From 'Cultural Revolution' to the Weariness of the Self: New Struggles for Recognition
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Introduction

The year 1968 entered history as a culmination of a series of socio-political and cultural transformations that triggered the 'Cultural Revolution' of protest against the shackles of modernity, fostering countercultural values and attempting to replace hierarchical authority with ample democratization guaranteeing individual rights, equality, and freedom. The first half of the twentieth century was shaped by World Wars, in which personal sacrifices on behalf of nation states' collective goals decimated the life of millions of persons. However, after World War II, the reconstruction process in Europe produced a social democratic moment that gave rise to 'a dense tissue of social benefits and economic strategies in which it was the state that served its subjects, rather than the other way around' (Judt, 2006: 360). These practices might have functioned as a conscious and unconscious State strategy to work through the damage that the dark times had caused to citizens. Thus, even if illusory, a collective feeling of social cohesion and belonging seemed to prevail in the post-war period (Penna, forthcoming). At the same time, the resulting economic boom, combined with the benefits of the welfare state in association with the rapid capitalist transformations in the socio-cultural spheres, paved the way for the resurgence of individualistic claims in Western societies, reaching their apex during the 1960s and 1970s.

In parallel, while the Cold War itself never escalated into direct confrontation, conflicts in China, Indonesia, and Iran related to political polarization, as well as African anti-colonial wars and Latin American dictatorships, emerged to create the foundations for several of today's international conflicts. These worldwide struggles determined the ideological, international and domestic framework in which the political, social and cultural changes evolved (Westad, 2007). It was during this Cold War period that new social movements emerged, opposing both capitalist liberal politics and Stalinist politics, and highlighting the subjective and the objective political dimensions. According to Hall, Held and McGrew (1992:290), they reflected the weakening and demise of the political class and mass political organizations, as well as their fragmentation into different social movements. These movements had a strong cultural appeal, foregrounding social identities and so giving birth to identity politics. Indeed, the struggles against the Vietnam War, the movement for Civil Rights in the USA, the sexual revolution, and feminism provided, from 1968 onwards, the new figurations (Elias, 1984) for individuality, subjectivity, liberty, equality and fraternity. These new existential choices, which found expression in the 'Cultural Revolution' ended up highlighting the value of individuality, fuelling in the subsequent decades the emergence of new individualistic perspectives.

The post-war period revealed a confluence of ideas and practices that established a set of discourses, fragmentations, and deconstructions (Hall, Held, and Mc Grew, 1992), but also fantasies, myths and claims in persons and groups that were transformative in the

Western Societies. Having this transformative context as a background, in France, starting in May 1968, two-months of radical protests against the University system, capitalism, American imperialism and traditional institutions gave rise to an unprecedented mass movement. The unrest mobilized students on the streets and led to occupations of universities as well as general strikes involving at least 11 million workers in factories (Thiollent, 1998; Judt, 2006), halting France's economy and triggering a wave of demonstrations all over the world.

Ferry and Renault (1985) state that May 1968 protests in France could be understood from multiple theoretical and empirical interpretations, ranging from the shifts of philosophical discourse in France, democratisation of the university system, and intergenerational conflicts to a new form of class struggle. Moreover, the growing unpopularity of Charles de Gaulle's administration and the rapid modernization of industry was threatening society through 'the ghost of unemployment' (ibid., 58-64). In this sense, May 1968 represented the climax of a complex historical process in France revealing new socio-cultural and political-economic implications with visible consequences until today.

This article is an attempt to reflect on the accomplishments but also on the new challenges presented by the 'Cultural Revolution'. Although the decades of the 1960s and 1970s were transformative in the socio-cultural sphere, fifty years later the post-modern world is facing unexpected socio-economic hardships, and setbacks in important socio-cultural achievements, which in turn are contributing to an increase in individual's personal/social suffering.

In this sense, the article will explore, under a transdisciplinary approach, some of the shifts of the last fifty years and their psychosocial consequences on individual's trajectories. To attain this aim, we will discuss individualism as ideology, by presenting Simmel's conceptualizations of two individualistic revolutions: the 'individualism of singleness' and the 'individualism of uniqueness', introducing as well reflections on a third individualistic revolution - the 'libertarian individualism' (Salem, 1991), attributed to the 'Cultural Revolution' transformations. The 'libertarian individualism' will be explored in relation to the narcissistic culture (Lasch, 1978) joined with the exhaustion of the individualistic ideology and its consequences, as discussed by Lipovestsky (1983), Ehrenberg (2010) and Byung-Chul Han (2015).

The unexpected 'legacies' of 'the revolt of the freedom of the individual against the oppression of the state' (Ferry and Renault, 1985: 64) will be reflected upon by revisiting some of the social-philosophical bases of Western Societies - mainly through the explorations of Alford (2005) and Honneth (1996, 2014, 2017) of the idea of freedom, but also through psychoanalytic and group analytic inputs. Through the development of ideas such as 'freedom with' (Alford, 2005) and 'social freedom' (Honneth, 2017), the exacerbated individualism of the post-modern society may reconnect with the social foundations of democratic life, especially with the idea of fraternity. Thus, individuals' struggles for recognition might find new forms of expression.

'On individuality and social forms'

According to Moscovici (1985), the individual was the most important creation of modernity. Individualism led to a shift from the emphasis placed on society as a whole –

holism – to the human individual who began to be considered as the embodiment of humanity itself – individualism (Dumont, 1986). Replacing the ancient traditions and medieval dogmatism, the modern individual was nursed in the cradle of the Enlightenment and was influenced by humanistic traditions as well as by Romanticism (Elias, 2001). The concept of the modern individual and the study of individualism is interwoven with the history of modern ideology as a whole and was shaped as a paradigm of social organization between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. Individualism is in the origins of democratic thought, grounding political society on principles of equal rights for human beings, following some of Hobbes', Locke's, and Rousseau's hypotheses (Dumont, 1986). Thus, individualism as ideology became the paradigm of social organization from the sixteenth century on.

However, the development of individualism was not linear. The German sociologist Georg Simmel described two 'individualistic revolutions', the 'individualism of singleness' and the 'individualism of uniqueness' (Simmel, 1957[1902]). The former dates back to Rousseau's *Social Contract* (1762), to the Enlightenment and the French Revolution ideals. In the 'individualism of singleness', freedom *and* equality were highlighted, and individuals were considered as equivalent entities in face of the social as a whole. The individual had his/her singularity and freedom, but his/her individuality represented the archetype of the human race. On the other hand, the 'individualism of uniqueness' was based on freedom, but inequality was enhanced. Characteristic of the nineteenth century, the 'individualism of uniqueness' valued the singularity and the uniqueness of the individual. It referred to an idea of individuality based on a singular and irreplaceable unit. It was shaped by economic liberalism, the consequences of the economic division of labour as well as by German romanticism (Simmel, 1957[1902]) in the nineteenth century (Penna, 2016). What becomes relevant in the 'individualism of uniqueness' is no longer the free individual as such, but the fact that he/she is a unique and distinct being. Thus, the qualitative uniqueness (singularity) and the irreplaceability of each human being acquired from then on a new meaning.

The second individualistic revolution contributed to the creation of the idea of subjectivity as well as the emergence of psychoanalysis. Indeed, Freudian psychoanalysis emerged at the end of the nineteenth century, influenced by the Enlightenment and by the Romanticism, highlighting the comprehension of the singularity and the uniqueness of the subjective experience. Thus, it was only after the creation of the idea of the individual, as an independent entity, owner of an inner and psychological dimension, that the idea of modern subjectivity could emerge. This step was fundamental in the development of psychoanalysis (Garcia and Coutinho, 2004: 128). However, the 'individualism of uniqueness' assumptions ended up contributing to the strengthening of the modern dichotomies that oppose individual and society.

Lipovestsky (1983), Salem (1991) and Honneth (1996), affirm that a new phase of Western individualism was born in the aftermath of the 'Cultural Revolution'. Lipovetsky (1983) states that we are experiencing, in 'hyper-modernity' (ibid., 35), the second individualistic revolution in which the modern submission of individuals to the disciplinary and collective rules was challenged, and a process of personalization took place. Personalization reshaped different sectors of social life by enhancing the singularity of the subjects and their personal achievements. Moreover, consumerism, hedonism, sexual liberation, and freedom became the cornerstones of the new Western individualism, which

found its main expression in the development of what Lasch (1978) described as narcissistic culture.

'Libertarian individualism' enhanced psychological subjectivity and a radical affirmation of individuality, promising freedom and equality to individuals, now free from normativity and modern social injunctions. This aversion to normativity points to a refusal of universalization of norms on one hand, while at the same time, supported by equality, it allowed the flowering of the subject. In this sense, the idea of 'liberation' (Salem, 1991: 67) is the base for individualism in the 1960s' socio-cultural transformations. Thus, the idea of freeing individuals through equality is the basis of 'libertarian individualism'.

However, Salem states that 'although professedly concerned with the *res publica*, the 1960s thinking' (ibid., 66) resulted in 'privatizing existence' (Ferry and Renault 1985:73). This means that after the 1968 movements, especially from the 1980s onwards, the importance the 'Cultural Revolution' gave to the political and public spheres as well to socio-cultural projects was transformed into an excessive concern with the private lives of individuals as pointed out by Sennett (1974) and Lipovetsky (1983). Thus, instead of fostering the accomplishment of collective goals in society, the new ethos of the 'Cultural Revolution' promoted individuals' achievements (Ferry and Renault, 1985:72) and performances (Ehrenberg, 2004; Han, 2015).

So, the radical affirmation of individuality produced by the 'Cultural Revolution', ended up conferring value on, and ethically centring on, the individual, the core of his/her subjectivity and his/her personal aspirations (Salem, 1991). However, the idea of individuals' equality is intermingled with the idea of the difference, which brings this 'libertarian individualism' close to Simmel's 'individualism of uniqueness', by enhancing the uniqueness of the individual's project. Thus, the individualistic shift proposed by the 'Cultural Revolution' is rooted in the idea that the transformation of the society, beyond material bases, could only be achieved through a revolution in customs and in mentalities (ibid., 70). Thus, 'people's subjectivity has, therefore, a fundamental role in the transformations of the society' (Cohn-Bendit and Gabeira, 1985: 48, translation mine). This assertion seems to justify why 'May 1968' is called a 'Cultural Revolution'. Indeed, 'the thought of May 1968' dissolved the boundaries between the inner and the outer world, and the private and public spheres, intertwining psychology and politics, as we observe through the feminist movement's motto 'the personal is political' (Castel, 1981: 9). The 'Cultural Revolution' opened new frontiers for political contestation in the personal and social spheres, politicizing subjectivity, identity and identifications, fostering, in addition, an extensive debate on sexual differences and gender identities (Hall, Held, and McGrew, 1992: 291). However, the transformations demanded by the libertarian project seem to subjugate the society to the individual. They reveal what Sennett (1974) observed through the tyranny of intimacy – where the excessive focus on intimacy of the post-modern individual 'tyrannized' the public sphere, producing the disintegration of the public man – and what Lasch (1978) explored in his analysis of the narcissistic culture.

In spite of the revolutionary outlook of the 'Cultural Revolution', the movement reveals a contradiction unveiled by Salem (1991). On the one hand, the movement was captured by the modern dichotomies opposing individual and society when it promoted rebellion against the social and moral restraints on an individual's autonomy. On the other hand, the opposition between individual and society seems to have dissolved, not only by asserting equality between individuals through the rejection of the normativity and

hierarchies of modernity but also by the attempt to merge traditional spheres, such as the public and the private. The idea was a radical affirmation of individuality, subjecting society to the goals of the individual (ibid., 69). Thus, as Salem (1991) states, the right to equality in the social sphere became associated with the individual's possibility to be unique. In this sense, the 'egalitarian utopia' promoted by the 'libertarian individualism' eventually enhanced the radicalism of the individual and consequently 'reissued the individualism of uniqueness' (Garcia and Coutinho, 2004:129).

In effect, the figurations (Elias, 1984) that the French Revolution principles – liberty, equality and fraternity – acquired through the three 'individualistic revolutions' contributed to the creation of socio-economical and psychosocial outlooks of the last centuries. Moreover, as we observed through the different formulations of the primacy of individual's goals in the 'individualistic revolutions', the classical sociological dichotomies that oppose individual and society (Elias, 2001; Foulkes, 1964) remain a seemingly unbreakable force in the Western societies. In this sense, the 'Cultural Revolution' can be considered a paradoxical and more complex form of continuity, but also of discontinuity, of Western individualism.

'As time goes by … the weariness of the self'

Today, fifty years after the 'Cultural Revolution', socio-cultural transformations are indisputable. However, we are witnessing the 'other face of Janus' of some of 1968's achievements. Although from the early 1970s, the world had experienced an accelerating global surge of democracy, especially after the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, reaching a peak in the mid-2000s, in the last years a 'democratic recession' has been frightening liberal democracies (Fukuyama, 2018:5). Today, democratic values are being threatened by neo-liberal policies, fundamentalist thinking and different shapes of 'liquid life' (Bauman, 2000).

Fukuyama (2018) states that twentieth-century politics had been organized along a left-right spectrum defined by economic issues, the left advocating for more equality and the right demanding more freedom. However, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, the focus turned to identity issues, the left leaned towards prioritising the rights of marginalized and excluded groups and the right increased its concern on protecting national identities (ibid., 6). As Fukuyama noted, while since Marx political struggles had been seen as reflecting economic conflicts, human beings are motivated as well by important psychosocial determinants. These include what he named the 'politics of resentment', which he explores as an important force in democratic societies (ibid., 7). The politics of resentment is connected to experiences of inequality and indignity in social life, triggering claims for recognition through identity politics that are tantamount to the struggles for recognition (Honneth, 1996) in current politics.

Indeed, what Fukuyama observed is connected to one of the most important legacies of the 'Cultural Revolution'. That is, from May 1968 onwards, the appreciation of individual needs and the close association between the personal and the political possibly contributed to the emergence of the 'affective turn' in social sciences and political studies, which rediscovered the role of emotions in public and political life (Hoggett, 2009; Thompson and Hoggett, 2012). Recognising the influence of emotions in these spheres is

not only related to transdisciplinarity tendencies in today's academic circles, but it is also connected to the awareness that to address the complexity of post-modern problems, investigations into the psychosocial must proceed in 'trans spaces' (Frosh, 2013). This means that to explore the impact and the role of emotions in the psychosocial sphere, it is necessary to deconstruct the dichotomies between individual (psyche) and social by acknowledging the indissolubility of individual-society relations (ibid.). Research must be conducted in spaces where the psycho and social dimensions of human subject interweave, in association with other disciplines. The 'affective turn' highlights exactly the interconnectedness of approaches that confer value not only to discourse, ideology and/or belief systems, but also to the role that human feelings play in investigations of communities, social movements, institutions and governments (Hoggett *et al*, 2013: 568). Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that investigations on politics, political culture and popular culture (Hoggett, 2009; Thompson and Hoggett, 2012; Yates, 2015; Richards, 2018) are traversed by a myriad of emotions that must be explored under intersubjective and trans-subjective approaches. In this sense, research of psychosocial studies clearly demonstrates how emotions eventually interfere, transform and shape political expressions and actions.

Since the 1970s, the focus on the individual's trajectory ideal of self-realization has been engendering transformations and new figurations for life in society. Though, as the French philosopher Gilles Lipovetsky (1983: 71) observed, since the 1980s, the excess of subjectivity, the consumer society, the society of the spectacle (Debord, 1967), the media imperatives, and the hyper-valorisation of the body and sexuality were all eroding the subject. Indeed, the increased demand for self-realization left its mark on social statistics, as higher divorce rates and declines in birth rates changed the family structure and the strength of primary bonds (Honneth, 2004). The exacerbation of 'libertarian individualism' (Salem 1991) and the narcissistic culture are bringing isolation, emptiness, and alienation. People are being forced to coexist in a society where the 'cult of the performance' (Ehrenberg, 1994) is compelling individuals to take the responsibility for themselves (Ehrenberg, 2010), for their 'self-employment' and 'self-care' (Scanlon, 2015). Thus, what in the early days of the 'Cultural Revolution' connected individuals with their claims to self-realization turned out to be a productive force, in which involvement, flexibility, self-experimentation, originality, and initiative became institutionalised. Thereby, regulated by capitalist economy, these claims were transmuted into a support of the system's legitimacy, almost as an ideology (Honneth, 2004: 473).

The French sociologist Alain Ehrenberg (2010) investigated the rise of the diagnosis of depression in contemporaneity, connecting it not only to the pharmacological and psychiatric mental-health care strategies but also to the idea that individuals are failing to meet the personal and social demands for autonomy, self-realization, and freedom. In this sense, depression, psychic sufferings and mental health problems are being also considered as social pathologies. As Johnsen (2011) comments, for Ehrenberg depression became a language to express feelings of deficiency, insufficiency, isolation and shame that are experienced by subjects living under the ideal of the individual's sovereignty and self-realization which has developed in recent decades. In this sense, Ehrenberg's hypothesis confers on depression the status of a 'functional pathology' (ibid., 94), a morbid state that allows a deeper understanding of current individualism and its dilemmas, similar to what hysteria and neurasthenia represented as a language at the end of the nineteenth century.

For Ehrenberg (2007) the history of depression parallels the decline of the modern disciplined individual. Thus, he attributes 'the twofold medical and social success of depression' (ibid., 130) to the global change that took place in society after the 1960s. So, if in modernity discipline, obedience, conformity and guilt shadowed the subject, in post-modernity, autonomy, initiative, personal accomplishment and responsibility became its corollaries. Thus, if in the past the neurotic personality led to conflict and to guilt feelings, the depressive personality of today is characterised by feelings of insufficiency (Ehrenberg, 2010). In this sense, post-modern subjects seem to have replaced neurosis, conflict, anxiety, and guilt by uncertainty, inhibition, shame, and low self-esteem. Thus, summarizing his view on the history of contemporary depression and its consequences, Ehrenberg (2007) states 'if neurosis, according to Freud, is an *illness of guilt*, depression appears as an *illness of responsibility*, one where insufficiency dominates guilt' (ibid., 130). Therefore, the failure of post-modern individuals to accomplish the demands for autonomy and self-realization makes individuals suffer from the 'illness of responsibility', which leads the subject to experience exhaustion, the 'weariness of the self' (Ehrenberg, 2010: 9-12).

In effect, the individual's failure to take responsibility for his/her inner life project emerged in association with real problems of employment. The resurgence of unprotected labour (Castel, 1995; Scanlon, 2015) and the growing flexibility of labour work (Standing, 2011) reveal new forms of psychosocial suffering connected to experiences of personal failure, insufficiency, and helplessness. These uncontained emotions have been creating a mass of exhausted, 'depressed' but also deprived and excluded individuals, who personify the twenty-first-century forms of personal and social suffering (Akhtar, 2014). These situations have provided a space where the personal, the public and the political spheres reconnect through suffering and resentment (Thompson and Hoggett, 2012; Fukuyama, 2018), and also through hate.

After 'May 1968', the divided subject of modernity gave space to narcissistically invested sovereign individuals (Ehrenberg, 2010). However, the processes of individualization fostered by the 'Cultural Revolution', resulted in a 'paradoxal reversal' (Honneth, 2004: 467) at the dawn of the twenty-first century, when the increasing qualitative freedom of the subjects turned out to be the angst/anxiety of 'being himself/herself'. Indeed, the exhaustion of the individuals is connected to the imperative demands to maximize self-realization and production in the globalized world.

The South Korean philosopher, Byung-Chul Han (2015), has added to the debate. Taking into account Ehrenberg's (2010) postulation, which located depression in the shift from the disciplinary society to the 'achievement society', Han criticizes the author for considering depression only from the perspective of the economy of the self. That is, while Ehrenberg points to depression as an expression of the failure of the individual on 'becoming himself/herself', for Han depression is also caused by impoverished attachment, fragmentation, and atomization of life in society. These aspects associated with systemic violence present in the 'achievement society' were, in Han's opinion, also neglected in Ehrenberg's analysis. In this sense, the suffering is not only related to the imperative to 'be himself /herself', but it is connected to the pressures associated with these achievements, which ultimately lead to fatigue and depression (Han, 2015: 10).

Han's thesis is that Western society has become a 'burnout society', a 'society of tiredness' (Han, 2015: 30). Today, the individual subjected to the increasing demands for

performance does not suffer, anymore, the demands of an external constraint that forces him to work and produce. He, himself, submits to exhaustive work. In this sense, the cruelty embedded in the tiredness of the 'achievement society' is related not only to the extreme isolation of the individual but to the unexpected encounter between freedom and self-coercion, in which freedom and constraint coincide. Thus, 'the achievement-subject gives itself over to compulsive freedom – that is, to the free constraint of maximizing achievement. Excess work and performance escalate into auto-exploitation' (Han, 2015: 11).

Moreover, this new type of exploitation seems to be more efficient than the domination of the other, characteristic in disciplinary societies, since it moves *pari passu* with the idea of freedom. 'The exploiter is at the same time the exploited, becoming the perpetrator and the victim, the lord and the slave of himself. Perpetrator and victim can no longer be differentiated' (Han, 2015: 11). This self-referentiality generates a 'paradoxical freedom' and the pathological manifestations of the 'achievement societies' are precisely the outcome of this paradox. In sum, the 'burn out society' seems to be leading the individuals to experience the consumption of their own souls. Thus, as Han (2015: 60) strikingly pointed out, 'the burn out society' is blurring the 'Hegelian master-slave dialectics', by transforming subjects into masters and slaves of themselves. So, if for Han this 'paradoxical freedom' seems to characterize post-modern individuals we should ask: what happened to freedom after 'May 1968'?

'No Man is an Island' – Rethinking freedom

The Western modern individualistic model seems to have reached the peak which Lipovetsky (1983), Ehrenberg (2010) and Han (2015) described. Thus, the distance between the 'post-modern' self-realized subjects and the 'Cultural Revolution' promises, especially in terms of social equality and freedom, is surprising. According to Honneth (2014), among the hegemonic ethical values of modern society, only individual's freedom and autonomy proves able to characterize the institutional ordering of society in an effectively lasting way. In effect, since the French Revolution, the idea of individual freedom is present in any group who had struggled for social recognition, as we witnessed in the 'Cultural Revolution' movements, in which 'all have fought against legal and social forms of disrespect they saw as irreconcilable with their claims to self-respect and individual autonomy' (Honneth, 2014: 16).

Investigating freedom, Taylor (1992) points to a Post-Romantic idea – clearly cherished by Salem's 'libertarian individualism' – which states that each person's form of self-realization is original to him/herself and can be worked out independently. Indeed, the idea of freedom has been shaped by Western individualism highlighting the idea of 'individual freedom' (Honneth, 2014). However, due to the valorisation of authenticity and the individual's autonomy, the idea of freedom has become connected not only to the individual's solipsistic aims of self-discovery (Taylor, 1992) but also to the individual's possibility to shape and re-shape the social order (Honneth, 2014). In this sense, there is no space left for understanding freedom in respect to otherness, neither in the possibility to develop 'freedom with' the other (Alford, 2005) nor 'social freedom' (Honneth, 2017). Today, the idea of freedom seems to have lost its connections with the plurality of the public sphere, becoming an extension of self-realization. This reality makes it difficult to

include in the post-modern experience of freedom the importance of the development of fraternal bonds with the other and/or collective common goals. Freedom became fused and confused with the personal realm and shaped by individualistic goals inflated by narcissism, idealization, and illusions.

This impression is clear in the empirical research conducted by Alford (2005) on freedom. He interviewed fifty-two middle-class North-American persons – that he named, inspired by anthropology research, 'informants' – ranging from seventeen to seventy-four year old, and from different ethnicities and religions (ibid., 141). His aim was to understand, not in the philosophical discourse, but in social, psychological and political ways, 'why freedom seems to have lost its meaning, and what might be done to restore it' (Alford, 2005: 2). Alford's investigation reveals how the experience of freedom is perceived from a more personal perspective and how it seems to be disconnected from political and philosophical dimensions.

The majority of the 'informants' approached by Alford defined freedom as the possession of mastery, money, and power as essential means of self-realization, revealing how the colloquial vision of freedom is defined in negative terms, as a lack of restraint, of not finding obstacles to its realization. In this sense, these visions connect freedom with isolation and anomie, but mainly with power over the other, akin to Hobbesian perspectives (ibid., 7). Moreover, the 'informants' perceptions of freedom point to the fear of personal constraints or 'narcissistic injury' related to the intrusion of the outside world upon their experiences of freedom. They rarely refer to experiences enjoyed in the company of others (ibid., 15). For Alford, this first empirical observation of freedom is related to a kind of 'naive individualism' or frustrated 'naive individualism' (ibid., 12) that interweaves narcissistic aspirations with individualistic accomplishments in the outside world. Therefore, this empirical observation of freedom is fundamentally grounded in competitive and materialistic liberal perspectives, revealing how Western individualism is embedded in the experiences and discourses presented about freedom. The second most important discourse captured by Alford on freedom is related to experiences that provide individual relaxation and respite, as a kind of personal retreat from the restraints and constraints of life in society, a moment when the individual becomes sovereign of his own will (ibid., 9). Once again, only few answers connect freedom to experiences of good fellowship (ibid., 22).

Alford (2015) observed that both dimensions of freedom are split because the 'informants' cannot establish a connection between freedom as mastery and freedom as relaxation (ibid., 23). We suggest that both possibilities, more than revealing narcissistic aspirations that connect freedom to egoist and hedonist goals, illustrate different facets of an inflated personal realm – the tyranny of intimacy (Sennett, 1974) – and a poorly invested public sphere in terms of experiences of freedom. In this sense, the public and the political dimension of freedom aroused little interest in the interviewees. Among several hypotheses based on group analytic investigations of the social unconscious (Hopper and Weinberg, 2011, 2016, 2017), we may infer that Alford's research subjects were revealing myths, fantasies and discourse formations that are embedded in the social unconscious of North American persons. It means that, in a culture where equality, freedom of speech, heterogeneity and human rights are taken for granted as core values, freedom has been perceived by North Americans, perhaps since de Tocqueville's (1835) observations, as an individualistic achievement.

However, in order to 'rethink freedom', Alford (2005) moves beyond individualism by exploring Winnicott's (1982) concept of transitional space, defined as an area between 'me' and 'not-me' that connects inner and external reality, bridging subjective experience and objective reality. It is an area of illusion, imagination and creative play, created between the dyad mother-baby in the early infant development. This area, where 'me' and 'not-me' paradoxically coexist, is fundamental for the healthy development of the self. By associating freedom with potential areas of illusion and disillusionment and with the capacity for imagination, Alford states that freedom requires not only fantasy and illusion but also a sort of human relatedness that he named 'freedom with'. Indeed, life in society requires the loss of the illusion that erroneously equated sovereign will with freedom (Alford, 2005: 35).

'Freedom with' seems to be lacking in post-modern individualistic projects of self-realization, which is leading subjects to exhaustion, failure, burn out and the weariness of their selves. It requires the ability to find potential spaces where the 'capacity to be alone' in the presence of the other could be experienced (Winnicott, 1958). In this sense, 'freedom with' demands empathy and the acknowledgment that human beings depend on the other to acquire independence and to grow. That is, to 'grow with' in interdependence with the other. Moreover, 'freedom with' demands disillusionment and the ability to mourn an idealized freedom, which is related to the achievement of the Kleinian depressive position (Alford, 2005: 33). According to Freudian thinking (1975[1920]), it is related to the subject's ability to move from the pleasure principle to the reality principle.

In group analytic terms that bridge individual and group perspectives, 'freedom with' might be translated into what Patrick de Maré proposed in terms of the development of citizenship through medium and large groups. He sees this as the ability to co-create a culture of togetherness, where impersonal fellowship/*Koinonia* might be fostered allowing the citizens to move from 'hate to dialogue to culture' (de Maré et al, 1991). *Koinonia* is defined as a type of 'spiritual-cum-human participation and communion in which people can speak, hear, see, and think freely' (ibid., 2). It seems that Alford's 'freedom with' shares with de Maré's aims in groups, the same *Koinoniac* spirit.

In recent critical theory, Axel Honneth (2014, 2017) devoted attention to investigations of freedom. However, before approaching some of these developments it is important to introduce some of his earlier work related to the importance of recognition in an individual's self-realization. Drawing on critics of his predecessors, such as Horkheimer, Adorno and Habermas, Honneth (1996) pointed to 'a sociological deficit' in their conceptualizations ascribing to social conflict and to the struggle for recognition a central role in critical social theory. Challenging Hobbesian teleological conceptions of humankind, grounded in the struggle for individual's self-preservation, Honneth (ibid) conceives a critical social theory based on Hegel's (1801-6) early Jena-period model of 'struggle for recognition', and on G. H Mead's symbolic interactionism. Honneth (1996) brought to critical theory the historical importance of intersubjective thinking by highlighting the idea that the basis of interaction is conflict, and its moral grammar is the 'struggle for recognition' (ibid:1-10).

In fact, the social struggles of the last decades have revealed that the lack/denial of recognition brings social injustice and suffering to a mass of excluded and marginalized groups. Taking into account conflicts originated by experiences of social disrespect, and by interweaving philosophy, sociology, psychology and psychoanalysis, Honneth (1996)

develops a critical theory of society that identifies the ethical and intersubjective conditions for the restoration of mutual recognition and respect. The personal self-realization depends, therefore, on the creation of ethical relationships of reciprocal recognition. Instead of focusing on the self-realization of the isolated individual, Honneth (ibid) trusts in the development of three different spheres of recognition in which a heathier self-realization might be fostered. In this sense, human flourishing could only be achieved through the creation of ethical relationships with the others in which love, law and rights, and solidarity could be established. Thus, the development and maintenance of self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem could only be acquired through mutual recognition. These accomplishments encompass not only the development of good-enough relationships of love and self-confidence, established since early childhood (Winnicott, 1982), but also involve experiences in which dignity and respect for human rights, guaranteed by law, when fulfilled, bring self-respect to individuals. These include situations in which bonds of solidarity and shared community values can foster the development of a stable self-esteem within society (Honneth, 1996).

The tenets of the 'Cultural Revolution' should have provided space for the development of the three dimensions of recognition, as well as a more ethical life for individuals. However, it seems that in the last decades, more narcissistic and less intersubjective values have prevailed in the globalized world. Indeed, as Honneth (2004) states, the aftermath of the 'Cultural Revolution' revealed paradoxical forms of individualism. If on the one hand the opportunities for individual freedom were amplified, these did not lead to the achievement of 'social freedom'– conceived as a theoretical element of holistic individualism (Honneth, 2017). Therefore, instead of contributing to the development of a life based on fraternal bonds, where subjects could develop 'action' and *zoon politikon* (Arendt, 1958) experiences, subjects became overcommitted to hedonistic and egoistic forms of 'individual freedom'. This has led to an increase in the lack of recognition of the otherness, disrespect, reification and social pathology (Honneth, 2004).

Recently, Honneth explored the concept of freedom in his book *Freedom's Rights* (2014), aiming to build a 'Hegelian' theory of justice. In a more recent work, *The Idea of Socialism* (2017), Honneth makes a relevant contribution to the subject when in discussing the history of socialist political thought, he emphasizes the idea of 'social freedom', which for him is at the core of the socialist movement. 'Social freedom' is defined as the kind of freedom which is grounded in mutual recognition and can only be achieved through relationships with others.

The idea of 'social freedom' could be found in the inspiring writings of early socialists as Saint Simon and Fourier, as well as in Proudhon and Louis Blanc (Honneth, 2017). Nevertheless, some of their postulations have been overlooked in the more recent visions of socialism, especially those which could not live up to the idea of 'social freedom' (ibid., 9). Indeed, early socialist thinkers discovered an internal contradiction between the principles of freedom, equality, and fraternity of the French Revolution. Proudhon and Blanc, as presented by Honneth (ibid.), tried to re-shape the concept of freedom, making it more compatible with fraternal coexistence and ethical solidarity. Moreover, in criticizing the market economy, they pointed out that the understanding of freedom had been reduced to the pursuit of private and selfish interests. Thus, the task of socialism should be to resolve a contradiction in the demands of the French Revolution by creating social relations between the three principles. In other words, 'The aim of fraternity, of mutual

responsibility in solidarity, cannot even begin to be realized as long as liberty is understood solely in terms of private egoism characteristic of the competition in the capitalistic market' (Honneth, 2017: 12). This means that it is necessary to co-create a kind of freedom that did not conflict with the demand for fraternity. However, to achieve this goal, it is necessary to give up an individualistic understanding of the meaning of freedom in the name of relationships that might reconcile the principles of the French Revolution (ibid., 27). The motto of this reconciliation is the possibility to develop 'social freedom'.

It seems that the contradictions of the three principles could only be solved if 'individual freedom' could be understood not only as an individual achievement, but rather as a relational one, in which the individuals, as members of the society, complement each other. In this direction, freedom must be rethought and 'individual freedom' should be substituted by new forms of 'intersubjective freedom'. Consequently, individual subjects can only fulfil their capacity for freedom as members of a free social community, where the mutual realization of shared intentions occurs in an atmosphere of mutual empathy and recognition. In this sense, Honneth's 'social freedom' (2014, 2017) shares a deep affinity with Alford's 'freedom with' (2005). Freedom can only truly be achieved in a society where it can be realized through solidarity and in the name of a new democratic ethics (Honneth, 2014, 2017).

Concluding Comments

The ideals conveyed by the French Revolution did not guarantee liberty, equality, and fraternity to all, neither did capitalism nor socialism, so the struggles for recognition continue. The path is uncertain, and observing the socio-economic and political atmosphere of the current world, in spite of all the signs that individualism has reached its limits, we continue to witness its acute expressions. The concepts of a precarious life (Butler, 2005) and necropolitics (Mbembe, 2003) reveal how disrespect and cruelty are eroding human lives in incohesive social systems (Hopper, 2003). Moreover, social suffering, resentment and indignation brought about by these situations trigger emotions (Hoggett, 2009; Thompson and Hoggett, 2012) in the collective life that find expressions in social movements. Since the 'Cultural Revolution' some of those movements have successfully offered, through social identities (Hall *et al*, 1992) and social cohesion (Richards, 2018), containment, recognition and 'freedom with'/ 'social freedom'. In this sense, shared identifications and the development of empathy/ 'being with' - *Einfühlung* (Ferenczi, 1928/1994) – can act as antidotes in the public sphere against individualism and the fragmentation of the social world. In contrast, fuelled by massification processes (Hopper, 2003; Penna, forthcoming) they may give birth to social movements that through an illusion of cohesion, project into the others the resentment and hate formerly experienced by its members. In this sense, they enact in the personal and in the public sphere destructive forms of togetherness that exclude the different other.

Taking these perspectives into account, it seems that it is necessary to create/ re-create in the socio-cultural, psychosocial and political spheres, new spaces where recognition could be fostered. Thus, the debate on freedom and equality must rely on the importance of fraternity and solidarity (Honneth, 2017), providing experiences where intersubjective bonds and a real encounter with the otherness could take place. In group analysis, Foulkes (1964) calls attention to the social nature of persons and, in fact, we can only develop our own subjectivity in relationships supported by mutual recognition.

Interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches in human and social sciences have been prominent in reflecting on the complexity of the post-modern figurations (Elias, 1984; Frosh, 2013). These challenges find in psychosocial studies a multi-dimensional and an evolving trans-subjective field that may discover in Hoggett's words an important recommendation:

> To make things better (…) suggests an attitude to life which is fundamentally reparative. It is not about the pursuit of a perfect world, rather it is an attitude which recognizes the damage and the injury daily incurred by the collective body of humanity (of which we are both victims and perpetrators) and a commitment to make amends (Hoggett, 1992: 7).

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