Striving for 100%: An essay on totality and totalism

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„...'the more man controls anything, the more uncontrollable both become.'" (Tyler 1986:123)

„The world exists to serve the glorification of God and for that purpose alone. The elected Christian is in the world only to increase this glory of God by fulfilling His commandments to the best of his ability. But God requires social achievement of the Christian because He wills that social life shall be organized according to his commandments..." (Weber 1976:108

Abstract

This essay reflects on the possibility of a 'total' situation: various cultural tendencies, drives, intentions or processes, which aim to have 'total' control of a situation or a setting; totality being a state, with totalism an agenda or process.

Striving for 100%, whether unlimited growth in capitalism, total control of something (like information) or over someone respectively 'all', is described as an imminent danger considering present-day technological possibilities, and ideological programs such as neoliberalism, or various politically totalist strivings. This has been discussed even by Max Weber's critique of rationalism, Bataille's critique of economy, or Zygmunt Bauman's critique of the superpanopticon regarding surveillance. On the other hand, religions can be

understood as total systems demanding 100% belief and obedience from believers. Since they operate in 'cultures', they tend to influence or 'color' them with their tenets, and evangelical groups are a particularly aggressive contemporary phenomenon.

Keywords

Totality, neoliberalism, religio-economic nexus, political economy, surveillance, nation state, global rule, religious fundamentalism

Firstly, I would like to clarify the difference between totalism and totalitarianism. For totality, I consider a total state of affairs or things, like '100% pure sugar', life-sentence imprisonment, the death penalty, or a community's total population instead of dealing with just a part of it; I perceive totalism as paths or endeavors to this end. That is, totalism is going all the way, or, I should say, it tries to do so because it will have to deal with difficulty in concrete social situations. Thus, it is an idea and an ideal adopted by persons, who may be possessed by it.

I use the term totalism by focusing various cultural tendencies, drives, intentions or processes, which aim to have 'total' control of a situation or a setting; totality being a state, with totalism an agenda or process. This may be economic – whether a monopoly, political control, or something else. All of this means '100%', either factually, as an intention, or as an unintended result – at a certain place, a certain time. Each of these 'total' (or not *quite* total) states of affairs is relative and historical, of course.

This brings to mind theoretical predecessors, such as Mauss's *Le fait social total* (The Total Social Fact), which in some cases "keep a society and its institutions going in their *totality*" (Mauss 1978, II:137; my emphasis). According to Mauss, it is an exchange system affecting cohesion of the entire culture and in current sociology *Le fait social total* has been interpreted as a contribution to "dynamic sociology" (or anthropology) (Farrugia 2006:216f.), society continuously reproducing itself (and culture-specific cognition) („auto-produite" – ibid.216). Yet, Mauss's dynamic notion of the total social fact has to be understood in the light of critique of static French structuralism (ibid.217), as it shows that his totality differs from the one discussed here: a (global) totality and its implications from which there is no escape.

Even the most totalitarian (state) tyranny is not really '100%': there are always aspects arising from the total situation in the complex field of a lifeworld, such as deviating sections or individuals of the population, and some authors think that a total state of affairs cannot exist, that it will not be possible to create it.

Capitalism, as the globally dominant economic order, claims the necessity of constant economic expansion, a permanent process that may be understood as a totalist attitude. There is widespread criticism of this ideology, and Bataille's argument (2001:53ff.) seems appropriate here: limits of the 'biosphere', our globe, means limits to growth and the question arises: What happens if we arrive at these limits? We cannot yet count on inhabiting or colonizing extra-terrestrial space. Quantitatively substantial human expansion into space is not foreseeable in the near future, but it can be considered philosophically or cosmologically. The terrestrial biosphere, taken as a unit of 100% (a totality), sets limits to human, or capitalist, kinds of permanent, unlimited or 'eternal' growth. So, for the present purpose I will classify totalism as a striving for total states of affairs[1], and in so doing I shall draw from/on US ethnographic settings, since it is from here that novel processes pointing to globally relevant totalism frequently emerge, whether it is through economic drives, hegemonic tendencies, or informational totalism (surveillance). Additionally, we have a corpus of social research starting from the times of Max Weber, connecting such processes with religion.

In turning to totalism in a concrete way, for instance, in political settings, we encounter extreme situations that may generate extreme interpretations. Therefore, it may be wise to consider George Marcus's work on paranoia (1999) and discussing conspiracy, which is often utilized if extreme processes tend to be enigmatic.

While there are not many explicit studies on totalism, much research has been made on totalitarianism. In defining it, one realizes that borders and delimitations are fluid, as, for instance, Abraham & van Schendel have convincingly shown in a study on licit and illicit flows across borders (2005:8, and passim). In showing the situatedness and relativity of legal and illegal processes, of what is criminal and what is not, their anthropological perspective seems, by analogy, to prove the impossibility of any 'total' situation. There are economic studies, too, investigating illegal practices, as seen, for instance, in the context of monopolies and neoliberalism (van Horn 2009:223, 229). In the course of their argument, Abraham & van Schendel also touch upon the subject of failed states, "the inability of a state to meet its security and welfare goals" (ibid.21). This seems to be the opposite of total state control but, as an abstract argument, would a failed state be a total situation, the opposite of total state control? Or, does it just mean somebody else in power, such as the rule of anarchic groups or individuals? Whenever one tries to apply such ideas in concrete ethnographic situations, as

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[1] Even though there is a kind of parallelism, the *telos* of totalism here is not the same as that in Nietzsche (cf. Gebhard 1983:5f.), who, in his philosophy, took it as a perspective, a view, or comprehension of all things.

Abraham & van Schendel have done, it seems there *are no* total situations, which may be true, but I believe we are frequently confronted with *endeavors* to implement total situations, by various actors, whether political, religious, or economic. One such endeavour is the present trend towards total surveillance, "fluid surveillance", as it is called by some (Bauman & Lyon 2013), or the striving for *empire* (Hardt & Negri 2002).

In the case of the nation, state totalitarianism has some more ingredients: while it agrees with totalism with regard to a state of 100%, or the striving for it, it has some political, religious, and economic agendas aiming *not just* to reach the total state but to do so by *controlling* human beings, which is not necessarily the case with totalism. While the operational target unit of totalitarianism is the human being, or all human beings in its influence zone, in totalism it may be some commodity, or all commodities. The type of control in totalism can be in the markets or some specific commodity of economy (a monopoly); in religion (some religions claim to be monopolies, and religion agrees with totalitarianism in having the human being as target), including the *sanctioning* of difference (like totalizing power strategies, such as torture (Crapanzano 2004:88f.)[2]); the death penalty, for non-believers of a religion; or 'complete' political control. So, what would be 'total', according to Morris, discussing Derrida, is the *exclusion* of difference (Morris 2007:364), which does not seem possible in praxis, however.

The case of total *institutions* is somewhat different: they may be small or big, but I do not focus on single, individual institutions here. Instead, I look at the total state of a larger unit, such as that of a nation state, a field comprising numerous institutions, groups, clusters and perhaps religions of all kinds. However, to understand this, focus on a limited field, such as a religious group, a global economic player, or a secret service institution, is useful as an analytical tool.

Erving Goffman (1962) had dealt with the topic of 'total institutions' prior to Foucault (1994:295ff.), and he describes them as a sociologist: they are experienced as total situations for their 'inmates', whether in prisons, homes for the elderly and the blind, and so forth. Yet this setting of control and being in the hands of other humans in such institutions still strongly resembles situations and processes of modernity, whereas, for instance, Lyon (2008:141ff.) discusses differences between modern and *postmodern* surveillance. One aspect of the latter is its pervasiveness, its omnipresence, while, in Goffman's case (and in Foucault's, too), these

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[2] There are totalizing strategies in torture, such as the silence, or silencing of the victim (in order that the victim must be able, *always* (=100%), to hear what torturers say or ask (cf. Oberdiek 2000:80f., 86), or else, silence in the absence of complaining. In initiations, for instance, it is a required proof of bravery in enduring pain, and it has been reported that, after torture, the ability of the victim to speak has been destroyed, which is a totality in itself.

institutions were clearly delimited enclaves in the whole of a society.[3] Enclaves of a similar kind, that is, totalisms in delimited fields, are presently being studied by Wacquant (2013), whose control institutions of deviant humans are situated in quasi-postmodern settings but do not discuss an overall totality. Like Goffman and Foucault, Wacquant focuses on particular total institutions constituting a sub-unit of a whole, such as a state. A *postmodern* technological-electronic *complete* and over-all surveillance, which is global and not only of particular institutions, is termed 'superpanopticon' by Lyon (2008:147). This would designate a totality, however *hypothetical,* of surveillance discussed as an idea, which is not the same as the factual (impending) totality I have in mind, however impossible that may be, but I think it is important to ventilate this issue because of its imminent danger for all.

In totalitarianism, the means of violence and coercion, the power to sanction, are integral. It is, as we know, the concomitant of rule and power. Other than in 'modern' settings described by Foucault, present-day totalizing strategies and the means to influence and to manifest totalism are often more indirect and, as Bauman and Lyon (2013) stress, 'soft' methods are a characteristic of current and postmodern 'fluid surveillance'.

The numerous contributions to the research of totalitarianism cannot all be discussed here, so a few remarks must suffice. In her study on *The origins of totalitarianism* (1966), Hannah Arendt refers to the global outreach of countries (ibid. 415). Such states never lose sight of their visions of "conquering the globe" (ibid.), but Arendt discusses the whole issue rather closely along the lines of what had happened in her immediate past – the two World Wars and Nazism – and does not focus on totalitarianism in a very general, or more theoretical way. Additionally, and in a certain way, Horkheimer and Adorno's classic, the *Dialectic of enlightenment* (1969) has some intriguing ideas to contribute, which I shall discuss later.

The setting for the present purpose is somewhat different: Can one say that the US nation-state as such is striving to 'conquer the world'? Is it really hegemonic, or even imperialistic, or is it only segments, certain corporations, for instance, guided by economic theory, that strive for global control (a grip that is predominantly economic but which would enslave all other spheres as we know since the rise of neoliberalism)? This would be very plausible if we consider the "disembeddedness" of neoliberalism (Harvey 2005; Polanyi 2001:XXIIIf.), and its hierarchy with itself on top, to which all other spheres are subservient.

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[3] A number of papers by historians, based on Goffman's model, have analyzed total institutions of the limited kind Goffman had presented in a special issue of the *Wiener Zeitschrift zur Geschichte der Neuzeit*, Vol. 8,1.2008: monasteries (Schneider 2008), mental asylums (Heidegger 2008), poor houses (Part 2008), border policemen (Sälter 2008), and the "non-historicity" of such institutions (Bretschneider 2008),. Especially in the last paper, Bretschneider claims that one should dismiss Goffman's argument of total institutions as a general statement for historical science, and that instead one should try to understand its time-related bias (social protest, devaluation of institutions).

Total Religion

Since totalism, culturally, may be very well connected with the idea of purity, the striving for a *pure* state (which, like totalism, can be described as 100%, purity (like politically and ideologically motivated genocides, or described religiously, as in, the *right* religion, the ideologically *right* way of life) is worthy of inclusion in the analysis. So, purity often applies to religious and sometimes political settings, and, for the latter, the undertones of totalitarianism tend to be stronger than they are in the religious setting. Here, one may point to a theoretical 'confluence' of religion and economy, namely, Max Weber's and Walter Benjamin's framings of capitalism: that modern capitalism emerged *out of* religion, according to Weber, and that capitalism is understood *as* religion by Benjamin, respectively (cf. Baecker 2009).

However, metamorphoses of this kind do not happen all of a sudden but can be identified only over long periods of time. Such a process has been described by Max Weber: the metamorphosis from Protestant belief and piety in to modern capitalism. In a quite similar context, neo-liberalism, Mirowski (2013:13) writes while focusing on the difficulty of tracing changes of this type: "Ideas have a nasty habit of transubstantiating as they wend their way throughout the space of discourse...",

Even though there has been mission in Catholicism since its early days in the age of discovery in the Old World and overseas due to norms stated in the bible (St. Matthew 28,18-20), it has become fiercer with the Reformation and Protestant groups[4]. Remember Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498), the Dominican monk whose religious order is devoted to preaching and defending their faith, and who had been preaching his doctrine of purity in the 1490s in Florence, in the face of decadent Medici rule and the libertine common lifestyle. He was outraged by the decadence of the people and the clergy and recruited an 'army' of boys who trawled the streets of Florence to extract donations, which were both voluntarily given and coerced, for his religious purpose. At that time and for a little later, several preachers appeared in Europe, creating movements, aiming, like Savonarola, at 'reform': what they conceived as pure and their opposition to 'decadent' life. Martin Luther held Savonarola in high esteem, and a little later other reformers, such as Calvin, appeared on the religious scene in order to 'regulate' the lives of the people.

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[4] Horkheimer & Adorno (1969:21) characterize it as "the militant religiosity of the more recent epoch of Torquemada, Luther, Muhammad".

Many of those who disagreed with established religion, whether Catholic or Protestant, also migrated to America. These 'dissenters', departing from the traditional religious fold, and Protestant groups were summarily termed Puritans by others. In the New World, they developed peculiar forms, different from European avenues of thought and action, and they have been a focus of interest for social scientists and historians, from Max Weber and his contemporaries to Barbalet (2008), De la Fuente (2004) and others, for more than a hundred years.

So, what evangelicals, being current offshoots of Protestant strivings, say and want to implement and organize *for everyone*, according to theological dictum, is revelation-based and thus irrefutable. This biblical ideology applies to the various other Christian groupings as well: they *will not rest* until all mankind has been converted, because there is the above-mentioned sentence in the Bible to this end – it is a 100% end, and should simultaneously be the end of all other religions; the formulation, which is attributed to Jesus, starts with his statement of having "all power/violence" (St. Matthew 28,18-20), which sounds dangerous. This is a strong statement and position.

It agrees with the statement in Revelation (7.4-8) concerning 144,000 just people from certain tribes, who will finally be in heaven – all others will go to hell. This grotesque statement, which may have been very 'rational' 2000 years ago, following the best available 'knowledge' at that time, must be contextualized in the Near-Eastern mind and speculations made of that remote time and place, from a current and central European perspective. Biblical revelations and cognate things, like 'God has told them' to do, cannot be questioned. This *totalism* comes in the garb of belief, and because it is religious and not discursive, it *has to be* accepted: one cannot argue, and belief is extolled as a positive virtue. Only another 'revelation' can oppose or top it, which would actually mean combat. Such revelations enable and empower all kinds of manipulation, both personal and group. There is no way out: the ideological demand here is total, for 100%, and adherents of this idea will not rest until they have achieved it. This cultural construction creates a constant source of unrest and the opposite of peace, and of letting things be as they are. The believers will not let people have their way: everyone has to conform to *their* belief. This is the believers' conviction, which, in strong, embodied practices during evangelical services, is supported and strengthened: part of their *power drive* is the inclusion of the activated, accelerated body. The tendency of evangelical striving is, 'physiologically' stated to propel the body's velocity, so to speak, until it has gathered the speed of an ecstatic bullet and penetrates (and therefore intrudes, injures or kills) otherness, first in the evangelical person, then in other persons. It aims to conquer and dominate

everything, and in confronting non-believers, their methods, in the wake of postmodernism, have become less crude and more fluid. The vision and drive is geared toward a *pure* state of being. The only problem is that the conservative, Middle Eastern, two thousand year-old content of this vision and its cultural messages are highly neurotic and violently power-oriented, meaning the result of their application will be a disaster, as has been the case so far. We have witnessed the effects of Christendom for a long time and we know from experience, approximately, what will happen. However, since evangelicals and fundamentalist Christians, as an ideal type, are generally averse to knowledge of a secular kind, such as history, for example, and to events that have happened (which amounts to anti-intellectualism), and instead focus on narrow scriptural belief enhanced by their body practices, such minds are not receptive to the experiences diverse human cultures have gone through.

In the eyes of Christian fundamentalists, there *has to be* acceptance of their belief. What adds to the complexity is that their demands are often addressed to people who themselves (at least those in the USA) have been raised in Christian ways. So, there is cognate soil making it more difficult for those approached to refuse such demands, because they sound familiar and acceptable. It is also true that some people, who are familiar with the strategies of fundamentalists, can be their harshest critics. On the other hand, newcomers to the religious mix, propagated by evangelicals in parts of Asia, Africa and South America, may experience this new exposure as exotic, tempting and so, consequently, and because of material promises, they may embrace it.

Totalism and society

Even though Puritans pursuing an extreme path were themselves originally 'dissenters' from the religious mainstream, evangelicals today nevertheless hunt down those deviating from *their* path, and persecuting deviance has found avenues of action beyond the religious sphere, particularly in the USA. Attempts to eliminate deviance, or otherness, may be understood as a trend at majorification, the 'complete' majority being *total*, so to speak. Historically, in the USA, researching and combatting deviance has been important for religious and political reasons of control. Such activity has been directed against alcohol, gangs, communists, control of prostitution, and even the deviance of skin color. Studies of deviant behavior in sociology and anthropology have seen one remarkable trend since the early 20th century, when scholars of the Chicago School (Anderson 1923; Thrasher 1927, and others, cf. Hannerz 1980) presented their studies. These studies were often financed by social agencies to protect young people, safeguard city life, or gather structural intelligence concerning deviant groups.

They have generated knowledge about deviance in order to control the public sphere. History shows that what did not fit into the mainstream has historically been identified, researched, and, in some cases, hunted down with a vengeance, because mainstream is regarded as a "patriotic" duty, like in the case of sex offenders (Wacquant 2013:222; cf. also Versluis 2006). One of the most famous 'witch hunts' has been the McCarthy process of persecuting communists in the country, and Wacquant reports a current trend for hunts in the course of new punishment strategies following neoliberal logic in the US (2013:222 and passim).

The US mainstream has long been 'White Anglo-Saxon Protestant' (WASP), which holds a majorly dominant, historical and current cultural, political and economic influence in the USA. It is a formula that includes a place of origin and a religious orientation. I say it is dominant insofar as power, capital and domination of the public scene are mainly controlled by this cultural influence in institutions, corporations, public office, and communication channels. Additionally, it is dominated by relatively few interconnected, very rich families: an elite (Marcus 1992, 1983), whose members control most of the capital in the country (Bauman 2013; Keister 2011), even though there are singular exceptions of all kinds to this general, dominant trend. This organizational and functional cluster is complemented by another, as described by Kapferer (2005) and which Nonini (2005) has termed a "cleptocratic oligarchy", wherein individuals, supported by the ruling neoliberal ideology, switch from CEO positions in companies to government posts and back, securing personal or family gains to the disadvantage of the public, a process that may be characterized as corrupt action. These individual agents are frequently owners of big corporations, or members of the aforementioned elite families, favoring legislation profitable to their corporations while in public office, which amounts to theft of public property: for example, in cases of privatization. These cases, and particularly the "Neoliberal Thought Collective" (Mirowski 2013), form trends of totalism. Before considering this further, I will briefly mention another complex study in the history of ideas, which, although being philosophical, nevertheless utilizes anthropological thought and material in a remarkable way.

Horkheimer and Adorno, in their *Dialectics of Enlightenment* (1986), which was first published in 1944, point to a transformation of puritanism, possibly reflecting the Weber thesis of some thirty years prior, stating that puritanism's inherent totalist drive is no longer the relevant totalist drive, but instead this would be the economy, leaving no chance for the consumer to escape[5]. In this way, but without mentioning it, these two authors basically adopt

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[5] "Entscheidend ist heute nicht mehr der Puritanismus, obwohl er in Gestalt der Frauenorganisationen immer noch sich geltend macht, sondern die im System liegende Notwendigkeit, den Konsumenten nicht auszulassen, ihm keinen Augenblick die Ahnung von der Möglichkeit des Widerstands zu geben." (Horkheimer & Adorno

the position of Weber's *iron cage*, even though they did not connect the two realms, puritanism (i.e. religion), the totalist drive of economy (which stands for Enlightenment) and the western scientific principle in general, which they aimed to 'disenchant' by showing that it would revert to myth. Horkheimer and Adorno's referral to totalism[6] has its origin in philosophical thought, namely G.W.F Hegel, when they discuss, in the first part of their work, actually 'primordial' anthropological questions of relations of magic (and art, 'images' vs. writing/language in Western cultures) and belief and knowledge, and in doing so they utilize anthropologists' works of that time. Starting from the *mana* principle, they follow up stages of human changes, up to Western scientific principles (as if it these formed one coherent line), such as mathematics, and, currently, economic totality, instead of the earlier totality of images and signs that used to explain and legitimate the course of things, or processes of nature. While an image, or a myth, stood for, or *was* the totality of the world, discursive processes took them apart, but, followed to their consequential end, were totalist themselves, and thus 'myth' again (1986:21, 25).

How does this relate to my argument of totalism? Horkheimer and Adorno (ibid. 25) based theirs on the contradiction by Hegel, who, according to them, fell victim to mythology himself by making the totality in "system and history" absolute. While these processes of thought (and, thus, interpretations) and framings of history, or 'what happens', are rather loosely connected to factual events and configurations, my own approach is much more 'materialistically' based, starting from concrete processes, declared goals, intentions of actors, or direct results of processes. Decisive in judging it as totalist is its trend toward that end, and this judgment is arrived at inductively. An example of this is the theft of SIM card codes from the Dutch SIM card manufacturer, Gemalto, by the American National Security Agency, NSA, and the British Secret Service, GCHQ, as reported by the media in February 2015. It has been reported that this theft pertains to about 50% of all SIM cards, which may now be hacked by these Secret Services without anyone noticing. So, even though only 50% of cards are controlled now, the other 50% do not seem out of reach, and this clearly points to a process of totalism, for which we do not have to go back to Hegel. It is tendencies and facts of this kind

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1986:127). This statement will have to be modified in the face of current evangelical and other religious tendencies.

[6] Starting from 'primordial' states taken from anthropological literature, like the mana principle, the two authors claim totality for the arts, too, and continue to the interpretation of modern identity, as determined by Enlightenment, the scientific principle, etc.: "Als Ausdruck der **Totalität** beansprucht Kunst die Würde des Absoluten." (Horkheimer and Adorno 1986:21). Furthermore, proceeding to the occidental history of ideas: "Mit dem Begriff der bestimmten Negation hat Hegel ein Element hervorgehoben, das Aufklärung von dem positivistischen Zerfall unterscheidet, dem er sie zurechnet. Indem er freilich das gewußte Resultat des gesamten Prozesses der Negation: die **Totalität** in System und Geschichte, schließlich doch zum Absoluten machte, verstieß er gegen das Verbot und verfiel selbst der Mythologie." (Ibid.:25; my emphasis).

that I use when talking about totalism.

I am not concerned with Horkheimer and Adorno's deterministic vision of the total situation, which is inescapable according to them. Inescapability has also been hinted at, albeit with a caveat, and not as radically but rather carefully and bound to sociological fact, by Weber. Horkheimer and Adorno ingeniously concretize their vision of the present age in Homer's epic story, *Ulysses* (ibid.: 34ff.), but my aim is to analyze and decipher present dangers of total surveillance and control, as Mirowski has done in demystifying strategies of neoliberals (Mirowsky 2013). Despite Horkheimer and Adorno's ingenious monument, invoking inescapability (art being the only feature in this situation that makes life 'easier')[7], there are numerous spaces and tendencies offering escapes from their scenario.

Exemplifying totalist drives ethnographically

In dealing with totalist drives more concretely, I will *first* turn to a (seemingly!) rather simple, tangible and down-to-earth ethnographic case of totalizing. It is the *Anglicized* background of a dominant piece of American culture that originates in British *food*, which, according to general consensus, is not classed as gourmet cooking, nor is it on par with, say, French, Italian or Chinese cuisine, or the extravagant and excellent use of spices in Indian cooking. Instead, a British meal traditionally consists of a piece of meat, preferably beef, something like mashed potatoes, brown (or some other color) sauce, and perhaps some deep-frozen peas on the side[8]. In America, this type of food of the British settlers, which was perhaps somewhat influenced and transformed by the culinary dearth of the days of the expansion into the Western Reserve, has been ingeniously industrialized and normalized, following the processes of the Fordian assembly line of automobile production (Henry Ford's conveyor belt being a model (Bauman 2013:80)), to become what has been termed McDonaldized (Ritzer 1993), which, again, points to a 100% model, an attempt at perfection and maximized profit in this technological sub-sphere of the project of modernity (cf. Bauman 2013:79f.). So, food of the *British* culinary tradition, has, in America, been processed, made durable – and thus more profitable – by industrial means, as with canned products and their long shelf lives being economically prepared and maximized and exported everywhere. Restaurants of this type (ie. fast food), meanwhile, are cherished around the world – not for the quality of their food, but as a status

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[7] "Das Kulturgut [die Kunst] steht zur kommandierten Arbeit [die *totale* Realität der modernen Welt] in genauer Korrelation, und beide gründen im unentrinnbaren Zwang zur gesellschaftlichen Herrschaft über die Natur." (Horkheimer and Adorno 1986:34). This totalist vision might be relativized, or 'softened' by an anthropological perception of human life by stressing the fact and necessity of survival or subsistence, which, in the end, of course, has to be achieved *somehow*, and there are many avenues… This does not have to be a totalist "gesellschaftliche Herrschaft über die Natur".

[8] In case you want to be sure about this, you may search, as a case in point, the recipe for 'Windsor Soup'.

symbol and meeting point, particularly in cities of South America and Asia. This drive, or strategy, of the protagonists of this business model, to me, presents a case of totalizing in effect: it aims at, or points to, a total state, at least.

Another level of the Anglocized food realm is the ecological dimension (the production of its raw materials, agricultural production),which shows analogous characteristics: monoculture, uniform sizes, pesticides, genetic manipulation, monopolizing seeds – all of which aim at higher output – that is, profit – and economic activities and logic create and enforce this type of production worldwide.

A *second* ethnographic case, or symptomatic complex, is manifesting in American movies: in just about every other American film, people find themselves in *courts*, trying to rectify things. They are struggling with the peculiarities of American positive law and its monopoly of violence, and try to obey it or prove their innocence in numerous cases of accusation and detention. This nightmare of being in court all the time, of having to report to judges, seems to mirror a guilt complex (or trauma?) deriving from American juridical culture, and it certainly also mirrors evangelical ritual practice to confess one's 'sins' in public services, and to declare one's born-again status. While Padderatz (2007:30) interprets this as a strategy of sensationalism and propaganda employed by those dominating the public in order to stultify the people, one may ask whether it can be traced to religious culture, or the historical fact that early settlers did not yet have an established juridical system and so were forced to deal with juridical questions personally (and perhaps with their guns). I would argue that both causes have repercussions, with the religious cause having the stronger of the two. Recently, Wacquant (2013) has studied the guilt-offence-policing-deviance complex in the US in a class-specific way.

However, on the other hand, Nederveen Pieterse (2003:100) attributes the court-mania to American constitutionalism, the structure being a "legal-rational culture" (ibid.), which would amount to a (historical) rational-technical interpretation (checks and balances), a pattern of explanation that may also apply, without having to be the only factor. In a (voluntarily) rather weak state, the law takes a superior position in order to regulate affairs. My own interpretation, however, focuses on value commitments behind such 'court-seeking' behavior. Nederveen Pieterse (2003:101) rightly stresses the existence of a certain impotence of international American policy, and the possibility to pass progressive laws because of the powerful grip of local, special groups' interests on Congress decisions, even though he has asked, reflecting on mainly political US influence (ibid.:93), whether, for those that become

tangible internationally (in trends emanating from the USA), a "basic or foundational dynamic is at work". So, there seems to be a technical-structural condition leading to American policy, too, but we may look at those local-particular interests to find value decisions, and even religiously motivated decisions behind them. Here, an anthropological perspective is, in my view, well suited to inquire into such affairs, since, as an anthropologist, one may include any necessary context serving the outcome statements, without too many confining methodological constraints.

At this point, the question of democracy comes in: Is the United States really a democratic political entity? Quite a few analysts negate this. Greider (cited in Beck 2003:101) attests to a depraved state of US-democracy: non-participation in elections, problems and dubious ways of financing elections, and only brief and shallow political statements by politicians to satisfy media formats. One may also refer on the principle of kleptocracy (the nexus of personnel switches between corporations and government positions) combined with neo-liberal ideology (Nonini 2005) to acknowledge a desolate state of American politics and democracy, or the 'rule' of neoliberal economy. Does the USA (or, rather, major trends in that country) drift from what Buruma & Margalit (2004, following Sombart 1915) would have termed a "liberal democracy", with its logic of soft and "comfortist: merchant values and aims of life[9], to become a dominant culture of heroism? The latter may be classified as out-dated in dominant the present-day lifestyles pursued in western or industrial countries.

This short excursus on democracy and heroism leads me to consider a *third* ethnographic case – another cultural complex that can be connected with totalism – namely, heroism in films. In *movies*, there are repercussions from the lack of securities in the American way of life, calling for heroes *that save*. This type of heroism is born from weaknesses, the need to be protected; it is a call for helpers in desparate situations, where no hope is in sight, to help, but heroism in the USA also has other strands feeding it, machismo being one. Yearning for the help of redeemers, saviours in difficult situations may create self-assurance, and this is affirmed in constructs like *Superman*, involving various sorts of heroes. These cultural productions have the calming ingredient portraying forces that guarantee that things are going well, as seen in

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[9] "Liberal democracy is the political system most suited to merchant peoples. It is a competitive system in which different parties contend, and in which conflicts of interest can be solved only through negotiation and compromise. It is by definition unheroic, and thus, in the eyes of its detractors, despicably wishy-washy, mediocre, and corrupt." (Buruma & Margalit 2004:55). Such distinct and determinist categorizations by these two authors remind us of bygone days in anthropology, when 'the culture' of the XY was stated as a timeless given (or as distinct and rather uniform in major traits), so we have to be careful here. However, Buruma and Margalit may only have cited Sombart's view, formed one hundred years ago when this way of proceeding was common. Given the many different streams or strands of endeavors in present-day America, we can only say that the heroic vein is just one, albeit a strong one, and we cannot be sure whether its influence will become stronger.

fairy tales, or Disneyland, for example: they deliver us from nightmares. Such cultural dreams seem to be helpful for feeling personally more secure in the face of widespread rampage, 'conquista' of the person (mainly economical), robbery and ruthless occupation. Additionally, it involuntarily affirms or reveals states of being that make people feel unsafe: economically, politically and culturally.

The *fourth* and most pressing example is the march of neoliberalism towards total control: of everything and throughout the economic realm. This is structurally related to my brief excursus on Horkheimer and Adorno's (1986) grand and pessimistic construct of the course of human affairs, from magic to science (and the latter's involuntary but inescapably totalist *telos,* as sketched above). One may notice an evolutionistic tone in their model, but this is not necessarily the case. The text was written at the time of the emergence of the Mont Pèlerin Society, the founding organization of neoliberalism (Mirowsky 2013) that superseded classical economic ideology. In the wake of the 2008 economic crisis, Mirowsky analyzes the performance and strategies of neoliberalism (the 'Neoliberal Thought Collective', or NTC), comprising various authors, organizations, think tanks, etc.), and identifies three neoliberal strategies – short, medium and long-range – to achieve their goal (other or new markets), in response to whatever happens.

Interestingly, Mirowski develops his argument of neoliberal totalism by using the biosphere, and this reminds us of Bataille's statements on the totality of the biosphere, as mentioned above. To dismantle neoliberal strategy, he uses the example of global ecological policy: global warming and CO^2 emissions, and the resulting instrument of *trading* carbon permits (much to the delight of the NTC, since it means more markets and diverts attention from the problem itself, and does not solve it). In the case of global warming, the NTC complex applies three strategies:

1. Short-term: science-denialism = denying its man-made origin and with this message influencing the media scene;

2. medium-range = favoring carbon permit trading, which does not solve the problem;

3. Long-term policies = geoengineering) (Mirowski ibid.:337).

Similarly, in the case of general economics and neoliberal trends, there are three strategies:

1. Denying that the economic crisis of 2008 was due to faulty economics;

2. „market-based rescue of banks" (ibid. 343) as a response;

3. 'Financial innovation', the long-term answer, which involves finding always new financial mechanisms (and consequently market mechanisms) to deal with what has happened.

Because of a quasi-metaphysical neoliberal conviction, the 'omnicient' market, the course of events cannot be fully understood by humans, but the market always (and naturally) moves in directions that are right; humans have to be patient and observe where it moves. It seems to be the perfect agent:

"Neoliberal doctrine maintains that anyone should be free to propound any wonky falsehood they may wish, because the final arbiter of truth is the market..." (Ibid. 338)

According to Mirowski, neoliberals count on "…the dynamic and chaotic character of nature and society and the immutable solidity of the market…" (ibid. 342). This makes their attitude and expectation dynamic and strong, and probably much more akin to 'life' than any fix system, and hardly refutable, also. So "…neoliberals [did] come through the [economic] crisis stronger than ever…" (ibid.356), contrary to opinions that this ideology shows a downward trend. Following Mirowski's interpretation, all of this amounts to an "industrial-scale manufacture of ignorance about the crisis" (ibid. 357), and he asks for some agenda to counter it. This will certainly not be an easy task, considering the mind power of the neoliberal movement, from Hayek in the 1940s to present times.

So, what can we glean from these theoretical considerations and ethnographical cases? I have outlined one cultural case of totalism, or trend towards economic monopolism (food, in the US), two cultural cases of 'coping' with pressures of totalist (or extreme trends in society surfacing in US movies showing some religious background or features (eg. confessions in courts, heroes as saviours, etc.)), and one globally active, theoretically based and strategically shrewd and successful movement (neoliberalism), which has been aimed at 'the whole' for about half a century.

Thinking of 'being witness' to the courts, striving for totality in economics (monopoly and the maximization of profit, as seen in the food industry), or saviour heroes in the film industry, one may see patterns that previously existed in religion and are still practice now. For example, confessing in evangelical services, striving for total, or complete belief (and spreading this belief everywhere), and the neoliberal belief in the omniscient 'saviour' of the market. In the American cultural field, there has always been the direct cultural feedback from institutions of religion, anchoring seemingly secular drives to the direct drive of religion, thereby assuring its roots and continuing the connection. Let's not forget that there is the figure of salvation on top, or, as a last resort, in the garb of heroes rescuing people from all kinds of secular situations of dire need, aside from the institution of religious salvation. So, these secular trends may well have their backgrounds set in earlier forms of religion. What

typically takes place in the US field of politics and public thought, both belief and action, is the shifting or transposing of quasi (or formerly) religious constructs of 'knowledge' (ie. coping with contingency) to the modern realm of materiality. It is the changing of an actual pre-modern corpus of habitus into the technologically advanced settings of the 20th and 21st centuries. And this harbors danger, conflict, and, of course, violence. As the presently most dangerous single trend among these, I would class neoliberal trends, and, secondly, the evangelical challenge.

The other point is more abstract, but it may become very material at any time: states declare war on other states in order to protect their own citizens, or, they do so for reasons of robbery, land annexure and the like. This follows a seemingly "natural and justified" intrastate logic (Derrida 2001:84f.), but what if, after processes of globalization, only one 'state' is left? In this single and therefore structurally 'total' state, there cannot be extra-state enemies, and we can only hope that there will be intrastate mechanisms within (and in my view, not necessarily outside, beyond or 'above') the juridical system that control, renew and reform it. As things are, there is continuity. The new law will be generated out of earlier systems, one out of the other: it is not possible to "un-inherit" our past (Abeysekara 2008:2f.).

So, in the absence of different states, if only one is left, a unified juridical system cannot be 'fraudulent' any more by attacking other states, and, if this new omnisystem is consistent, what will be its 'other' possible critic, or even enemy? Will individual citizens and/or institutions, corporations be the only ones capable of overthrowing it, and will they be natural enemies of the state? How far will governmental institutions go to combat the people? Will they strive for total control?

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