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Capitalism's Cynical Leviathan: Cynicism, Totalitarianism, and Hobbes in Modern Capitalist Regulation

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"Obstinately, he clings to something he has come to see through; but he calls it faithfulness" - Friedrich Nietzsche

"Lacan's theory is perhaps the most radical contemporary version of the Enlightenment." - Slavoj Žižek

How capitalist organizations ensure the obedience of its members has long been a matter of discussion. Behind the idealism of "market freedom" lie more troubling realities of daily subordination and ideologies of conformity. Increasingly scholars have studied the effect of subjugating subjectivities present in capitalist production. Two specific features of modern capitalism have been the utilization of totalitarian discourses, in this case defined within the boundaries of capitalist institutions, and the prevalence of cynicism for this purpose. The former highlights the attempts by these institutions to control every aspect of the workers' experience and understandings for the benefit of the company. Ideologically this involves the internalization of capitalist values resulting in practices of "self-regulation" (Knights and Wilmont 1989). By contrast recent research has focused on how employee cynicism, away from organizational values, paradoxically strengthens an individual's commitment to these economic institutions (Fleming and Spicer 2003). A subjectivity of "I disagree but I still obey" is central to this seemingly contradictory phenomenon.

Currently, analysis of totalitarianism and cynicism exist if not antagonistically at the very least in an uneasy tension. However, a more in depth theoretical and historical examination reveals the complementary character of these perspectives within liberal theories of sovereignty. In particular Hobbesian discussions on this topic reflect an early and perhaps defining precedent for modern capitalist regulatory ideologies that rely on a so-called cynical totalitarianism.

In the contemporary context, Slavoj Žižek has theoretically borne witness to the role of both totalitarianism and cynicism for ideological interpellation more generally. The idea of complete subjective inscription speaks to notions of fantasy and the Law. By contrast the perspective of “I disagree but I still obey” resonates with the author’s lengthy analysis of cynicism for ensuring the subject’s ideological obedience. Yet while Žižek takes great strides to situate these concepts within a workable theory of how certain dominant discourses affectively “grip” the subject, it remains ambiguous as to how these categories map out specifically onto each other. At stake therefore is to theoretically elucidate how a psychological mode of cynicism may work to legitimize and ultimately reproduce forms of totalitarian control. In order to do so it is imperative to return, as Žižek himself so often desires, to the Enlightenment. However, whereas Žižek finds his original interlocutor to be Kant, couched in his mandates to “reason about whatever you want and as much as you want-but Obey!”, the first and perhaps most forceful thinker to combine cynicism and totalitarianism was Hobbes (Žižek 1989: 80). A more in depth reading of contemporary capitalist regulation reveals this reliance on the cynical subject for the reproduction of totalitarianism as initially put forth by Hobbes.

This work thus interrogates how Hobbes’ combination of totalitarianism and cynicism into a workable theory of sovereignty resonates with contemporary discourses of capitalist control. After reviewing the recent literature concerning how these subjectivities exist as modern techniques for capitalist management I will seek to marry these concepts, drawing on a post-structuralist analysis of hegemony and fantasy, through a more thorough examination of Hobbes. First I will trace out the similarities of the Hobbesian and capitalist “social contract” as each asks individuals to rationally surrender their natural liberty for the promise of security and survival. I will then show the totalitarian basis of these arrangements as the Leviathan and the organization respectively decides what is necessary for this contract with relatively little limit to their authority. Following this initial, and perhaps more obvious, investigation I will illuminate how Hobbes’s totalitarianism, akin to present day capitalism, implicitly contains within it the positive allowance for individual cynicism toward existing sovereign regimes. Specifically Hobbes separates thoughts from

action-arguing that individuals may at all times think as they wish provided that they are obedient in their actions. This point directly refers to the responsibility one has to comply with a leader if it means the possibility of religious damnation. In Hobbes an individual has the obligation to conform to the Leviathans' desires in action but not in thoughts-precipitating a subject simultaneously bound to a totalitarian system while potentially cynical to its rule.

Modern economic organizations operate from a similar ideological framework whereby workers may internally subjectively oppose organizational prerogatives as long as they outwardly conform to company policy. Moreover, like in Hobbes this displaces feelings of personal responsibility to these overarching institutions legitimizing individual inscription into these institutions despite personal ethical disagreement. Consequently, both Hobbesian liberalism and present day capitalism account for and often rely upon a "fetishist disavowal" from its members in order to sustain and reinforce totalitarian relationships of power.

Totalitarianism, Cynicism, and Capitalism Management

Over the past several decades totalitarianism has become a prominent means for explaining capitalist regulation. Central to this analysis has been how current economic institutions employ ideological mechanisms demanding complete employee submission in all areas of their working life. In particular capitalist organizations "manufacture consent" through the construction of subjectivities able to encompass all aspects of an individual's working experience to their needs (Burawoy 1979, Clegg and Dunkerley 1980, Knight and Wilmont 1989). Specifically business theorists have noted the importance of creating over-arching management cultures that conflate individual desires with those of the company in order to promote efficiency and production (Deal and Kennedy 1982, Peters and Waterman 1982, Waterman 1988). Hugh Wilmont has by contrast revealed the negative character of these ideological regimes, directly relating such ideologies to the fictional dystopia of Orwell's 1984 (Wilmont 1993).

This all-encompassing regulatory framework has led to processes of value internalization by workers within these organizations. Thus the traditional coercive nature of totalitarianism becomes translated into types of intentional and induced "self-regulation" by employees in conformity with given institutional prerogatives. This involves specifically the creation of worker subjectivities aimed at increasing productivity and decreasing desires for resistance (Casey 1995). Moreover,

coinciding with this move has been the atomisation of employees designed to replace past identifications of workplace solidarity with an over-arching positive individual relationship to the company. Discourses of an “enterprising self” reflect this shifting managerial strategy in which individuals are positively interpellated as capitalist subjects, accepting of hierarchical power structures and increased demands for productivity (du Gay 1996, Fleming and Spicer 2003). In this way the totalitarian character of modern capitalist organizations is exhibited dually in the greater latitude given to these institutions regarding their employees and the renewed desires for workers to completely and totally identify with their company.

Recently scholars have expanded this model in order to emphasize how individuals look to their place of employment for psychological and social fulfilment more generally. Here workers desire from capitalist institutions a sense of wholeness, as the expanded scope of these organizations opens the space for a more expansive vision of what these institutions could potentially offer its members. Sosteric's (1996) case study of the restaurant industry speaks to this phenomenon reflecting the positive regulatory aspects of this totalitarian mode of control. Workers in his research turned to the company for emotional wholeness and to provide meaning to their largely atomised existence. Importantly these employees saw themselves in individual terms not as a collective-each attaining their personal dreams and aspirations through the company. Thus critical scholarship concerning the totalitarian character of modern capitalism has transformed from a purely negative conception of total individual inscription, akin to modernist fears of unlimited sovereignty, to a more positive account of this interpellation with organizations increasingly serving as conduits for individual desires.

Not surprisingly however the totalitarian tendencies of modern capitalism has led to increased spaces of resistance and heightened experiences of worker dis-identification. The increased reach of contemporary economic organizations has also expanded the opportunities for resistance. Sturdy (1998) writes of the inevitable tensions that arise in implementing all encompassing institutional discourses. In demanding total complicity companies are exposed to a wider range of questioning previously unseen. Thus, paradoxically, the greater the scope of an institution's ideology the more it avails itself to contradiction and challenge. In concrete terms Knights and McCabe (2000) have chronicled employee resistance against totalitarian workplace imperatives through disobedience and subversion. Examining the practices of bank employees the authors investigate how totalistic attempts at ideological interpellation produces unachievable demands breeding employee non-complicity and institutional disillusionment.

Moreover, this totalitarian model causes greater cynicism among workers. The increased resistance of employees reflects a more pervasive ideological distancing by these individuals from organizational protocols and values. Knights and McCabes' work reveals the disenchantment created by unattainable institutional demands, fuelling gradually an overall subjective detachment from these overarching institutional subjectivities. Sosternic's insight into the situating of work sites as a place for interpersonal fulfilment exacerbates this problem of cynicism. The inevitable failure of capitalist institutions to psychologically complete individuals, despite its claims to the contrary produces employee dissatisfaction and disappointment. The imperative for workers to identify totally with their place of work precipitates anger and ultimately dis-identification when these expectations fail to materialize. In particular structural barriers to inclusion in decision-making catalyze increased sentiments of cynicism (Wanous, Richter, and Austin 2000). The lack of genuine democratic participation over company direction and resource redistribution augments worker discontent and personal dis-identification within these organizations.

Yet such cynicism empirically has not served as a flashpoint for more transformatory changes. Both Knights and McCabe as well as Wanous, Richter, and Austin note the ultimately non-revolutionary character of this cynicism. Fleming and Spicer (2003) have accordingly sought to theoretically explain this disjuncture between internal dissatisfaction and continued external compliance with organizational desires. Their essay "Working at a Cynical Distance" illuminates the relationship between cynicism and capitalist conformity. Drawing on the work of Lacan and Žižek they reveal how cynical attitudes reinforce organizational obedience through displacing resistance away from actual practical change and towards a complacency of internal disagreement. Here, cynicism acts as a salve for individuals who realize the futility of their working experience yet refuse or are unable to actualize this dissent. Consequently, the very presence of subjective distancing works as a barrier to more effective campaigns of resistance.

How are we then to understand this seeming contradiction between the daily presence of individual subjective dis-identification and a continued compliance to capitalist organizational prerogatives? This cynical totalitarianism speaks theoretically to two competing elements integral to contemporary capitalist regulation—namely hegemony and the fetishist disavowal. Far from being separate both play into and enhance the overall strength of the other. Interrogating the dominant theorists of each perspective, Laclau and Žižek respectively, speaks to their ultimate compatibility. Laclau's notion of hegemony highlights how an organizational ideology

can suture itself as an all-encompassing subjectivity due to the fact that discourses ontologically seek to dominate totally a given social space.

However, implicit in the Laclauian account is the eternal availability of contestation to this hegemonic discourse as no one subjectivity can completely monopolize a subject's understanding. It is at this juncture between complete interpellation and hegemony that cynicism reveals its importance for individual inscription, an idea expressed most clearly in the work of Žižek. The inherently incomplete nature of this hegemony provides the very terrain for a cynical obedience—as one can recognize the inadequacies of a hegemonic discourse without thinking beyond its ideological horizons. At stake thus is not internal coherence of a hegemonic discourse but the forms of enjoyment it provides to its inscribed subject. To this end an individual is able to participate within a hegemonic field of meaning without internally accepting its over-arching truth value. Put differently, a dominant social understanding is sustained exactly through the allowance of internal subjective disagreement premised on the perceived inability to change prevailing systems of power.

Laclau, Hegemony, and the Impossibility of Total Inscription

Laclauian notions of hegemony correspond strongly with contemporary configurations of capitalist totalitarianism. In his work with Chantal Mouffe *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1986) he describes how central to politics and subjectification is the contingent battle for dominance between competing suturing discourses. Here the line dividing discursive and non-discursive disappears, as all actions and understandings are constituted within prevailing hegemonic fields of meaning. Whether one is playing football, building a house (Laclau and Mouffe 1990) or completing a sales call, each of these practices is precipitated by and given relevance through an existing dominant discourse. Significantly, this discursive war of positions is emptied of any essential character, as a hegemonic constellation is never a priori pre-determined. Politics and the formation of the social more generally thus revolve around the struggle between discourses to achieve supremacy. Hegemony therefore for Laclau is the effort to cohere and unify the multiplicity of available subjectivities and social understandings into a singular discourse overdetermining a subject's perspective. In their words it is “a space in which bursts forth a whole conception of the social based upon an intelligibility which reduces its distinct moments to the interiority of a closed paradigm” (Laclau and Mouffe 1986: 93).

This analysis of hegemony illuminates current efforts by capitalist organizations to completely define its employees to their own advantage. The plurality of subject positions within an institution and various desires driving its members is overcome through the appearance of over-determining organizational discourses. These proscribed subjectivities situate employees into a similar mindset designed to enhance a company's prerogatives. Thus regardless of department, occupation, or overall place within the organizational hierarchy capitalist institutions employ hegemonic discourses to reinforce company values and ensure employee conformity. However, at the heart of this attempted interpellation, whether it be in companies or in more obvious political struggles, lies a paradox. The very attempt to completely inscribe individuals ideologically is what opens the space for the contestation of these hegemonies. Laclau and Mouffe refer to this as the "impossibility of society" in so much as any attempt to completely define society will ultimately be insufficient to describe a social space composed of a multiplicity and often times dissimilar subjectivities (Laclau and Mouffe 1986: 114). In doing so a hegemonic discourse, seeking the total ideological inscription of the subject, reveals its ultimate deficiency for this purpose. This eternal incompleteness thus allows differing discourses to emerge challenging such dominant articulations. To say therefore that "this company is this" or "this is Britain," reveals paradoxically exactly what is not being represented in such a definition. Consequently, in striving for a complete and homogenous discursive identity what emerges is the very heterogeneity of the object being described.

Borne out of this contradictory, though necessary process of identification, are renewed opportunities for counter-hegemonic questioning and resistance. For Laclau and Mouffe a discourse cannot simply exist outside of hegemony. Instead all meanings are formed through, or in resistance to, an existing dominant ideology. For this reason they refer to antagonisms as "the limit of objectivity" in that challenges to a hegemonic discourse exposes the non-objective quality of these prevailing subjectivities while opening the space for new social truths to become dominant. (Laclau and Mouffe: 122). Primarily theorists have employed this framework in order to explain social change. Specifically, Laclau has described how hegemonies become dislocated and are thus made available for replacement. Here "dislocations are events that cannot be symbolized by an existent discursive order, and thus function to disrupt that order" (Howarth 2000a: 111). Using the case of Apartheid South Africa, Howarth (2000b) and Norval (1996) have shown how this entrenched racist discourse was made subject to contestation due to events like the Soweto crisis in the early 1970's, paving the way for the hegemonic ascendancy of a multi-

ethnic liberal democratic discourse to reign supreme by the late 1980s.

However, while this model works well in illustrating the continual instability of hegemonies it nonetheless is problematic in portraying how such dominant articulations remain viable despite large-scale ideological dis-identification. One does not have to look far in the post-cold war era for evidence of the simultaneous presence of disillusionment and conformity. Mass disenchantment of electoral choice in established Western democracies, and progressively smaller voting turnout, speaks to the subjective distancing individuals exhibit to reigning ideological configurations. Yet this has not in turn catalyzed broad based movements for social transformation or substantive questioning to the ideals of liberal democratic nationalism within these contexts. Similarly, as the empirical work of Wanous, Richter, and Austin along with Knights and McCabe show greater workplace cynicism is not a recipe for transformatory workplace resistance. This theoretically validates Fleming and Spicer's insight into the non-revolutionary nature of this cynicism more generally.

Žižek, Cynicism, and Totalitarianism

Recent psychoanalytic perspectives help to gain purchase on this paradoxical phenomenon of cynicism as a reinforcement of hegemonic ideologies. Post-structuralist readings of Jacques Lacan, especially concerning fantasy, reflect the ways a dominant discourse may act to interpellate a subject despite its unfulfilling qualities. Here an inherently lacking subject's drive for psychoanalytic wholeness becomes manifested into a particular articulated desire (Glynos and Stavrakakis 2004: 206-207). Accordingly, an individual finds solace in pursuing such a fantasy even when confronted with the futility of this phantasmatic longing. For Lacan individuals thus gain enjoyment, or *jouissance*, from over-arching fantasies that are inherently unattainable (Evans 1998, Fink 1995, Fink 1997, Miller 2000). This psychoanalytic reading of fantasy importantly is linked to collective social discourses of hegemony. Slavoj Žižek in particular has shown the ways that dominant understandings are reinforced and indeed sustained through the personalized enjoyment individuals gain from this shared world-view (Žižek 1989). Here *jouissance* plays a necessary supporting role for hegemonic articulations-as it explains how such colonizing discourses remain so appealing to those being inscribed within its meanings. In the words of Žižek:

What psychoanalysis can do to help the critique of ideology is precisely to clarify the status of this paradoxical jouissance as the payment the exploited, the served received for serving the master. This jouissance of course, always emerges within a certain phantasmic field; the crucial precondition for breaking the chains of servitude is thus to 'transverse the fantasy' which structures our jouissance in a way which keeps us attached to the Master-makes us accept the framework of the social relationship of domination" (Žižek 1997: 48; also taken from Glynos and Stavrakakis 2004).

The increasingly atomised and individualistic character of post-industrial capitalism further highlights the importance of fantasy for present practices of capitalist regulation. Phantasmatic inscription as put forward by Lacan is intrinsically individualistic by nature, in contrast to the Law, which acts homogeneously to regulate individual, or create the collective limits, for individual desire. In this sense the Law is the set of mandates, understandings, taboos that help to circumscribe personalized desire—a desire which is simultaneously borne out of the Law yet nonetheless whose primary purpose is to transgress its boundaries. As such the Law is that which structures individual social relationships, giving it order and meaning as part of a larger collective just as language structures individual unconscious and one's understanding of symbolic reality: "This law, then, is revealed clearly enough as identical with an order of language. For without kinship nominations, no power is capable of instituting the order of preferences and taboos that bind and weave the yarn of lineage through succeeding generations" (Lacan 1977: 66).

Žižek describes this distinction, even while correctly appealing to the intersubjective nature of fantasy, in the following way:

To speak of the 'social fantasy' seems nevertheless to imply a fundamental theoretical error insofar as a fantasy is basically non-universalizable. The social fantasy is particular, 'pathological' in the Kantian sense, personal...the unique way each of us tries to come to terms with the Thing, the impossible jouissance...The field of Law, of rights and duties, on the contrary, is not only universalizable but universal in its very nature.

In this way within the larger restrictions of the Law a diverse number of fantasies and desires can exist. Think in this instance of a nation-state. While all citizens must uniformly obey its legal mandates nonetheless people seek fulfilment through its auspices in a variety of ways. Thus while nationalism may have a broad based appeal each subject uniquely experiences and designs this ideology according to their own wishes. Within modern capitalism employees craft institutional fantasies as specific to their distinct desires. Consequently, companies exist not simply as behemoths promoting a homogenous vision of reality but as ambiguous sites able to potentially fulfil a heterogeneous number of subjectively constructed aspirations. The

Law plays into this as these desires, despite differences, are constantly translated through the continued existence of the company and its established regulatory demands. Thinking again of the nation-citizens may have divergent conceptions of what it means to be ideally British, a welfare or a Thatcherite free-market for instance, yet nonetheless all rely on the survival of the nation for these fantasies to become potential realities, thus subscribing to the necessity of national security. Of primary significance here is how these organizations or imagined communities conflate their own existence with the inherent need for order more generally.

This tension between the personalized nature of fantasies and the aggregate mandates of the Law opens the way for understanding the phenomena of cynical conformity. Though the futility of fantasy may breed the cynic, it is the continued force of the Law that ensures the continued obedience of subjects. Žižek refers to this contradiction as the “fetishist disavowal.” Here, an individual recognizes the absurdity or failures of a particular person or order yet nonetheless remains an active participant to its demands. Put differently, it is the perspective of the compliant cynic, one who justifies his or her conformity by internally declaring “I know this is wrong yet I still act for what else is there?” (Žižek 1989, Žižek 2004) It would be too easy to say however that this disavowal is merely a new form of jouissance (though that is certainly an element) whereby an individual gains enjoyment from their understood inability to be fulfilled. Instead such a mindset is premised on a deep ideological commitment to the sanctity and necessity of a given symbolic order. Žižek masterfully employs the very institutions of the law to reveal the over-determining significance of the Law for inscribing even disillusioned individuals within a prevailing hegemonic field of meaning. Speaking through the mouth of the doubting defendant in the presence of an incompetent judge he declares: “I know very well that things are the way I see them /that this person is a corrupt weakling, but I nonetheless treat him respectfully, since he wears the insignia of a judge, so that when he speaks, it is the Law itself which speaks through him” (Žižek 2005).

It is this simultaneous presence of distancing and belief that explains the actions of the cynical conformist. Even at her most disenchanting she remains committed to the necessity of the Law, the need for a given system to exist for others to fulfil their fantasies. The instance of legality previously mentioned encapsulates this disjuncture. To dismiss the judge would have been to disregard the very sanctity of lawfulness-destroying even the possibility for justice. Yet what is essential in this case is not that the disillusioned subject seeks fulfilment within the law, or any Law for that matter. Instead such an individual cannot think beyond the boundaries of these systems. Indeed it is the fundamental dichotomization of reality between

chaos and order-here the dignity of the punitive law comes to represent the requirement of a Law in toto. Thus it is no longer a matter of choosing orders but accepting the need for order as such even in disagreement with the current state of affairs.

Through this framework of the fetishist disavowal it is made clear how an individual could remain committed to a hegemonic discourse even while subjectively dis-identifying with it. Hegemonies deal with their incomplete character through phrasing themselves not merely in the particularity of their own ideology but in the very requirement of hegemony as such. Thus even if one rejects the nation, to think outside its ideological boundaries would be to reject the necessity of community. Similarly, for an employee to dismiss the mandates of a capitalist organization wholesale is akin to imagining a world of pure competition without any regulation or assurances of economic security. In this way though one may disagree with a system nonetheless they maintain their obedience to its demands exactly because to not do so would be to deny the importance of the Law, or any order, more generally for structuring human affairs. Individuals are therefore shaped to be at once above the Law yet continually committed to its over-arching importance.

This paradoxical situating of the subject as simultaneously above the Law yet subservient to its demands thus reflects the affective role of cynicism for ideologically reproducing hegemonic configurations of power. To this end, through the performance of the fetishist disavowal, an individual is able to gain the enjoyment of transgressing the Law without the consequences of confronting the “real”, or always incomplete nature, of order as such. The Law provides the subject therefore a means of transcending the confines of the Law while respecting its necessity in structuring society through the specified fantasies in which it manifests itself within. This speaks to the always transgressive role of fantasy to the Law. While the Law represents the taboos, the very irrational essence of the social, fantasies gain their force through their promise of transgressing such entrenched apriori limits. However, via cynicism, the individual is presented the opportunity of going beyond the restrictive confines of the Law, as a subjective ideological force, while remaining compliant to over-arching ideological prerogatives. When one says “I know this is wrong but I follow” what they are really articulating is the safe pleasure gained through the fetishist disavowal, the comfortable distance they retain to an over-determining set of ideological relations commanding their actions.

Consequently, this hegemonic strategy acts to disempower individuals from demanding or even expecting positive social transformation. Hegemonies situate individual resistance so that they can dis-identify with prevailing values yet see no

way in which to reimagine their present circumstances. By presenting hegemonies as the decision between order and anarchy, survival and non-survival, individuals are able to equally disregard the content of dominant ideologies while being “free” from having to change them. This “relief” from responsibility enables subjects to simultaneously feel validated in their disillusionment of obviously constricting ruling systems while still comfortably acting as if they believe. Fleming and Spicer describe this phenomenon in the following way: “...when the dis-identification process is enacted it can establish an alluring ‘breathing space’ where people feel untrammelled by the subjective demands of the organization, but which ironically permits them to behave as an efficient and meticulous member of the team nevertheless” (Fleming and Spicer 2003: 167). Here hegemonies are strengthened exactly because they do not demand belief. Individuals are exempted from ethically identifying with dominant ideologies, or a sense of responsibility toward them based on their disagreement with its principles coupled with the accepted necessity of these configurations of power. An employee may after work make fun of their boss; laugh at the organizations constantly repeated clichéd ideals, and pull pranks at the office yet still be a model employee in so much as these institutions present themselves as despite all else the very means of these individuals’ continued existence. If they quit one job their next job would undoubtedly operate from the same underlying set of values and practices. To dramatically question such a system would be to challenge the entire structures of society, the very basis for present security, order, and survival. Cynicism on the other hand permits this disillusioned subject the moral high ground of internal dissent without the added obligation of revolutionary or reforming action.

Importantly, cynicism is the rational consent to the irrationality of an eternally incomplete symbolic order. Law, in the Lacanian sense, is never rational in its own right. Instead it is the irrational, the non-explainable, apriori limits for the allowance of order more generally. Žižek states in this regard “it follows, from this continuously senseless character of the Law, that we must obey it not because it is just, good or even beneficial, but simply *because it is the law*” (Žižek 1989: 37). For this reason ideological compliance based on conscious belief is always secondary, and of a weaker character, than the external submission to its over-determining mandates. In Žižek’s own words:

the only real obedience, then, is an ‘external’ one: obedience out of conviction is not real obedience because it is already ‘mediated’ through our subjectivity—that is, we are not really obeying the authority but simply following our own judgement, which tells us that the authority deserves to be obeyed in so far as it is good, wise, beneficent...” (Žižek 1989: 37).

The cynic therefore is expressing, even in the attitude of utter disdain, a more thorough and complete acceptance of a totalitarian system of control. In this respect the cynic obeys not out of belief, or a rational acceptance of its mandates, but out of duty and fidelity to the need for order as such. Paradoxically therefore, the perspective of the disbelieving fetishist is always pragmatic-founded in the rational acceptance of the irrational. Žižek notes accordingly that “fetishist are not dreamers lost in their private worlds, they are thoroughly realists able to accept the things the way they actually are...” (Žižek 2001: 14, also found in Johnston 2007: 73). In this respect, it is the very act of laughing at power, even while following its every decree that fantasies remain at their most effective for completely suturing the subject within its ideology. Indeed, to Žižek “the ruling ideology is not meant to be taken seriously or literally. Perhaps the greatest danger for totalitarianism is people who take its ideology literally...” (Žižek 1989: 28). The rationalization of an ideology as a fantasy, in terms of its correctness and overall appeal to pre-conceived normative values, opens it exactly to the questioning of its legitimacy. In so much as any phantasmatic order will necessarily be incomplete, on the basis of belief it will always be found insufficient. No order can ever be completely just, internally coherent, or fulfilling. Instead, the compliance of the cynic is based on a much stronger bond—the acceptance of its imperfection yet rational consent to its mandates despite this realization. Indeed it is when such ideological fidelity is premised on the acceptance of the universal Law as opposed to the particularity of the fantasy that its reproduction is most assured.

Consequently, it becomes apparent why the cynical totalitarian, one who does not even recognize or admit they are in a totalitarian system, is so much more stable than those subjects engaged in an explicitly totalitarian project. In his own work Žižek differentiates between the “totalitarianism of fantasy” and the “totalitarian fantasy” (Žižek 2006:88). The former denotes the all-encompassing character of fantasies for constituting an individual’s worldview and structuring their actions. The latter by contrast signifies a specific phantasmatic form founded on desires to unite individuals homogeneously in the pursuit of wholeness. In this sense, the “totalitarian fantasy” acts to completely conflate the Law with fantasy, to deny them a “minimal distance” by which fantasies, formed out of the Law, can nevertheless seek its transgression (Žižek 2006: 91). Put differently it is the establishment not of order per se but of a particular order. Žižek therefore defines the “totalitarian fantasy” as the state of affairs by which the “Law has lost its formal neutrality” (Žižek 1989: 77). Thus a traditional totalitarian politics relies not on the cynic but the hysteric or the

psychotic-one who by nature defies interpellation yet nonetheless demands from a phantasmatic order a legitimization for their continued inscription.

By contrast the cynical subject of totalitarianism views the Law not in any particularized form but as the very mechanism through which stability is guaranteed. As such she is not concerned with whether or not it is right but in the continuation of its existence even in the face of its deficiencies. The Law is in this context not an object for belief but a clear means to an end-one whose compliance is demanded not due to its own rationality but in the apriori way it obliges individuals to comply with its irrational mandates while permitting for the acknowledgement of its own imperfections. Indeed what is more fearful to the sovereign, the subject who is convinced that she is forever righteous and therefore demands that their rule never betray them or let them down, or the subject who is outwardly disdainful but obeys out of a recognition that however deficient at least order is being preserved? It is for this very reason that totalitarianism is at its strongest when it is at its most silent, existing as a “totalitarianism of fantasy”, relying on the unbelieving cynical subject as opposed to when it announces itself forthrightly and opens itself to the questioning of its convictions.

Thus it is now becomes possible to understand how through hegemony and the fetishist disavowal dominant ideologies are able to affectively “grip” individuals even in the face of mass cynicism to its values. By linking the particularities of one hegemonic articulation, in all its imperfections, as representative of the Law overall-individuals are presented the option of complacency, recognizing the present absurdity of existing ruling discourses yet conforming to its demands out of fear of dis-order and the perceived inability to positively confront such totalistic systems of control. This mode of discursive regulation however is by no means ahistorical. Instead it has its historical roots in the Enlightenment.

Hobbes and a Cynical Totalitarianism

Thus far this paper has investigated how ideologies interpellate individuals through the dual presence of totalitarianism and cynicism. On the one hand hegemonic discourses attempt to completely subjectivize individuals within their field of meaning. This is apparent in how political, social, and economic identities increasingly phrase themselves as all encompassing entities able to completely fulfil a subject’s needs and desires. On the other hand these dominant understandings deal with their inability to achieve this wholesale subjectification through the positive allowance of cynicism. Specifically, through presenting hegemonies in terms of the false decision

between order and dis-order, ideological challenges are situated as the questioning of the necessity of the Law more generally. In this way an individual can comfortably dis-identify with a prevailing regime while remaining committed to its overall importance and conforming to its demands. As such the very totalitarian character of these discursive techniques of control paradoxically relies on the availability of a complacent cynicism to its rule.

The work of the first liberal thinker Thomas Hobbes speaks to this contemporary form of capitalist regulation. Hobbes proposed a theory of sovereignty that similarly combined the need for totalitarianism with the positive allowance for individual cynicism. Significantly, Hobbes separated a subject's right to freedom of thought from their obligation for sovereign conformity in action. A more in depth examination of his theory thus does much to shed light on the current capitalist promotion of cynical totalitarianism.

Hobbes, the Need for Totalitarianism and Capitalism Regulation

Hobbes is historically associated with totalitarianism and unlimited sovereignty. Writing in the aftermath of the English civil war his theory argues for the need of a Leviathan able to ensure the collective peace between naturally antagonistic individuals. Consequently, he subscribes sovereign obligation to the over-arching requirement of survival both individually and collectively. This appeal to totalitarianism as essential to the construction of social order more generally, indeed an individual's very existence, resonates with ideologies of late capitalism. Capitalism similarly frames organizational obedience as premised on the need to transcend the fearful prospect of individual competition and as a conduit for continued material survival.

Hobbes begins his argument with a detailed ontological analysis of the human subject. He describes individuals as naturally desiring goods as well as power (Hobbes 1996: 70-71). The natural liberty of humans pre-supposes paradoxically an intolerable situation of infinite conflict and ultimately unjustified domination. As each individual is free to do and pursue what he or she wishes in a world of limited resources, over time this liberty becomes translated into an anarchic submission of the weak to the powerful (Hobbes 1996: 90-91). To prevent this outcome Hobbes argues for the creation of a collective covenant between subjects for mutually assured peace. This social contract rationally asks individuals to surrender their natural liberty for the higher achievement of survival and stability (Hobbes: 120)

However, as individuals are by nature competitive and driven by shortsighted “passions” this “social contract” must be maintained through a Leviathan able to prohibit individual non-compliance threatening social harmony. On the one hand the leviathan’s role is purely punitive in character (Hobbes 1996: 214). When a subject violates the social covenant the leviathan is charged with punishing him or her in the name of collective security. On the other hand Hobbes’s sovereign must act preventatively to avert potential risks to this social peace (Hobbes 1996: 124). This flexible remit ranges from deciding matters of acceptable speech in the public sphere to the determination of labour laws (Hobbes 1996: 371, 125, 171). Importantly, Hobbes does not specify the form that this Leviathan must take. While favouring monarchy he accepts that democracy or aristocracy may be equally successful (Hobbes: 135). Instead his principal concern is collective security and the avoidance of conflict. At the heart of this system thus is the presence of fear obligating subjects to follow sovereign mandates despite their natural passions desiring short-term gain at the expense of their fellow citizen. Hobbes argues therefore that:

The final cause, end or design of men (who naturally love Liberty and Dominion over others) in the introduction of that restraint upon themselves (in which we see them live in commonwealths) is the foresight of their own preservation, and of a more contented life thereby; that is to say of getting them out of that miserable condition of War, which is necessarily consequent (as hath been shown) to the natural passions of men, when there is no visible power to keep them in awe, and tye them by fear of punishment to the performance of their covenants. (Hobbes 1996: 117).

Totalitarianism is essential for this purpose as it is only in the permitting of an almost unlimited sovereign authority that individuals will be constrained to follow the social contract. The continual prospects of “war of all against all” demands a strong leviathan capable of ensuring order in the face of any and all emerging threats and possible subversions. Further this “order” must be maintained through the continued existence of the commonwealth-therefore conflating the success of the state with the overall survival of its individual members, a survival that can only be ensured moreover through a totalitarian leader. Notice further that for Hobbes totalitarianism doesn’t necessarily imply wholesale control only that the limits of sovereignty is at the discretion of the sovereign. Individuals for their part are required to conform to this totalitarian system of rule to avoid a more bleak future of eternal discord. Hobbes therefore constructs a vision of legitimate rule where individuals submit to domination for their very survival. Thus in the world of Hobbes to be free is to be dominated, to be dominated is to be free.

Modern capitalism functions out of an analogous framework to that of

Hobbes, especially in terms of its desire for organizational obedience. While modern capitalist discourses valorise individual initiative and enterprise, it like Hobbes asks the majority of individuals to surrender their natural liberty for the controlled environment of the workplace. In a strikingly similar process the innate freedom of the capitalist subject is voluntarily forfeited for the security of a constricting market institution. Moreover, this surrendering of liberty stems from the same rationale. Here the “free” individual, at liberty to do, go and live as he or she pleases leaves the competitive sphere of market competition and instead agrees to a more subservient position in a larger organization. They do so to ensure their own material survival as well as the comfort of regularized pay and benefits. Thus they forgo the short-term rationality of complete freedom for the “peace” of institutional conformity and consented servitude. Put more concretely, individuals will choose not to own their own business; despite the independence it provides, in order to guarantee their continued material survival through the auspices of a larger company.

Moreover, as with Hobbes capitalist organizations desire formally a totalitarian system in which an employer decides what level of regulation is necessary in relationship to his or her employees. It is up ultimately to management to choose how deeply it desires to control its staff. Thus while one company may enforce a strict dress code while others may not, in the final instance the degree of conscription is decided solely by those in power. In this way an organization is given free reign to control all aspects of an individual’s working life that they see fit. Institutions justify this totalitarianism through appeals to the overriding imperative of organizational survival. If a company fails then so to does the security of its employees. Thus the continued existence of the inscribing organization is translated and integrally connected to the existence of its subjects. This totalitarian allowance in capitalism based on the need to preserve an organization for the very survival of its members echoes Hobbesian legitimization along the same line as a Leviathan is provided an almost infinite scope to determine what is necessary to sustain the commonwealth. Hobbes therefore offers an early means for justifying totalitarian regimes, one currently in use within dominating capitalist organizations.

Saving the Individual to Save the State and Organization

Perhaps just as significant as their similar logics for totalitarianism are their almost parallel limitations both Hobbes and capitalism places on this largely unlimited sovereignty. Each sets restrictions around the sanctity of the subject’s life. If for

Hobbes the purpose of the Leviathan is to prevent eternal conflict, preserving individual survival, allowing the sovereign to unlawfully and arbitrarily execute those they rule would be ultimately self-defeating. Yet while ostensibly about the needs of the subject of greater importance for Hobbes is the resiliency of the state. Without citizens there would be no commonwealth. Further by privileging the state as the only means for ensuring individual and collective survival subjects can be expected to have a heightened desire to protect it against unrest. On the other side of the spectrum, a Leviathan cannot be so repressive to ferment rebellion. Of over riding importance thus was maintaining the state and its overall functioning. Totalitarianism was simply a means for this end.

Akin to Hobbes in contemporary capitalism employers cannot harm, and needless to say kill, its workforce. Both managers and workers are constrained by the needs of sustaining the company. The entire point of capitalist regulation is consequentialist, centring on making the organization more profitable and economically viable. As in the Hobbesian perspective, without workers there is not company. Recognition of workplace diversity as well as more general trends concerning a greater sensitivity to employee's emotional needs all revolve around the mandates of organizational survival. In moreover linking institutional fortunes to those of its members in the most fundamental way possible, their very material subsistence, organizations are able to demand conformity for a "larger good." Equally in Hobbes and capitalism subjects accept totalitarian practices due to the supposed need to maintain constricting systems, the state and market organizations respectively, and by proxy their own lives.

What is apparent therefore in Hobbes and capitalism at their most basic level is a similar legitimization for totalitarian inscription. In both individuals begin in freedom and end up in submission. In both subjects rationally choose to be dominated due to promises of security and survival. Further, each justifies this totalitarianism in terms of the needs for over-arching stability. Thus Hobbes and capitalism construct rationales for invasive and nearly all encompassing modes of control through appeals their necessity in ensuring individual survival. Yet each also shares desires for individuals to not merely rationally embrace this reasoning but to internalize its values and freely consent to its rule. As such both would face the same problems stemming from this wish to wholesale shape subjectivity and thus open the space for the positive employment of cynicism.

Consent, Internalization and Dis-Identification in Hobbes and Capitalism

Central to the Hobbessian project is individual consent. This need for consent is derived from the competing and contradictory elements contained within Hobbes' theory—namely freedom and domination. On first glance his argument is rife with tension over exactly how one can negotiate appeals to natural liberty and totalitarianism. Indeed why would a free individual voluntarily agree to become a subordinate subject? Hobbes' first inclination is to provide a rational explanation for this transference of power. The anarchy of freedom is transplanted by the stability of submission. As inherently rational creatures humans are able realize this truth and act accordingly. Therefore unlike natural orders of domination a Leviathan acquires his authority through the consensus of those he or she governs. In his own words:

The way to erect such a Common Power, as may be able to defend them from the invasion of Forraigners, and the injuries of one another, and thereby to secure them in such sort, as that by their own industrie, and by the fruites of the Earth, they may nourish themselves and live contentedly, is to confere all their power and strenght upon Man, or upon one Assembly of men, that may reduce all their Will, by plurality of voices, unto one Will: which is as much as to say, to appoint one man, or Assembly of men, to bear their Person; and everyone to owne, and acknowledge himselfe to be author of whatsoever he that so beareth their Person, shall Act, or cause to be acted, in those things which concerned the Common Peace and Saftie, and therein to submit their wills, everyone to his Will, and their Judgements, to his Judgement. This is more than Consent, or Concord, it is a really unity of them all, in one and the same Person, made covenant of every man to every man....” (Hobbes 1996: 120).

What remains troubling in this formulation however is how Hobbes can rectify his dualistic vision of human motivation premised equally on reason and passion. If his system of totalitarian inscription is so self-evident why has it not already been achieved and why has such authoritarian relationships of sovereignty continually been undermined? Hobbes' implicit solution is to emphasize his appeal to rationality—to guide human action so that they understand the benefit and need for totalitarian regulation. In the face of mounting unrest against monarchy and the appearance of civil war with the possibility for even greater discord in the future Hobbes sought to transform officially sanctioned hierarchical associations of rule into a freely given individual submission to authority. Importantly, conservatives of his time rejected his theory as heresy on the grounds that he situates conformity not in any essentialized view of “divine right” but as made through considerations of utility. The king is by no means pre-ordained nor any type of Leviathan figure for that matter. Instead it is gained and maintained only through the realization of its beneficial character and the acceptance of its legitimacy by all members of the community equally.

Thus at the heart of Hobbes is a desire for individuals to internalize the value of domination-phrasing it in terms of their own good as well as for the community at large. The formal enshrinement of totalitarianism would itself be insufficient if individuals felt or saw no reason to abide by such a system. One of Hobbes key innovations is to argue not merely for authoritarianism per say but for the identification of subjects to this authoritarian subordination. To do so he frames this domination in terms of consent. An individual chooses subordination out of his or her own free will, rationally and with full assent to the righteousness of this decision. In doing so a subject is asked to identify completely with the commonwealth, to assume that he or she is this political community in full. Any attempt thus to subvert the social contract would be for Hobbes an insult not to the leviathan but to one's own self.

Yet while Hobbes primarily relies on reason for this determination he also recognizes the usefulness of ideology for this purpose. In addition to making the case for the rational handing over of liberty for the security of being ruled he further compels people in positions of authority, such as teachers and fathers, to instruct those under them about the need for sovereign obedience (Hobbes: 234-236, 373-374). Further he asks that those learning these values accept them not blindly but "sincerely from the heart" (236). Hobbes thus provides a theory that at its foundations offers an objective and subjective strategy for achieving authoritarianism. As such it expresses its totalitarianism both externally in the formal rights of the sovereign to decide what is necessary to maintain peace and internally in its complete ideological inscription of the subject into its system of values. Put differently, Hobbes wants a form of governance able to regulate a subject's actions while subjectively determining her over-arching perspective as well.

More to the point it creates a theoretical framework for normatively legitimizing structural problems of stratification and subordination. Hobbes theory seeks to justify authoritarian rule and uneven relationships of power via discourses of freedom, consent, and security. Further, his argument desires to implement a totalitarian system of sovereignty through completely transforming an individual's perspective in line with this end. It draws on the rational as well as the constructive possibility of ideological arguments to convince subjects of the moral correctness of their subjugation. In this way Hobbes advocates a totalitarian means for achieving totalitarian ends.

Like Hobbes capitalism similarly draws on ideas of consent to justify its own discursive practices of control. Capitalist organizations normatively phrase their wholesale regulation over their workforce using the same ideas of freedom and

choice. Accordingly, these institutions present contemporary situations of totalitarianism in emphasizing the supposed free choice of individuals in accepting such conscripting conditions. Despite evidence questioning the voluntary nature of these exchanges (Preston 1984) analogous to Hobbes capitalism defends its totalitarianism through highlighting paradoxically its foundations in “freedom.” Consequently, it is largely able to legitimize its invasive and potentially all-encompassing modes of control via its recourse to the supposed liberty underpinning these decisions. More simply, since individuals choose out of their accord to enter into these organizations any complaint concerning its remit is said to be null and void. In employing this discourse capitalism desires thus to validate its reliance on systems of totalitarian oversight by subscribing them to the deliberate preference of the subjugated individuals themselves. Further, it longs for these subjects to internalize such values as their own-justifying for themselves that this submission is rational and necessary.

In addition capitalism acts to inscribe individuals into totalitarian organizations through constructing subjectivities of unity and fraternity. Parallel to Hobbesian notions of a civil religion institutional rhetoric of being as a family and “as one with the company” emotionally connects employees to these subordinating organizations. It moreover reflects upon the dualistic character of totalitarianism in both capitalism and Hobbes. As with Hobbes capitalism seeks not only to establish a totalitarian system of institutional rule but also to completely shape an individual’s subjectivities. Its traditional political opposition to explicitly totalitarian forms of governance—namely that of Communism—demands that it couches its own authoritarianism through notions of freedom and shared community. Implied thus in capitalist regulation is the need for proper ideological discourses able to convince subjects of the justness of organizational totalitarianism thus avoiding questions of moral legitimacy.

Yet the difficulty in such totalitarianism is exactly its totalised character. It is impossible to ever fully inscribe an individual within a given subjectivity. These ideological perspectives will always be incomplete and become available to challenge. Regardless of whether one is referring to a political community or workplace—these social spaces will forever be crisscrossed by competing understandings and individualized desires. To deal with this reality concerning totalitarianism’s innate futility both Hobbes and capitalism have positively transformed such possible dislocations into a manageable cynicism. In separating the freedom one has in word and action they have constructed acceptable spaces of dissent that ultimately reinforce and strengthen existing hegemonic configurations.

Separating Words and Thoughts: Hobbes, Capitalism, and an Acceptable Cynicism

The totalitarian desires contained within the early liberal writings of Hobbes and in modern capitalist organizations is inherently undermined by the impossibility of ever totally inscribing a subject within a single ideology. In short the problem of totalitarianism is the futility of totalitarianism. The innately incomplete character of inscribing discourses naturally catalyzes hegemonic questioning. Efforts at homogeneity thus create paradoxically a greater awareness of heterogeneity. To say you are to be “this and only this” lead exactly to subjects saying, “no I am not.” To confront these issues Hobbes and modern capitalism have relied upon cynicism to minimize the prospects for later movements of change. By opening up the permanent space for dis-identification these theories ultimately create a framework whereby individuals may be comfortably compliant. This involves dually the idea that one is performing a necessary unchanging role that they nonetheless disagree with and secondly the subsequent ethical distancing one has to these conscripting systems. Put differently, subjects are permitted internal dissension due to the perceived immutable nature of these communities or organizations and their underlying ideologies.

Early in his work Hobbes distinguishes between words and actions in terms of importance. It is only in and through the act that the word or verbal longing can be actualized and judged. More importantly Hobbes mistrusts words. Actions are solid and real where as words are fantasies or simple idealistic desires. This perspective is clear in his discussions regarding the need for a leviathan in ensuring the social contract. Words alone cannot guarantee the collective peace. The possibility of tangible force is essential in this regard. He states, “covenants without the sword, are but words, and are of no strength to secure a man at all” (Hobbes 1996: 120). Thus Hobbes reveals his overriding concern with performance as opposed to abstraction-the end result instead of idle longings and untrustworthy verbal covenants. His emphasis therefore is on the construction of stability not its simple articulation.

This action oriented totalitarian perspective however becomes directly challenged when having to deal with competing levels of authority. In Hobbes’ time the state was always subsidiary to the religious, at least theoretically. Proposing a total politics as well as the essentiality of above all else an active sovereign obligation contradicted the overriding authority of the divine. It raised significant questions for individuals regarding whom they owed their allegiance-God or the leviathan. Specifically problematic is to what extent religion should primarily be a force for social stability or a personal means for salvation. If the sovereign is the highest leader, the new guarantee for human survival, can they compel subject to accept eternal damnation for the sake of secular peace? If the leviathan demands that all citizens

follow Catholicism or Scientology, whether by mistake or otherwise, while Calvinism is the one true religion how is an individual to respond? To disobey the leader would be to fail themselves and their fellow humans in fermenting instability and possible war. To go against God further would lead to a more long-term problem of hell.

Hobbes deals with this contradiction through implicitly promoting practices of cynical conformity. First as perhaps expected, Hobbes offers a rational solution. God in giving humans reason to realize the necessity of the Leviathan expects individual to follow the sovereign's will (Hobbes 1996: 199). Yet this answer does little to address concerns over God's final judgement. It is here that Hobbes introduces the positive possibility of cynicism. Drawing on his earlier distinction between words and actions he posits that one's thoughts are not really reflected in one's actions. Only actions belong to sovereignty. By contrast what one internally believes is always free due to its inherent inconsequential nature. Hobbes argues in this sense that a Sovereign

...cannot oblige men to believe; though as a Civil Sovereign he may make Laws suitable to his doctrine, which may oblige men to certain actions, and sometimes to such as they would not otherwise do, and which he ought not to command, and yet when they are commanded, they are Laws; and the external actions done in obedience to them, without the inward approbation, are the actions of the Sovereign, and not of the Subject, which is in that case but as an instrument, without any motion of his own at all, because God hath commanded to obey them all" (Hobbes 1996: 389).

Thus if one believes in the correct God they are not made religiously responsible for the decisions of the Leviathan. The divine will not punish them for obeying the sovereign as long as they were internally faithful to the true ways of God as "God accepteth not the Will for the Deed, but only in the Faithful" (Hobbes 1996: 413). For this reason in Hobbes view "Faith and Obedience are both Necessary to Salvation" (Hobbes 1996: 413).

This separation of word and action also materializes similarly regarding sin and acceptable dissent. According to Hobbes to think of misconduct is not in and of itself a sin. To dream of murdering doesn't make one a murderer or any wrongdoing for that matter. He states:

To be delighted in the Imagination only, of being possessed of another man's goods, servants, or wife, without any intention to take them by force, or fraud, is no breach of the Law, that sayeth *thou shall not covet*, nor is the pleasure a man may have in imagining, or dreaming of the death of him...For to be pleased in the fiction of that, which would please a man if it were real, is a Passion so adherent to the Nature both of man, and every other living creature,

as to make it a Sinne, were to make Sinne out of being a Man” (Hobbes 1996: 201).

Hobbes further transposes this religious perspective onto his politics. To think disobedience is as harmless and non-punishable as to dream of murder. It is only the action of subversion that is of any concern. Even the sin of positive intention is cannot be prosecuted within the commonwealth as:

Crime is a sin, but not every sin is a Crime. To intend to steal, or kill, is a sinne, though it never appears in Word, or Fact: for God that seeth the thoughts of man can lay it to his charge; but till it appear something done, or said, by which the intention may be argued by a human judge, it hath not the name of a crime” (Hobbes 1996: 201).

Hobbes thus positively distinguishes between thought and action in order to ensure conformity. In privileging the external over the internal he hopes to relegate dissent purely within the realm of thought and therefore inaction.

Yet this dichotomy should not be understood as the making mutually exclusive thought and action. Instead Hobbes presents a conception of the subject that ably combines these two elements for inducing a subject’s overall obedience. In pre-supposing thought as a space of unalienable freedom he sets the boundaries for acceptable antagonisms. While an individual may never be completely interpellated in a sovereign ideology they nonetheless can be taught what the limits of such disillusionment are. In this sense the Althusserian notion of externality concerning ideology depends often exactly on an “internal” dis-identification. To demand external compliance requires the perceived presence of internal liberty.

Capitalist organizations base their own regulatory practices around this separation of thought and action, expressed in their positive allowance for cynicism. Companies even while desiring complete control over their employee’s subjectivity ask no more than for its workers to follow its rules and actively dissent. The positive employment of cynicism by these institutions as suggested by Fleming and Spicer becomes clearer when viewed through its Hobbesian forerunner. The situating of thoughts as the ultimate site of freedom leaves action almost entirely under the command of the sovereign. Subjects become satisfied exactly in being dissatisfied-in so much as they view their liberty in terms of internality and not external effect. The internal or secretly shared complaint becomes the *modus operandi* for considerations of resistance more generally. Capitalism like Hobbes thus has symbolically set aside the sphere of thought as the proper place for dissent while demanding full and total conformity in action. In acting out the subjective freedom of the cynic the individual is therefore often embracing the confining politics of

sovereign obedience.

Cynicism, Responsibility, and Dis-Identification

A key component of Hobbesian cynicism is its displacement of social responsibility by individuals through processes of dis-identification. If one subjectively distances themselves from leadership and its decisions this subsequently causes a rejection of responsibility for these actors' actions. Hobbes problem of religion reflects this phenomenon. By not making the subject divinely accountable for the Leviathan's choice of public religion he frees them from all sense of community responsibility in terms of its decisions and direction. Instead their only ethical obligation resides in conformity to sovereign prerogatives for its continued survival.

The effect of this ethical erosion is the lessening of desires for more transformatory change. Why should an individual try to challenge the religious convictions set out by the Leviathan if internally they are free to believe as they wish? Their only secular responsibility is obedience. They can think, feel, and believe what they want and receive no punishment from the Leviathan or in turn God for the sovereign's potential wrongdoing. Thus the subjects' liberty of thought is the existential freedom of the non-decision. "I was just following orders" becomes a justification for the internally but actively unethical consenting subject. Consequently, the freedom of subjectivity is two-fold: the liberty of internal thought and the freedom of complete irresponsibility for one's surrounding and society.

Cynicism plays heavily into this jettisoning of ethical responsibility. The cynic is not merely disillusioned with their superiors but with themselves as well. In particular cynicism is premised on the subject's supposed inability for enacting change. It thus takes away obligations for seeking reform or revolution to these systems. If it is futile then why bother? Moreover, this dis-identification gradually separates individuals morally from their actions. Through situating thought as the locus of freedom and dissent feelings of responsibility over one's conduct becomes reduced and in many cases completely disappear. By partaking in cynicism thus one is to a large degree comfortably rejecting their own responsibility for their action and those within their community.

Capitalism similarly employs cynicism to distance individuals from feelings of ethical responsibility to their environment. In allowing for, and at points promoting, this dis-identification they make it easier for individuals to deal with their perhaps unethical unease over their company's practices and overall ideology. The theme of "what can I do I just work here" permits employees to simultaneously recognize the

immorality of their organization while comfortably rejecting or feeling any obligation to change them. The structural barriers preventing workers from enacting such a transformation serves to further isolate individuals from feelings of ethical accountability. If an employee is barred from real democratic decision making concerning institutional direction then what plausible justification does he or she have for questioning its larger prerogatives? Considering that legally most employees are not liable for the overall conduct of their workplace further exacerbates this problem. How can one hold a lowly Enron sales representative at blame for the corrupt actions of Ken Lay? The dis-identification resulting from the lack of genuine democracy in capitalist organizations thus directly bears upon the daily cynicism of its members. Moreover, it speaks to how a personally ethical individual can comfortably stop themselves from challenging market institutions even when subjectively realizing their unethical character.

Order, Dis-Identification, and the Construction of the Cynical Totalitarian Subject

The preceding examination of Hobbes and capitalism permits a broader reading of the interrelationship between totalitarianism and cynicism for ideological interpellation. Hegemonic discourses deal with their innately incomplete nature by presenting their specific dominant understandings as related to the maintenance of social order more generally while allowing an internal but ultimately ineffectual space for internal dissent to these revealing fields of meaning. In short dominant ideologies use their totalistic nature to render subjects less capable of large-scale questioning through fear of anarchy and in the final analysis non-survival. This strategy is complemented through promoting perspectives of individual cynicism, which accommodate subjective dis-identification, but nonetheless demands external compliance. Through interrogating how these seemingly contradictory phenomena of totalitarianism and cynicism work together it becomes to clear more generally how necessarily incomplete ideologies maintain their overall hegemonic status.

Importantly both Hobbes and capitalism equate conformity to totalitarian systems with individual survival. Hobbes posits the keeping of the social contract via obedience to the sovereign as a pre-requisite for ensuring a subject's very continued worldly existence. Without such compliance society would revert back to eternal warfare and make tenuous an individual's survival. He thus justified the surrendering of natural freedom for the security of the leviathan and conformity. Similarly capitalist organizations legitimize the complete submission to their regulation as necessary for

individuals to maintain their material reproduction. Without these institutions people would be unable to draw a salary, buy a house, or even purchase food. As with Hobbes' social covenant individuals agree to both acquiescence their liberty and put aside differences with co-workers for the security of obedience.

By situating ideological compliance with subsistence Hobbes and capitalism effectively conflate such conformity to the achievement of order in toto. Totalitarianism exists in this instance not merely through regimes of complete control or even wholesale ideological inscription but as the only means for ensuring survival. Its totalistic character in this sense is exactly in its presenting of itself as the sole course for guaranteeing one's life. Obviously one is free to reject Hobbes' social contract or a capitalist job but in doing so he or she is exposed to a world of complete competition and a precarious self-sufficiency. Consequently, it becomes difficult for individuals to imagine their existence outside of this ideological horizon and easier to simply submit to its conscripting mandates. These systems thus base their success on equating their specific dominant articulations with the existence of the Law completely. They present themselves not simply as one amongst competing social orders but as the presence of social order wholesale. No wonder Žižek, even while arguing for a renewed class struggle, declares, "today one cannot even imagine a viable alternative to global capitalism" (Žižek 2000: 321). Indeed for individuals to rebel against these systems would be to support anarchy and potentially precipitate their own ruin.

This linking of totalitarianism with survival further presents obedience to the Law with the subsequent fulfilment of individual fantasy. Considering that the hegemonic orders proposed by Hobbes and modern capitalist organizations implies fundamentally an individual's sustained material existence they also herald themselves as the necessary condition for achieving their subsequent social aspirations. For Hobbes underlying all individual success was the foundations provided by the assured peace of the social contract. His Leviathan offered not only the bare minimum of guaranteed survival but the ability to securely gaining individual desires in an orderly and safe environment:

The office of the Sovereign (be it Monarch or an Assembly) consisteth in the end, for which he was trusted with the Sovereign Power, namely the procuration of the *safety of the people*; to which his obliged by the Law of Nature and to render an account thereof to God, the Author of the Law, and to none but him. But by Safety here is not meant a bare Preservation, but also all other Contentments of live, which every man by lawfull Industry, without danger, or hurt to the Common-wealth, shall acquire to himselfe" (Hobbes 1996: 231).

Capitalism operates out of the same framework. It presents itself as the most viable means for continued existence and in doing so as the principle means for attaining what one wants out of society. This basis for phantasmatic fullness works dually for those pursuing wholeness inside or outside their place of work. In terms of the former capitalist organizations serve as sites for realizing all one's interpersonal goals. As to the later it provides the means for accomplishing one's extra-curricular objectives such as family and friends.

However, the over-arching nature of these ideologies, especially when representative of the Law, leads to the questioning of these regimes as to their ability for providing as much as they claim. If these discourses are the locus for achieving wholeness how does one deal with their inevitable failure in this regard? It is here that cynicism plays such a productive role for interpellation. By making available internal dissent to individual subjects these prevailing ideologies are able to sustain their dominance while limitedly permitting dis-identification to their rule. This feeds into the conflation of specific hegemonic articulations and the maintenance of social order more generally. In situating a given governing configuration as representative of the Law overall they sanction an acceptable cynicism to their prerogatives while reinforcing their position as the only possible means for ensuring continued individual survival. In this way subjects can legitimately express sentiments of futility while acting compliantly. It is akin to saying "I don't like my present situation, but what else is there? What can I do but accept it and hope for the best." Cynicism thus acts as a salve for feelings of disappointment to a system that is seemingly permanent and necessary.

Conclusion: Reinforcing Totalitarianism through Cynicism

In this paper I have tried to show the symbiotic relationship between discursive systems of totalitarianism and cynicism. Whether speaking of a social Leviathan a la Hobbes or localized capitalist regulation each relies upon the symbiotic combination of total governance with the positive allowance for individual dis-identification. The inherent failures of totalitarian discourses to fully interpellate a subject requires a subjective freedom of thought expressed via an ineffectual cynicism, a point borne witness to in the theoretical work of Žižek. Individuals are thus, either implicitly or explicitly, encouraged to manifest their discontent through a non-active liberty in thought or an "ideology of cynicism" (Žižek: 1989). By providing the space to think resistance these systems are able to legitimately demand and make easier

obedience in action. Thus the liberating effect of cynical rebellion is the foundation for an acting compliance.

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