



THE PRODUCTION OF *HOMO ECONOMICUS* IN THE PUBLIC SPHERES OF THE FILIPINO MASSES AND MIDDLE CLASS

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One way to address the question of how subjects are being shaped in capitalist society is to examine how individuals embrace the ideals of homo economicus. The paper contributes to the discussion of capitalist subjectivity by examining how the ideals of homo economicus are being embraced by the two diverging public spheres in the Philippines: the masses and the middle class. Drawing from the study of the moral politics of the Filipino people and highlighting factors such as livelihood and linguistic condition as important social factors, the paper claims that although the ideals of self-entrepreneur can be observed in the middle-class sphere, they rather have a limited influence in the mass sphere. Premised on those points, the paper further notes the significance of the integrative approach addressing the issue of the formation of subjectivity. In the end, these explorations offer a possible way to move beyond the problematic morals and subjectivities promoted by capitalism.

Keywords: Subjectivity, *Homo economicus*, Capitalism, middle class, mass sphere.

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INTRODUCTION

From a Marxist perspective, problems such as universal alienation, massive environmental devastation, and gross inequality are commonly understood as rooted in the system of capitalism.¹ Following the logic of the capitalist system, these problematic conditions could be mitigated if individuals would simply choose not to participate in the capital's exploitation of resources, where everything—including culture, heritage, human lives, nature et. al.—is converted to be a means to gain more profit. Yet despite capital's destructive costs, most people are far from disobeying what the market wants. Humanity is deeply integrated into the market as producers and consumers, where one could be a worker who diligently follows orders to get meager salaries, or one could be a wealthy person who spends millions on luxurious things to satisfy his or her lavish desires. In either form of life, both subjects valorize capital as a producer and a consumer; both keep the capital in constant motion.

The type of subjectivity being promoted in this capitalist system can be termed as *homo economicus* or a self-entrepreneur. Drawing from Foucault's seminal studies on neoliberalism and governmentality, *homo economicus* refers to a rational individual who aims to maximize the gains of one's enterprise.² Here, an individual is not only depicted as a consumer whose goal is fair exchange; more than achieving a just trade, a *homo economicus* aims to gain more than what one paid for. This individual calculates one's actions through utility, satisfaction, and scarcity of resources to maximize one's gain.³ One's

time, money, effort, and assets are rationally assessed to be strategically invested for optimum returns. Through the dictates of neoliberalism, individuals are transformed from “passive savers” to “entrepreneurial investors who live their lives according to market rationality and risk calculation.”⁴

Following the Foucauldian perspective, a *homo economicus* is seen as an upshot of the post-Fordist stage of capitalism, in which one of its features is to make the production of the subject part of its objective. Here, the production process is not only operating inside factories but extends even outside workplaces, such as in the institutions, in the public spaces, and more importantly, in the subjects. Some scholars best described this process as a conversion of the whole society into its social factory.⁵ They theorized that the capital is expanding its operation to include even the subjects, configuring them to best serve the purpose of the market and embrace its system and values without question.

Studies on the formation of subjectivity, however, have not elaborated how individuals accept these traits of *homo economicus*. These works presuppose that “neoliberalism's discourses”, and market values are working in “relatively clean and straightforward ways,” where subjects are easily malleable to the values promoted by the market.⁶ From such an assumption, one can pose the question of how the ideals of *homo economicus* are being embraced by the subjects. Some scholars have seen the need to provide more details on the subjectification process. Some of these studies include the investigation

¹ David Harvey, *Marx, capital, and the madness of economic reason*. Oxford University Press, 2017.

² Jason Read, “A Genealogy Of Homo-Economicus: Neoliberalism and The Production Of Subjectivity.” *A Foucault for the 21st Century: governmentality, biopolitics and discipline in the new millennium* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2009), 2.

³ Wendy Brown, *Edgework: critical essays on knowledge and politics* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), 40.

⁴ Kim Bohyeong, “Think rich, feel hurt: the critique of capitalism and the production of affect in the making of financial subjects in South Korea” in *Cultural Studies* (2016): 1-13.

⁵ Rosalind Gill and Andy Pratt, “In the social factory? Immaterial labour, precariousness and cultural work.” *Theory, Culture, & Society* 25, no. 7-8 (2008): 1-30.

⁶ Martijn Konings, *The emotional logic of capitalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015); Bohyeong, “Think rich, feel hurt: the critique of capitalism and the production of affect in the making of financial subjects in South Korea”..., 2.



of rational and emotional processes of market traders⁷; the description of the production of subjectivity in view of machinic enslavements⁸; the penetration of financial logic in the everyday experiences⁹; and the financial subjectification through private education program.¹⁰

Since it is important to specify how the market rationality is being internalized, embodied, hindered, and even contested by individuals and communities in concrete political and cultural contexts, the paper contributes to the discussion by stressing how the two public spheres, namely the mass sphere and the middle-class spheres, affect the acceptance of ideals of *homo economicus*. The public sphere refers to the social class' discursive space, which includes language, media, daily contacts, information, et. al.¹¹ Since the mass and middle-class sphere have diverging discursive space, the difference highlights how these two public spheres have different ways of forming the subjectivity.

From these two public spheres, the differences in economic condition and language are explored to highlight how the ideals of *homo economicus* are only being promoted in the middle-class sphere different from the mass sphere. Such a case is mainly drawn from the study on moral politics in the Philippines, which shows the contrasting moral views observable in the mass sphere and the middle-class sphere. In Kusaka's work, the former typifies the morals of being a dependent and help-seeking person, while the latter is more driven to embody the ideals of *homo economicus*.

⁷ Hirokazu Miyazaki, *Arbitrating Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013); Joe Deville, "Regenerating market attachments: consumer credit debt collection and the capture of affect", *Journal of Cultural Economy* 5, No. 4 (2012): 423-439.

⁸ Maurizio Lazzarato, *Signs and Machines, Capitalism and the Production of Subjectivity*, Trans. J. D. Jordan (California: Semiotext(e), 2014).

⁹ Lena Pellandini-Simanyi et al. "The financialization of everyday life or the domestication of finance" in *Cultural Studies* 29 No. 5-6 (2015): 733-759.

¹⁰ Bohyeong, "Think rich, feel hurt: the critique of capitalism and the production of affect in the making of financial subjects in South Korea"...

¹¹ Wataru Kusaka, *Moral Politics in the Philippines, Inequality, Democracy, and the Urban Poor* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Press, 2019), 35.

By showing the different moral views of the mass sphere and the middle-class sphere, the paper confirms that the ideal of *homo economicus* is not universally accepted. Certainly, the middle-class sphere promotes values of capitalism but no way it is the dominant values in the mass sphere.

In the end, noting the importance of each public sphere, the paper notes that further study is needed to explore the subjectivity of the masses. Many studies of capitalist subjectivity can be safely assumed as based on the middle-class experience, there is much room to explore the kind of subjectivity the masses develop given their different condition. This exploration presents potential ground to move beyond the problematic values of capitalism, as the conditions and morals of the masses offer alternative lives, and a sense of morals compare to the ideals of *homo economicus*.

THE DUAL PUBLIC SPHERES

Public spheres add significant details on the subject formation in a capitalist society. As a living space, the concept of public sphere considers language, education, media, and livelihood condition as critical factors to depict the formation of the subject.¹² Recognition of public sphere implies that individuals are not living in an ideal space where market values and rationality are immediately accepted by the people without any hindrances. Rather certain public spheres where one belongs facilitate or restrict one's acceptance of the qualities of *homo economicus*.

In *Moral Politics in the Philippines*, Kusaka contributes to the discussion of public spheres by noting how the differences between the Filipino mass and the middle-class sphere contribute to the distinct values and morals certain spheres

¹² Ibid., 35.



adopt. It should be clarified that his study does not mainly inquire on individual formation in the capitalist society; his primary aim rather is to resolve the clashing moral politics of the masses and the middle class.¹³ He does this by illustrating the differences in the moral views on leadership and state policies by each public sphere, showing that each sphere has its own presumptions that should be critiqued to advance Philippine democracy.

But what is significant in Kusaka's study is it contributes to the need to verify whether the neoliberal ideals are successfully internalized by the subjects. Weidner also finds this issue problematic in his study on how the question of subjectivity is being approached in governmentality studies.¹⁴ For Wiedner, studies on capitalist subjectivity are incomplete. Although they have examined discourses that promote different aspects of neoliberal subjectivity, such as: responsibility, flexibility, rational calculation; however, they cannot take into "account" the "success or failure" of those discourses, in other words, these studies cannot ascertain whether the desired form of subjectivity has materialized or not.¹⁵ Thus, Kusaka's data from the masses and the middle class can provide a clear picture of what is happening in the ground. It adds significant facts that can be utilized to examine the efficacy of forms of subjectification and describe the process on how neoliberal ideals are internalized. Through survey and interview from the masses and the middle class, Kusaka describes the values as experienced by these public spheres.

Utilizing the data drawn from Kusaka's study, what his study shows is that although neoliberalism organizes "institutional practices"

and "reward systems" to promote ideals of *homo economicus*¹⁶, these values are far from being universally accepted by humanity, especially in the mass sphere; its sphere does not promote self-entrepreneurial values.

Kusaka identifies two public spheres that have different values: the mass sphere and the middle class (which he also termed the civic sphere).¹⁷ Both spheres of experience are forms of life shaped by "language, education, media, and livelihood gaps."¹⁸ From these aspects of the society, Kusaka stresses that people in the mass sphere are prone to show attitudes of being dependent; they like those who are generous to poor, and they are more inclined to appeal for help and mutual assistance for their security. The mass sphere is defined as the "lifeworld of the poor." It is a "discursive space in which "vernacular languages predominate", where even democracy for is understood as equality in a sense that everyone is entitled to have food.¹⁹

On the other hand, the middle-class sphere has set of values that go contrary to the masses. Middle-class sphere refers to "discursive space consisting of media, forums for discussion and the like that use English, and a living space that includes

¹⁶ Brown, *Edgework: critical essays on knowledge and politics* ..., 41.

¹⁷ Kusaka's distinction of the two spheres is based on socio-economic status and should not be understood under the traditional Marxist class theory. The latter theory contains problems in defining the new emerging forms of labor in the capitalist society. The Marxist traditional categories are still based on one's group relation to production; this class theory still describes society as contradiction between bourgeois and proletariat class: the bourgeois are the owner of the means of production, while the proletariat is the class who lacks any property. However, these categories are problematic especially if one looks at the recent capitalist developments, where ownership of production is an ambiguous basis for class distinction. The rise of middle-class professionals and managers challenge the traditional distinction between the bourgeois class and working class. The latter categories cannot be applied to the doctors who are self-employed and top-managers who still sell their labor. These people own considerable properties and they do not feel any sense of exploitation on their work. Contrary to such approach, Kusaka's dual sphere avoids the problems of the traditional class-theory, as its class division can be read as based on socio-economic status than the relation to production. Distinction on socio-economic status provides a more specified mark, since it refers to "economic position and educational attainment" characters that can be easily grasped by an individual. Because of its reliability, many social science literatures have indexed society based on these criteria rather than based on relation to means of production.

¹⁸ Kusaka, *Moral Politics in the Philippines* ..., 9.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*..., 40-41.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Jason Weidner, "Governmentality, capitalism, and subjectivity" *Global Society* 23, no. 4 (2009): 406 – 407.

¹⁵ Kusaka, *Moral Politics in the Philippines, Inequality, Democracy, and the Urban Poor*..., 390.



guarded subdivisions (gated communities) and high-rise condominiums, business districts lined with multinational corporations, and shopping malls sporting high-class brand names.”²⁰ Instead of dependency, this sphere promotes ideals of self-entrepreneurship, such as independency and self-sufficiency. This sphere endorses individuals as self-reliant taxpayers who deserve good governance from their politicians. Here, self-discipline, hard work, and ingenuity are the traits that could give economic success.²¹ The sphere of the middle class does not promote same values as the mass sphere. It has different language and economic condition compared to the masses. The middle-class sphere has much freedom to accept the ideals of *homo economicus* and embrace market values.

The Dual Moral Politics

Kusaka’s appraisal of the influence of public sphere in values and moral view contain significant insight when viewed in the relation to the question of the production of capitalist subject. His incorporation of public sphere condition sets certain terrain where one could understand the extent of influence of the capitalist values, showing how the dominant values of *homo economicus* are more widely accepted in the middle class compared to the masses. On this approach, his research poses questions on the extent of influence of *homo economicus* in a capitalist society composed of varied social conditions.

The kind of morals the mass sphere promotes makes evident the scope of influence the values of *homo economicus* on the whole society. By acknowledging that limitation, it further poses

questions regarding the degree of influence of capitalist values. One may ask: despite the pervading presence of the market in almost all aspects of modern life, why do the masses hold different morals and values than what the market and neoliberalism promote? In simpler terms, what made such rejection of the dominant values of the masses possible? And what also made its acceptance for the middle class possible? To address these questions, one may look at the important aspects of public spheres: the livelihood condition, language, and religion.

LIVELIHOOD CONDITION

While the economic condition is vital to understanding the production of the subject, it is often dismissed due to its apparent determinist implications. Economic determinism is problematic, not only because it turns all the subjects into mere products of economic forces, without any capacity to make choices.²² More importantly, this theoretical tool eliminates all other possible causes that affect the formation of the subjects. This reductionism in the economic approach is the same reason why Foucault subscribes to ideational and institutional factors to describe the production of the individual. The latter factors provide Foucault with alternative thinking to a kind of Marxism that is burdened by economic determinism or what Short refers to as “capitalist singularity.”²³

But one can argue that to merely consider economic factors in the subject formation is not tantamount to economic determinism, especially if the goal is to have a comprehensive grasp of the constitution of the subject. Determinism

²⁰ Ibid..., 36.

²¹ Ibid..., 39-40.

²² Jack Amariglio, and Antonio Callari, “Marxian Value Theory and the Problem of the Subject: The Role of Commodity Fetishism” in *Rethinking Marxism: A Journal of Economics, Culture & Society* 2 No. 3 (1989): 39.

²³ Nicola Short, “Market/society: mapping conceptions of power, ideology and subjectivity in Polanyi, Hayek, Foucault, Lukács” in *Globalizations* (1976): 9.



is produced only if one employs *economism* reductively, that is, if one tries to explain everything in view of economic forces. But if one integrates economic condition into other non-economic factors, then the result is in no way a form of determinism but an enriched understanding of the production of the subject. This approach can be understood as similar to those Marxist studies that employ an overdeterminist framework to avoid economic determinism. What these works have accomplished that is relevant to the present study is their incorporation of a variety of factors, such as economic, cultural, and political in the constitution of the subject.²⁴ Thus, the result of Kusaka's study should be read along with this non-determinist view. While his research draws from economic conditions to explain the emergence of a certain morality, where he shows that being middle class or being part of the masses is seen as an important factor that grounds the formation of one's values, the factor of economic condition should be understood *only* as part of other non-economic factors, such as language (which also includes religious concepts) in the public sphere.

When the effects of economic condition on the subject are underscored, it shows the larger social force that explains why a certain form of subjectivity (e.g., whether *homo economicus* or not) emerges. The economic dimension shows the ground that supports the development of a certain individual, which cannot be provided by the mere ideational and institutional account of the subject. This view goes against the notion that *homo economicus* is caused by the changing liberal discourses.²⁵ On the contrary, the *homo economicus* should be best understood also as a symptom of certain economic conditions, seen presently in the capitalist logic and the effects

of commodity structure. The capitalist economy should be introduced to explain the condition of how the *homo economicus* developed. Drawing from Lukacs' insight on commodity relations, Short asserts that although capitalism should not be read as a cause, at best, it could be viewed that "the rearticulation of 'classical' liberal rights as neoliberal interests reflects a logic immanent to the longstanding role of competition in capitalist social relations."²⁶ This implies that the intensified competition in capitalist social relations could be somehow the reason to produce self-entrepreneurial agents who are constantly demanded to maximize their capital to win the market competition.

The economic conditions should be also underscored when one tries to understand the Philippines' formation of the subjects of the masses and the middle class. In Kusaka's study, he shows that the different economic conditions in the mass and middle class sphere have provided for the development of a different sense of morals in each sphere. The different states of livelihood of each sphere are determining factors in developing their distinctive morals. The masses' constant experience of economic insecurity produces a life where being self-reliant is impractical and being independent to maximize one's profit is pointless. On the other hand, the middle class' safety nets and comforts allow them to entertain risks in exchange for greater return.

This connection between livelihood and one's morals is further confirmed in the study of Southeast Asian peasants. The study explains that "the peasant household has little scope for the profit maximization calculus of traditional neoclassical economics." As a result, peasants prioritize security or the "safety-first" principle. They are "risk-averse", and they minimize "the

²⁴ Amariglio and Callari "Marxian Value Theory and the Problem of the Subject: The Role of Commodity Fetishism" ..., 40.

²⁵ Short "Market/society: mapping conceptions of power, ideology and subjectivity in Polanyi, Hayek, Foucault, Lukács" ..., 12.

²⁶ Ibid.





subjective probability of maximum loss.”²⁷ Similar point has been established by early empirical studies on workers, confirming how economic insecurity heightens the working-class consciousness. The findings show that the unemployed workers, or those who experienced long layoffs, are prone to adopt the attitudes of skepticism and militancy; they also tend to agree with the ideals of egalitarianism.²⁸ Similar point has been proven in a survey of Cuban workers during pre-revolutionary period; the survey shows the correlation between unemployment, acceptance of militancy, and pro-communist sentiments.²⁹

Therefore, despite the problems of economic determinism, one should not dismiss the economic dimension as an important aspect in the formation of the subject. Many studies have confirmed that the economic condition affects the formation of one’s morals, and hence one’s subjectivity. In a capitalist context, where morals of *homo economicus* are promoted as part of its ideal subject, the economic condition also sets the ground for the subject to either reject or accept such ideal. The livelihood condition of the mass sphere makes them more distant from the entrepreneurial values of the middle class, which is permitted by their secured economic situation. If the masses lack the self-reliance and sense of independence that the capitalist culture demands, this is not simply because of their whim or laziness, or they are simply not good enough. Their livelihood condition should be also underscored in understanding the morals they embrace. The consistent economic insecurity they constantly experience should be integrated to illuminate why the masses dismiss

the ideals of *homo economicus* no matter how it is aggressively promoted by the capitalist culture and by different institutions.

LANGUAGE, RELIGION, AND THE MASS SPHERE

The economic dimension can only contribute to the discussion of the production of the subject if it does not fall into reductionism, that is, if the economic condition is not employed to explain every aspect of the formation of the individual. One of the popular versions of Economic reductionism (or economism) is articulated by Lukacs’s concept of the formation of consciousness. This concept of consciousness formulates that producers adopt calculative rationality, out of their constant activity of exchange of different products. But such view of consciousness fails to take into account the complex process of how the subject is being shaped. Without utilizing any means such as institutions or language, Lukacs’ reading fails to show that act of exchange alone can produce a rational consciousness. Non-economic factors such as institutional practices, routines, policies, language, religion et. al. are different areas where subjects are affected by society. Thus, to cite the structure of commodity alone cannot explain why human beings adopt a rational form of thinking. On the contrary, disciplinary apparatuses and how they are employed in society can illuminate how individuals are being trained to act and think in a certain manner. This shows that employing economism alone incompletely describes the formation of the subject, since it only depicts individuals instantly adopting the dominant ideals in the society.

The economic condition affects the individual’s (un)acceptance of *homo economicus*’ values, but the depiction of the formation of the subject should not be limited to the economic dimension

²⁷ James Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant Rebellion and subsistence in South East Asia*. (Yale: Yale University Press, 1976), 4-5.

²⁸ John C. Leggett, “Economic Insecurity and Working-Class Consciousness”, in *American Sociological Review* 29 no. 2 (1964): 226-234.

²⁹ Maurice Zeitlin, “Economic Insecurity and the Political Attitudes of Cuban Workers” in *American Sociological Review* 31 no. 1 (1966): 35-51





alone. There are other non-economistic factors involved in the formation of the subject. Hence, the further task is to investigate areas beyond economics. Certainly, that is an enormous task, but as a preliminary step, this section starts examining how language is a significant influence that shapes the subject.

To depict language as influencing the subject is not an unprecedented idea. In fact, this view can be already read from Aristotle who describes humans not only as political animals but also as animals that can use language. More recent developments in post-structuralism have also underscored the character of language to organize communities and shape identities. Lacan, for instance, introduces semiotics to psychoanalysis and depicts language and its structure as a key to understanding unconsciousness and identity formation.³⁰ Butler also sees power in language, as she argues that it has the capacity to reform human beings.³¹ These studies show the general accepted view that language is also political. It means that language is not a mere tool for communication i.e., to transfer one idea to another person, since it has also the capacity to shape identities or form individuals.

Thus, language is also a factor in the subject's acceptance or dismissal of the ideals of the *homo economicus*. In Kusaka's data on Philippine moral politics, it shows that the type of language the individuals learned or adopted from their culture could either help or restrict them in being influenced by the neoliberal values. For instance, English fluency in the educated and the middle class opens the individual to the enticements of neoliberal rationalities and fantasies. As English films, music, and writings

that promote self-reliance and financial success are made linguistically digestible to educated middle class, the middle class in return is shaped by this world, which is only accessible by the means of such language.

On the other hand, the English world is absent in the mass sphere, shaping a different world and identity for the masses. The Filipino masses certainly could use few English phrases, but still, they comprehend and speak better using their mother tongues (often Visayan or Tagalog). Due to their restricted command of the English language, the masses also have limited access to many cultural products, since most of the works, such as technical manuals, classical texts, legal books, are written or translated in English. The masses as a result do not have the same understanding of the neoliberal world compare to the middle class. Because of language differences, the mass sphere contains barrier that restricts the traits of *homo economicus* to be fully influential to them.

What remains prominent in the mass sphere is the religious language, and this language serves as another barrier in this sphere to embrace the neoliberal ideals. Instead of the technical legal and political concepts, the Filipino masses is mainly influenced by the Catholicism, which morals are at odds with the ideals of the *homo economicus*. The Catholicism helps justify egalitarianism and duty to extend help to those who are in need, morals that contradict the neoliberalism's promotion of competition and independence.³²

These religious views' influence even extends to the way the masses shape their political views, as they put more value to spirituality and morality than economic and material gains. In a study

³⁰ Joël Dor, *Introduction to the reading of Lacan: The unconscious structured like a language* (New York: Other Press, 1998).

³¹ Alan McKinlay, "Performativity and the politics of identity: Putting Butler to work" *Critical perspectives on accounting* 21, no. 3 (2010): 232-242.

³² Soon, Chuan Yean, "Politics from Below Culture, Religion, and Popular Politics in Tanauan City, Batangas" *Philippine Studies* 56 no. 4 (2008): 438.





of political narratives of people of Tanauan, Batangas, Soon shows how religious terms such as *lakaran/sarili*, *mabait/loob*, *matuwid*, and *liwanag* have provided moral connotations to their political concepts, which is different from the usual senses of these terms.³³ For instance, the notion of *lakaran/sarili* (self-independence) cannot be simply understood as freedom to pursue one's enterprise, since this independence connotes one's personal struggle to purify one's heart (*mabuting loob*) to traverse the path to righteousness (*matuwid*). More than economic gains, the masses seek from their politician is *mabuting loob* (purity one's heart). Politicians should not only be able to extend their help, but also to do it sincerely, selflessly, in a saint-like fashion.³⁴

This depiction that the language of the middle class is different from the religiously imbued language of masses is not a new discovery. In fact, similar ideas have been pointed out in Iletto's study on the stark difference between the language of the masses and the *ilustrados* (Filipino educated class) during the Spanish colonial period. What his study refutes is the idea that the masses understand their condition similar to the *Ilustrados*. Iletto argues that the masses comprehended their situation through the metaphors and language of *pasyon*, a writing that describes the passion of Christ. Religious language such as darkness and light are the tools that the masses use to articulate their situation and organize themselves to social action. This language clearly deviates from what the *Ilustrados* use to understand the Spanish colonization. Unlike the masses, the *Ilustrados* utilize notions of liberty and equality, which are brought by their European education. These terms however are unintelligible for the masses, as these ideas are absent in the materials that are popular to them.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

Since the masses have a different language compared to the middle class, it implies that one cannot simply assume that the language being promoted by the capitalist society has dominated every aspect of human life. The way religious terms have interpenetrated the ordinary and political lives of the mass sphere indicates that contemporary society has not completely subsumed to the new emerging languages of capitalism. This new language expresses itself through systemic and technological terms. Lazzarato describes the development of this new capitalist language as brought by the shift from a "logocentric world" to a "machine-centric world."³⁵ He explains that this new form of language emerged because of human beings' constant encounter with machines. With the prevalence of man-to-machine interaction, communication, as a result, cannot be accurately described as intersubjective relation but of human to automaton relation. The result of this interaction is not individuals but *dividuals*. Meaning, human beings are *de-subjectified* and treated as non-subjects: as a mere appendage of machines or data that can be manipulated.

Given the type of prevailing language in the masses, it poses questions on whether the machine-centric language has abled to penetrate the lives of the mass sphere. Economic and linguistic factors remain crucial aspects of the subject, and these factors could limit the effects of this new form of language. Assuming that the language of the machines has infiltrated the masses, then it poses further problems on how this machine-centric language has integrated into their lives, or how these apparently antithetical worlds (i.e. the religious and machinic worlds) are synthesized in the world of the masses.

In the end, one can conclude that language is also crucial to understanding the subject formation.

³⁵ Maurizio Lazzarato, *Signs and Machines, Capitalism and the Production of Subjectivity*. ..., 60.





Language is not a simple tool for communication, since it could facilitate or restrict the individual to embrace values, such as those that are endorsed by capitalism. The language used by a person could shape that person in return. This point has been reiterated in this section through several examples. The language of the middle class, for instance, has not only provided them competence to communicate at the international level. At the same time, being a user of such language has also facilitated them towards neoliberal culture with its prescribed morals and values. The same is true with the religious language of the mass sphere. These religious words do not only provide the lower class the means to express one's faith; rather through this same language, the masses have found the words to articulate their morals and political views.

CONCLUSION

There is a variety of factors that have been put forward to explain why subjects in capitalist society think and act in ways that support the goals of the capital. The political understanding of language has elucidated how this system of signs has been, to use an Althusserian term, interpellating the individuals to imbibe certain meanings and forms of subjectivities. On the other hand, the Foucauldian studies on disciplinary apparatuses and institutional practices have also illuminated essential details on how subjects are being managed to internalize the neoliberal ideals and their form of individuality. Balibar even commented that what Foucault accomplished, through looking at these apparatuses, is to advance Marx's materialism.³⁶ Balibar integrates both Foucault and Marx, and such complementarity of these theories provide a way on how studies on the

production of the subject can be advanced. There is a need to integrate different theories of the subject to understand it more comprehensively.

Such an integrative approach to understanding the formation of subjectivity in the capitalist setting is advanced by the present study. The data cited on the moral politics of the Philippines in the present study advances an integrative explanation in the formation of the subject in capitalism. In this interpretation, what can be underscored is how different factors shape the subjectivity, noting the multi-faceted aspects of the individual formation. Here, livelihood conditions, linguistic abilities, and religious beliefs are emphasized as components of the public sphere that determine certain subjectivity in capitalism. By looking at these factors in the context of the capitalist formation of the subjects, what emerges is a depiction of individuals who are being shaped by a variety of forces in society.

By noting the multitudes of elements that affect the subject, one contends that any form of reductionist reading on the formation of the subject is problematic. Each public sphere that shapes the subject is complex and to study these spheres requires that one considers all its essential aspects. Certainly, the factors mentioned, such as livelihood, language, and religion, are far from being complete and there is much room to add on the factors that affect the individual. Nonetheless, the factors cited suggest that both economic and non-economic components of the public sphere shape the subjects, and one cannot reduce the production of the subject into a single aspect alone. To employ non-economist factors and disregard the economy misses an important framework that shapes the social life, while to focus only on the economy and neglect non-economic practices begs questions on the details on how the economy affects the subject.

³⁶ Etienne Balibar, "Foucault and Marx: The question of nominalism," *Michel Foucault Philosopher* (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), 54.





But more than putting emphasis on inadequacies of reductionist readings, this study, more importantly, introduces the public sphere in the discussion of subjectivities in capitalism. The recognition of public spheres also illustrates that subjects in capitalism do not immediately adhere to its entrepreneurial values. It shows that there is no ideal space where subjectification and internalization of values of *homo economicus* occur; since in concrete reality, socio-economic condition (and its economic, linguistic, and religious aspects) affects the acceptance of certain ideals. The public spheres make an individual either prone or averse to embracing entrepreneurial ideals. As the data shows, being in the middle-class sphere makes an individual culturally accessible and economically secure to be independent and risk-taker, and being in the mass sphere, which lacks the middle class cultural and economic condition, makes one commonly impervious to the capitalist individuality.

Despite the dominance of the capitalist condition, the mass sphere has been able to produce a non-entrepreneurial subjectivity. Their different morals and values open spaces to further inquire on the type of subjectivity these people have. While numerous works of literature and thick ethnographies have examined the middle-class subjectivities, such as the traders and professionals, there is much room to further articulate the character of subjectivity the mass sphere has. Commonly the masses are described as the marginalized, excluded, outcasts, and subaltern members of the society without much effort to articulate their values, morals, and rationalities. One could draw a conjecture that such a gap is determined by the fact that many studies in subjectivity are shaped by the western context, where a higher state of living and growing middle class make the inequality less obvious relative to the underdeveloped countries that are still beset in gross inequality.

To explore the subjectivity of the masses matter, because, in the end, this study shows the possibility of the existence of other morals and ideals than what is being promoted by capitalism. By looking at what is outside the influence of *homo economicus*, this task establishes the initial ground for the search for an alternative ideal subject or way of life.³⁷ The ideals of the masses could be an alternative subjectivity to address the so-called current crisis on subjectivity. This crisis involves the realization that ideals of *homo economicus* cannot be universalized, since it is impossible to make everyone an entrepreneur, and being a self-entrepreneur does not really guarantee the financial success it promises, as what happened during the last financial bubble.³⁸ By exploring the mass sphere, it shows non-self-entrepreneurial values and ways of living, which could provide some insight to build on alternative ways of living. More than anything, this search for alternative subjectivity does not only aim to look for a meaningful identity. The task is more urgent and critical because it provides a starting point to escape the devastating effects of capitalism made possible by a certain form of subjectivity. The ideals of independence and profit maximization are complicit to the capitalist exploitations at the human, environmental and societal levels. To challenge them requires different subjectivities, which could be shown by the values and morals exercised beyond the *homo economicus*.

³⁷ Daniele Lorenzini, "Governmentality, subjectivity, and the neoliberal form of life" in *Journal for Cultural Research* (2018): 8.

³⁸ Maurizio Lazzarato, *The Making of Indebted Man, An Essay on Neoliberal Condition* (California: Semiotext(e), 2011)





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