section. For now, it suffices to note that whilst the distributive aspects of exploitation and the unequal elements that arise on the hegemonic plane as a result of this paradigm are crucial, and the work of Roemer is rigorous, it is not broad enough.

The discussion turns now to the framework of antagonistic articulation. Income and wealth inequalities are some of the effects of hegemonic neoliberalism whose structures favour the interests of the 'winners' of market competition: the wealthy and powerful. The (unarticulated) elements – inequality of wealth and income – produce differential subject positions in the individuals affected by these inequalities. They also reflect inequalities in power relations, addressed more explicitly in the following section. These differential subject positions may take the form of resentment and distrust of those in higher income brackets, those that have the chance to dictate their remuneration packages and, more generally, the ruling and wealthy classes. Furthermore, an out and out rejection of the political and economic systems that (re)produce these inequalities is likely to characterise this subject position. The inequalities in themselves, whilst distributive in nature, produce social status and democratic disparities and anxieties that significantly affect an individual's capabilities and welfare.

Constituting subject positions for many members of the precariat class, subject position (1) laid out above is an example of how many of those affected by income and

wealth inequality are interpellated by the dominant ideology of neoliberal capitalism. The economic outcomes have ideological effects leading to identification with certain classes (the precariat, in this instance). The unarticulated subject position (1) is the outcome of this hegemonic ideological interpellation.

Now, when individuals become aware of their shared conditions of exploitation and disadvantage, the previously unarticulated element can then be articulated in a number of ways. In this case, inequality of wealth and income could become the base for a rush of outrage building on the rejection highlighted above. Once articulated, the element of distributive inequality becomes an antagonistic moment: the demand for equality and also a cry for liberty from the constraining positions inflicted by distributive inequality. Such a demand would represent the expression of democratic, egalitarian, and emancipatory antagonisms. Taken together, the corresponding shift of the articulated antagonistic moment would be a democratic egalitarian subject position (2). The shift in subject positions from 1 to 2 is the interpellation by antagonistic articulation. It denotes a contingent passage of time and, as such, is only an anticipatory framework for the development of antagonisms and the corresponding shifts in subject positions.

2.2. Social Status Inequities

Social (in)equality is much too broad a category to reduce it to analyses purely concerned with distribution (Fourie et al., 2015: 7). Indeed, the previous section demonstrated this significant overlap of distributive concerns with other types of inequalities. The analysis of distributive inequalities requires a broader, more intersectional analytical position if efforts to resist the effects of neoliberal hegemony and its accompanying ideologies are to yield any substance. Even the attempt to narrow the category of social (in)equality to social *status* (in)equality designates a wide swathe of specific imbalances.

Roemer's theory of exploitation offers rigorous analysis and is certainly a good starting point (Veneziani, 2013), but, as was touched on in the previous section, it is lacking. Reiman (1987), crucially, adds the dimension of force to his definition of exploitation which, when applied to the workplace, adequately captures the "leverage" that hierarchical structures afford bosses and managers over employees of a lower rank. Hierarchical leverage is a form of domination – inherently unequal – that when exercised is exploitative because it deprives the employee of equal footing and thus diminishes their bargaining position. In this way the employee is effectively subjected to the will of their superior.

The workplace is a good example of the structural entrenchment and unthinking reproduction of hierarchy, exacerbated under neoliberal hegemony. The logics engrained in a hierarchy, the workplace being just one example, can reinforce the social relations it produces. Consider the “bottleneck” analogy that Reiman (1987) uses to illustrate his force-inclusive definition of exploitation: A group of people exiting a stadium are funneled out by guards holding a bottleneck shape together. If anyone attempts to by-pass the bottleneck formation, whilst one or two may evade the attention of the guards, most who attempt to move out of formation will be directed back to the main group. Evidently it is not the guards’ intention to restrict the stadium attendees, but they must nevertheless ensure the vast majority of people exit the stadium via this structure. People may choose to attempt to disregard this system and possibly get away with it. But most that try will be noticed and ushered back by the guards. “[F]orce affects individuals by imposing an array of fates on some group while leaving it open how particular individuals in that group get sorted, or sort themselves, in those fates.” (Reiman, 1987). Reiman’s analogy demonstrates how people can be forced into certain patterns or structures by the perpetrators and upholders of that structure or pattern, even if those upholding it do not consciously intend on subjecting people to a certain structure. So Reiman’s analogy is also an example of the unconscious nature of ideological reproduction by interpellation of the subjects by the ruling ideology. The invisibility of this kind of “force” is effectively ideology at work.

This discussion of the force-inclusive definition of exploitation is important because it allows for the establishment of a concrete link between the inequalities produced by hierarchies, exploitation itself, and the role of ideology in reproducing the former two phenomena – reproduction understood as occurring through time, from person to person, generation to generation. The way in which individuals – who may belong to a certain class but not exclusively so – are limited in choice by a manifestation of ideological force can be considered exploitative. And the inequalities resulting from this manifestation can also then be understood as exploitative in nature because of how those affected by inequalities in status, respect, welfare and capabilities are forcibly deprived of their equality.

Taking the element – summarised as the inequality of status and respect – and its accompanying subject position (1): The subject position (1) corresponding to and resulting from the unarticulated differential position (element) produced by inequality of status and respect is likely to reflect a diminished level of welfare. This would result from ailments developed from physical and mental strains of precarity as well as the experience of social

precarity itself. What is more, a low level of self-esteem would also likely characterise this subject position. It is important to remember here is that the characterization of a subject position is not an exclusive phenomenon; several subject positions can result in response to a range of inequalities and/or antagonisms. In this instance, for example, a diminished level of welfare is also strongly related to diminished capacity for an individual to develop certain capabilities. This could be due to a lack of respect both socially and professionally which might translate into the inability to contribute equally to democratic processes. So diminished democratic capabilities could certainly be constituent of this subject position (1). The subject position (1) associated with the element identified here is the result of ideological interpellation under the dominant hegemony.

When articulated, the differential position arising from inequalities in status and respect would consist of a rejection of hierarchy and positions of social superiority. It would also most likely constitute an outcry by the affected against the injustice of their position. Moreover, this articulation would express a will to be free of the compelling and constraining force so defined above. So, whilst being articulated into an egalitarian antagonism, and remaining fundamentally existential, there is also an emancipatory element to heed. As for the subject position, when this articulation of an egalitarian, existential and emancipatory antagonism takes place – in a future time since the articulatory process of developing antagonisms occurs in the temporal sphere – the shift from (1) to the second (2) subject position would likely involve an increased recognition of democratic capabilities and hopefully an alleviation from previously low levels of welfare precisely by and because of an identification with this antagonistic position, individually or collectively.

The category of social status inequalities rounds out the analysis and highlights different facets of exploitation and oppression under today's hegemony. Acknowledging the very existential predicament facing many people helps to reinforce the constitutive importance of subject positions. The way in which an individual perceives not only their opportunity to engage in societal or political participation but also the worth of their participation is closely related to the formative subject position, interpellated by ideology. Diminished levels of welfare and capacity are thus likely to hamper these forms of participation or engagement. And, like the distributive inequalities discussed above, social status inequalities and the structures that reproduce them are very likely to affect future generations should they persist. It is therefore important to adopt this future-beneficial, presentist perspective working towards eliminating inequalities and shifting subject positions

contra neoliberal hegemony and towards radical, democratic, and egalitarian positions in order to improve the quality of democracy for the eventual benefit of future generations.

The possible, and quite likely, antagonisms that could arise from the elements highlighted in the two sections above demonstrate evident overlaps. It seems that an antagonism that is egalitarian also retains a significant democratic dimension. An overlap of these types of inequalities is clear. Distributive concerns undoubtedly impact on matters of social status. And the two produce democratic antagonisms. In each example thus far, an egalitarian dimension to the antagonism is also present. The next section addresses issues and inequalities pertaining to democracy itself to provide a more complete picture of the spectrum of inequalities addressed by the framework.

2.3. Democratic Elements

In this specifically democratic category, the primary focus is the issue of diminished democratic agency resulting from overbearing neoliberal hegemony and, particularly, the neoliberalization of contemporary liberal democracies. First, however, this section discusses some considerations of unequal access to political mechanisms.

Since future generations (non-overlapping, in this instance) have yet to come into existence, they evidently have unequal access to contemporary political mechanisms. The highly contentious normative question as to whether non-overlapping future generations should in fact have equal access, or be given equal consideration in present day democracies, is at the heart of intergenerational democratic considerations (see for example Beckman, 2013). Whilst there is no space here to adequately address the normative issues of democratic inclusion and consideration for future generations, the reader is reminded of the commitments laid down in the introduction. Specifically, that we have some obligations and responsibilities to take action today that would eventually benefit future generations. Improving the substantive quality of democracy, for example, is one way that would benefit the generations to come.

The previous two sections, by addressing distributive and social status inequalities, have demonstrated implicit democratic implications which therefore relate to this section. Notably, a diminished level of welfare and resources can impact one's democratic capability and overall access to political mechanisms – logistically, occupationally, or otherwise. Furthermore, active exclusionary methods from political constituencies, such as

gerrymandering, engender democratic inequalities regarding access to basic voting mechanisms – the primary source of engagement in representative liberal democracy.

This section intends to identify and articulate elements and antagonisms arising from democratic inequalities perpetuated by neoliberal hegemony. The primary element, which has many different facets, is the notion of diminished democratic agency in the face of neoliberalized democracy. First, the present and future dimensions of agency are considered. Then, the ways in which diminished democratic agency can constitute an inequality are ascertained before proceeding with the framework for antagonistic articulation.

Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische's conceptualization of agency is most instructive (1998). They identify three elements of agency – iterative; practical-evaluative; projective – that correspond to past, present and future temporal dimensions, respectively. The present (practical-evaluative) and future (projective) dimensions are of primary concern for this section's analysis. The present dimension of agency entails "the capacity of actors to make practical and normative judgments among alternative possible trajectories of action, in response to the emerging demands, dilemmas and ambiguities of presently evolving situations" (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). The future dimension of agency, as projective, encapsulates "the imaginative generation by actors of possible future trajectories of action, in which received structures of thought and action may be creatively reconfigured in relation to actors' hopes, fears, and desires for the future" (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). These authors refer to the constitutive elements corresponding to the temporal dimensions specifically to human agency. But the elements also apply to political agency (since humans are inherently political beings, and, as such, to democratic agency, too. As the notion of diminished democratic agency is explored in its capacity as an inequality, the discussion inevitably returns to these present and future dimensions of agency.

Developing the understanding advanced in this chapter of unequal access to political mechanisms, and in addition to the other inequalities named above which also temper democratic agency (welfare, resources, barriers to exclusion and access), consider the example of the overlapping next generation – the living youth of today. Due to their age and political maturity, it is reasonable that they have unequal access to political mechanisms. What makes them worthy of mention, however, are considerations of what political conditions they may inherit when they come of age. Increasing bureaucratization as well as the exacerbation of a professional political class in contemporary democracy, for example, would contribute to cementing this particular inequality. This notion bridges the gap also for

non-overlapping generations because they are inherently affected by the same inequality of access in light of their non-existence. There are non-overlapping generations who will exist in the near future, however, and, hence, they may experience similar things as present-day youth due to the subject position(s) corresponding to deficient democratic agency.

Present-day youth also face an unequal choice between viable alternatives. These alternatives could include entire regimes, political or economic systems, or even just difference between political parties. The extensive pervasion of neoliberal hegemony, encapsulated by the ideological mantra of TINA, precludes any alternatives by ensuring the priorities of neoliberalized democracies are the interests of capital. Thus, “the extreme centre” has become the dominant position on the political spectrum for mainstream parties in parliamentary democracies (Ali, 2015: 15).

The absence of viable alternatives clearly diminishes agency for people in the present, and especially present-day youth, since the parameters and realm of possibility of alternative actions and trajectories is determined to a large extent by hegemonic ideology. And also, regarding future generations, we can imagine that possible future trajectories, should hegemonic neoliberalism persist, would be limited. Hence, the imperative is highlighted for contemporary action contra neoliberal hegemony which would improve democratic conditions. Contemporary action, after the initial passage of time, will inevitably affect the younger, already living generations. If their agency is ameliorated, then it is conceivable that the future democratic agency of generations to come in the immediate future (and possibly beyond) will also improve.

Another crucial factor which serves to diminish agency in neoliberalised democracy is its excavation of people from its ideological corpus (Queiroz, 2021). A vacuous ‘demos’ results from neoliberalism’s construal of humans as human capital, *homo-oeconomicus* subsuming *homo-politicus* (Brown, 2015: 35-39), redefining what effective agency means; reduced to merely economic and consumptive spheres of activity. What is more, the process of economisation entailed by the neoliberalisation of democracy contributes to divesting people from various institutions and procedures of governance. This occurs via an increasing perception that these institutions are beyond the realm of ordinary people, entrenching a division between the classes that rule, and those who are ruled. Not only does neoliberal hegemony severely affect democratic agency, but via this ideological re-construal of humans, it aggravates and creates additional inequalities of access to political mechanisms.

Now, the differential position (element) arising deficient democratic agency and unequal access to political mechanisms corresponds to particular constitutive subject positions of contemporary groups and individuals. Any one of this amalgam of subject positions (1) would be characterised by varying degrees of hopelessness, dejection, apathy and a distinct resentment of democratic injustice. A subject position (1) would likely be opposed to some degree to the constraints of political agency and reject these perceived constraints. Once the elements are articulated into antagonisms, a radical, democratic antagonism arises in manifestation of stark opposition to neoliberal hegemony. The resulting shift to a future subject position (2) is anticipated to counter the tendencies that characterised subject position (1): hope, engagement, and enthusiasm, and could also entail a greater propensity for democratic organisation. Adversarial versus the dominant hegemony, the demand for greater democratic self-determination, as a result of effective democratic agency, would also be entailed in the subject position(s) (2). As would the rejection of inequality of access to democratic mechanisms and practices. The antagonism constitutive of and corresponding to subject positions (2) would be reflective of the principle of a radical democratic equality.

These shifts of subject positions by the articulation of antagonisms would contribute to the democratic and egalitarian foundations of future individuals. They would learn from those who have already been interpellated by this antagonistic articulation to demand equal access to elementary processes such as voting or deliberating and decry inequalities in attaining opportunities to participate. Not only is the formation of adversarial, antagonistic subject position (counter-hegemonic in the hegemonic context under discussion) key but the transfer, the interpellation, from one generation to the next is the crucial step for improving democracy in the long run. The transfer of demands characteristic of a democratic egalitarian subject position can help to build a more substantive democratic culture. Cultivating this culture amongst citizens and groups will help increase the substantive quality of democracy.

3. Conclusion

This exploration of elements that contribute to the insubstantive character of neoliberalized democracy demonstrate a fair degree of overlap. The elements submitted to the anticipatory framework of articulation do not exhaust the field. Rather, they are crucial aspects of issues within neoliberal hegemony that serve as something of a springboard for further analyses aiming to oppose this hegemony and improve the substantiveness of

democracy. As an anticipatory process, antagonistic articulation pulls the present into the future. Articulation and expression of antagonisms (contra neoliberal hegemony) denote shifts in constitutive subject positions away from those characterised by neoliberal hegemony and towards a radical, democratic equality. And their temporal dimensions imply a move into the future, just as the process of articulation itself is not temporally static. Overall, the antagonisms and subject positions traced by the postmodern (neo)Marxist framework would likely be defined by their radical, democratic and egalitarian dimensions.

Conclusion

In the postmodern period of real subsumption by capital, synonymous with neoliberal hegemony, contemporary Western democracies suffer from deficiencies derived from a fundamental lack of substantive quality. This is due to the proliferation and exacerbation of inequalities and oppressive power relations. It has been argued that in order to address this lack, a postmodern (neo)Marxist approach embodying a future-beneficial presentist strategy is required.

After establishing moral and temporal assumptions and commitments as well as the contemporary postmodern context, neoliberal hegemony and ideology were introduced. Neoliberal capitalism and neoliberalised democracy were shown to proliferate and exacerbate fundamental inequalities. Inequalities themselves were discussed before positing a notion of radical democratic equality as the basis of radical, democratic and egalitarian subject positions and as the principle for a substantive conception of democracy.

The thesis' particular hybrid theoretical position was then established by navigating distinctions in the broad Marxist tradition away from classical Marxism. Neo-Marxist pillars were ascertained and then added to revisionist (neo- & post-) Marxist categories as the concepts of hegemony and ideology were divulged in depth. Thus, the theoretical groundwork for the anticipatory framework of antagonist articulation was conducted. By applying such a framework and exploring specific elements (differential positions), antagonistic moments, and corresponding subject positions, suggestions were posited in the third chapter for the locus and content of movements to improve democracy.

All the while, this thesis has shown that hegemony and ideology have serious implications for the future. Developing an understanding of the reproduction of ideology and power relations through hegemony must involve a notion of temporality because hegemony persists into a future time, thus affecting future people. Also, contemporary action contra hegemony and towards democratic amelioration will affect the generations to come. The author hopes to have demonstrated that using a specific postmodern (neo)Marxist approach, addressing present day democratic concerns in an anticipatory fashion will eventually benefit the generations of the future in light of improved democratic conditions. The struggle is not linear, nor is it likely to be uni-directional. But attempts to contest neoliberal hegemony are crucial if the future is to hold any improvement in circumstances, particularly democratic

circumstances, where humans have adequate democratic agency and embrace the construction of a substantive democracy based on principles of radical, democratic equality.

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