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By Postliterate

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Žižek, in an interview with Vice → https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XS_Lzo4S8IA, humorously paints the image of a sort of postmodern boss, trying to make small talk with obscenities to make himself appear as a kind of friend to his workers. This is the same image portrayed in the film *Sorry to Bother You*. For the film and for Žižek, the first step to emancipation is the undermining of this facade to reveal what it really is: a retention of the same authoritarian dynamics as the modernist boss.

“While ‘peripheral’ countries were subject to sweated labour, privatised facilities, slashed welfare and surreally inequitable terms of trade, the bestubbed executives of the metropolitan nations tore off their ties, threw open their shirt necks and fretted about their employees’ spiritual well-being.” [1]

Yet this may not be sufficient, because the relations between the worker and the postmodern boss are in fact *more* authoritarian than the old relations between the worker and the Fordist hierarchy.

The Fordist structure embodied the control of human bodies as labor-forces for value extraction; it is was this structure that emphasized the process of labor abstraction and a general state of affairs Marx personally knew so well. The post-Fordist structure, however, embodies control over the *soul* of the employee. In some ways, it could be said the employee is denied his freedom to be left alone to be a robot — he now has to be a human for the capitalist too.

Before, the worker could begrudgingly do the work that had to be done, but in his actions, his speech, and his thoughts, completely decry the capitalist. [2] Now, however, he is expected to do the work and show enjoyment for it, follow orders and be happy about it, subsume himself into the company and show gratitude for it.

This parallels Foucault's account of the development of penal law — that is, from one over simple control of *bodies* (captured in pre-modern public tortures) to control over the *soul* (now captured in prisons, psych wards, and decentralized across schools, hospitals, judges, etc.) The effect is same: what is presented as “freedom to be yourself” and a flight from barbaric punishment is in reality the expansion of control (and thus the expansion of modes of punishment) into enough areas of life that the whole of the self can be captured by this “freedom.”

An employee at a corporation is no longer discussed as simply a worker, but now a member of a “family,” a “community,” a “team,” and is thus expected to give up more of his autonomy.

This expression appears not just in the courts or the workplace, but in our consumer items as well. Marcuse's account of “totalitarianism” in the modern world is precisely not one involving stereotypical dictators or outwardly visible violence (yet less visible violence, as writer Post-Modern Sophist notes → <https://pomosophists.substack.com/p/a-short-reflection-on-violence>, still proliferates incessantly.) Rather, it is the totalitarianism of hijacked needs and wants, of a flattening of culture, or in Mark Fisher's case,

“...not the incorporation of materials that previously seemed to possess subversive potentials, but instead, their *precorporation*: the preemptive formatting and shaping of desires, aspirations and hopes by capitalist culture.”

Working both from debt and enclosure does capital succeed in possessing the whole human soul. In this sense, Marx's description of capital, however impressive, is caught in this Fordist view of impersonality, easy-to-see

exploitation (by today's standards), and clear possibilities for unity.

Today, capital is simultaneously more personal and sensuous than ever, capturing the whole range of human emotion, and also more impersonal and abstracted than ever, turning all into shit by a process now so complex and abstract it requires almost religious terminology to describe it (a task Deleuze and Guattari have attempted.)