

## **ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY**

How far do we assimilate to the business culture and how work impacts on individual identities: a critical analysis.

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## **Table of Contents**

Abstract	p. 3
Introduction	p. 4
<b>Chapter 1:</b>	
<i>Culture and discourses: from group assumptions to individual values</i>	p. 8
<b>Chapter 2:</b>	
<i>Identities and the Self: how work identity influences home identity?</i>	p. 17
<b>Chapter 3:</b>	
<i>Relations to the Self</i>	p. 29
<b>Chapter 4:</b>	
<i>Why is a paradigm shift needed?</i>	p. 40
Conclusion	p. 54
Reference list	p. 59

## **ABSTRACT**

The industrial revolution that spread in Europe from the end of the eighteenth century has set up a new organizational discourse which redefined the way society has been thinking until today. Indeed, modernism has been focusing on progress by restructuring organizations to improve and ensure efficiency and performance. Individuals spend a lot of their waking time at the workplace. As such, it is interesting to reflect on how far individuals assimilate to the organizational culture and what the impact is on their individual identity. Does work foster human development? Here, it is believed that the organizational enculturation is assimilating, hence individuals' identities are shifting and hybrid identities are formed, which might have an impact on diversity, well-being and sustainability. The approach of this paper is interpretative and based on critical theory. Including psychological and philosophical approaches is believed to be essential to understand human beings as they are the ones who create the overall discourse. Although it will not provide any new qualitative or quantitative data, it will be able to contribute to the epistemology of organisational behaviour, economics and sustainability. This analysis helps find that, if there are many organisational cultures called practices, there is one dominant discourse which is alienating only because of individual existential struggles. Nevertheless, resistance does exist and individual agency is growing based on principles of sustainability. Further research is needed to understand how the existing institutions can acknowledge this resistance and adapt accordingly to embrace a new organizational revolution for the good of human emancipation.

## INTRODUCTION

Work has always been part of our lives, from hunting-gathering and subsistence agriculture to a more organised working structure that started mainly since the industrial revolution. Laszlo (1989) explains that the 'modern age' which starts with Gutenberg's invention of printing, back in the fifteenth century, has opened 'the way to the development of worldwide trade and transportation' (p.34). He says that from that moment, many social organizations have been discomposed and population started to increase. With this contextual background in mind, this paper focuses on the so called current modern world where most adult individuals spend an average of seven hours at the workplace, five days a week and often more. Individuals go and agree to exchange many hours of their freedom against a certain amount of income (Buchanan & Huczynski, 2010). Often individuals go to work for an organization in a space which is not home and where the use of technology results in on-going learning and increasing competition. Hence, individuals work longer hours, sometimes the load of work is also brought back home due to the use of the Internet. Having this in mind, it is interesting to stop and reflect on how much work defines human beings. Some would say that work is good for humanity. For example there is a popular saying in France that says 'le travail c'est la santé', that is 'work is healthy'. In other words, working is the norm that defines if individuals are good people or disabled beings who could put at risk the social harmony. Jean-Paul II also shares this idea, as quoted by Al-Gini (1998, p.708):

'Work is a good thing for man – a good thing for his humanity because through work man not only transforms nature, adapting it to his own needs, but he also achieves fulfilment as a human being and indeed in a sense becomes "more a human being"'.

This perspective on work can certainly be discussed, especially the first part of the quote. Regarding the rest of it, it assumes that work always gives satisfaction and fosters human being's growth. But from the twentieth century, this 'notion of development' could be seen as a 'discourse of power' as observed by the colonial discourse analysis (Zein-Elabdin, 2009, p.2). As such, personal growth is somehow controlled by the dominant culture. Furthermore, not working can cause the exclusion of individuals from the existing social system, which might mean that escaping the dominant discourse might be difficult and put human survival at risk. Indeed, as Al Gini says (1998, p.708):

'Work in this society is seen both as a means and an end in itself. As a means, work is the vehicle by which we can achieve status, stuff and success. As an end, work allows us to conform with one of our most cherished myths, the 'Protestant Work Ethic'. This ethic holds that work is good. And that all work, any work demonstrate integrity, responsibility and fulfilment of duty. The social imperative here is clear: not to work means you're a bum!'

This paper helps reflecting on if the assimilation to the dominant organizational discourse can still guarantee survival. This system of thinking represented by capitalism has spread all over the world as a result of colonialism. This 'culture of European modernity [...] has expanded [...] and has imbricated with other cultures in deep and complex forms.' (Zein-Elabdin, 2009, p.2) As a result, 'varieties of capitalism' emerged with nuanced practices of market economies such as liberal capitalism, coordinated capitalism or even social capitalism (Hall & Soskice, 2001). In other words, even if each region of the world is different, business practices have pretty much homogenised global social processes. So from an age where survival was about living in harmony with others and the planet (Laszlo, 1989), societies

evolved in such a way that survival is constrained by the forces of economic games where money is what helps keep people alive in fragmented and controlled working environment and for the ends of some owners and shareholders. How does this impact individual identity and how this challenges individual existential quests? Indeed, Giddens puts it as follows (1991, p.70): 'What to do? How to act? Who to be? These are focal questions for everyone living in circumstances of late modernity- and ones which, on some level or another, all of us answer, either discursively or through day-to-day social behaviour. They are existential questions [...].' For the author believes, the enculturation that results from the organizational socialization is an assimilation towards a dominant culture, hence individuals' identities are shifting and hybrid identities are formed. This could have an impact on diversity and well-being. As a consequence, individual's inner values and talent are lost which can result in a loss of life purpose (Jensen & Schrader, 1965). This loss of meaning could reinforce the value of survival defined by the Darwinian theory as discussed by Chandler and Dawkins (2001) which explains that survival does not allow people to look at long term projects nor help them foresee the consequences of their present behaviours. This means that the current organisational praxis is a limitation to sustainability and accelerates the destruction of our own specie. According to Jensen and Schrader (1965, p.201) :

'[...] the extraordinary development of modern formal organizations has created a situation in which most adults invest the major part of their time and energy in the ventures of such an organization. Since an individual's personal and family welfare depends upon how well he is able to function within these conditions, formal organizations generate powerful forces on the individual to acquire the necessary social learning. Consequently, adults may undergo a kind of socialization that is

beneficial to the formal organizations in which they function but not to their families and communities.'

The approach of this paper is interpretative and is based on published books and academic articles, as well as on the personal experience of the author who worked in different private companies operating in the cosmetic and beauty industry. Hence, links could be made to understand how alienating work can be for individuals in the current economic system. Although this hermeneutic approach will not provide any new qualitative or quantitative data, it will yet be able to contribute to the epistemology of organisational behaviour, economics and sustainability. The question of this essay is examined through the framework of critical theory; which as quoted by Alvesson and Willmott from Horkheimer is the following (2003, p.10):

'Critical thinking [...] is motivated today by the effort really to transcend the tension and to abolish the opposition between the individual's purposefulness, spontaneity, and rationality, and those work-process relationships on which society is built. Critical thought has a concept of man [sic] as in conflict with himself until this opposition is removed. [Critical] theory never aims simply at an increase in knowledge as such. Its goal is man's [sic] emancipation from slavery. (1976:220,224)'

The first chapter looks at organizational culture starting with a discussion on group assumptions to finish with analysing what individual values are. First, it invites the reader to consider culture from a societal perspective and then it goes further into explaining what culture means at an individual level. The second chapter looks at how work identities influence private identity by touching on the concepts of identity and of the self. It analyses how roles and impression management foster hybridity and resistance, and what impact it has on individual struggle. The third chapter looks further into the individuals' relations to the self to understand the history of thoughts

and behaviours. It helps understand how the world came to be what it is today through the influence of 'Western' ego-focused relations and that alternative ways of thinking - hence of behaving, are possible. Finally, the last chapter reflects on why a paradigm shift is needed in term of organizational discourse in order to truly evolve as human beings and survive. The conclusion summarizes the findings and it also includes some recommendations for further investigations. For the purpose of this study, the term organization refers to any type of human structures which aim is to achieve some common goals and outcomes. The reflection is mostly based within the context of for-profit business organizations, but also in the context of other institutional organizations which managerial practices are also based on performance.

### **1. Culture and discourses: from group assumptions to individual values**

Culture can have many definitions (Alvesson, 2002). This is easy to see when reading the critiques on Hofstede's definition of culture from anthropologists and sociologists (Baskerville, 2003). Also, culture can be synonymous with discourse. Indeed, as Whisnant explains (2012, p.1): 'Discourse is just one term that scholars have developed to analyse the system of thoughts, ideas, images and other symbolic practices that make up what we, following anthropology, generally call "culture"'. But as Alvesson adds, the exercise of defining culture becomes even more complicated when focusing on organizational culture, as in this case: 'Culture is [...] a tricky concept as it is easily used to cover everything and consequently nothing' (2002, p.3). Having this difficulty in mind, it might be a good idea to acknowledge the two main perspectives that exist in the literature. Organizational culture can either be 'something an organization has' which is the main viewpoint of managers and



consultants, or 'something an organization is' (Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G. J. & Minkov, M., 2010, p.346), which is often the viewpoint of academics. This later definition is the main framework within which this paper reflects as culture is related to identity.

The term culture can be a means to designate a 'central formation of values', which also is 'a particular way of life' (Monaghan & Just, 2000, p.36). Among others, Hofstede's work can be a good starting point to look at culture. He initiated his research based on a value survey, from what he says (Hofstede G., Hofstede and G. J. & Minkov, M., 2010) that culture is 'the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others' (p. 344). The group studied by Hofstede was the nation before he focused on organizations. At the workplace, individuals enter a group that live by specific norms. Many organizational researchers talk about organizational culture, which should allow the organization to excel through a 'common way by which its members have learned to think, feel, and act' (Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G. J. & Minkov, M., 2010, p.47). Also, organizational culture is differentiated from national culture because, as Hofstede again explains, its members 'did not grow in it' (p.47). Hence, the workplace is a place where individuals share common experience and assumption about how things should be done. Consequently a culture emerges from it and gives a sense of belongingness to its members. Furthermore, Schein explains (2010, p.73) that:

'The process of culture formation is, in a sense, identical to the process of group formation in that the very essence of 'groupness' or group identity - the shared patterns of thought, belief, feelings, and values that result from shared experience and common learning - results in the pattern of shared assumptions that I am calling the 'culture' of that group.'

Hofstede says that 'organizational culture can be defined as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one organization from others."' (Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G. J. & Minkov, M., 2010, p.344). Indeed, the organization represents the group, within which sub-groups can be found, like in a nation. But, he realised that, in an organization, culture is not based on values but on practices, hence on 'symbols', 'rituals' and 'heroes'. He says (2010, p.346):

'National cultures are part of the mental software we acquired during the first ten years of our lives, in the family, in the living environment, and in school, and they contain most of our basic values. Organizational cultures are acquired when we enter work organization as young or no-so-young adults, with our values firmly in place, and they consist mainly of the organization's practices - they are more superficial.'

As an example of these practices, organizational culture can be found in the dress-code, which relates to 'symbols', or through the identification of leaders or role models (the 'heroes'), and through events such as team building exercises or how to deal with customers within the organization which would be examples of 'rituals'. These organizational assumptions (Schein, 2010), hence culture, emerge from human resources practices which help institutionalize these 'structures, rules, or standard operating procedures' (Robert & Wasti, 2002, p.549). Furthermore, structure and design have been changing a lot with globalization for the need 'of coping with growing environmental dynamism, complexity, and competition', which means that the 'bureaucratic structure dissolves' (Ashforth & Mael, 1996, p.20). As such, organizations developed new ways of engaging their employees who make sense of how to behave to achieve the organizational goals in a flexible and autonomous manner; the structure is more organic. Since the late seventies, this has been the task of the transformational leaders to focus on creating an organizational

culture that would replace the traditional hierarchy (Western, 2008). This culture fosters a sense of belonging that gives an identity to the organization. Hence the objective of organizational culture is to create an environment to which individuals can identify to. Culture creates a group identity, which is what personality is to individuals. As Ashforth and Mael says: 'By endowing an organization with human qualities, it is made more familiar, concrete, and comprehensible – more "real" – and thereby easier to "know" and identify with' (1996, p.20). As such, the organizational culture defines the organizational identity which defines the strategy of the organization and vice-versa (Ashforth & Mael, 1996). As a result, the organizational culture acts as a way of aligning employees' behaviours with the goals of the company using the identification process as a main means to this end. This goal becomes a shared goal and individuals make it their responsibility to perform towards that end by sharing similar values.

According to Hofstede's concept of the onion, it is in the values of a group that culture can be found (Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G. J. & Minkov, M., 2010). So what can be understood by values? If culture comes from values in society and from practices in organizations, does it mean that organizations do not have values? Values are the beliefs of 'what is right or good' (Drath et al., 2008, p.645). Moreover, according to the Darwinian theorists a value is the survival gene (Chandler and Dawkins, 2001). So, values, or what is believed to be right and good is survival. As such, it could be said that the value of a company is profit. Without profit, an organization - either for-profit or not-for-profit, is not sustainable. Could this value be classified as cultural? Indeed, Taras and Steel (2009, p.22) highlight: 'Research should consider which values are indeed cultural'. From there, profit might indeed be the inner value from where practices come out and that ascertain organizational

culture. This could be how the main leadership literature ends up talking of 'shared values' between a company and its employees (Porter & Kramer, 2011). Thus, it is important to highlight here what Hofstede mentions: 'U.S. management literature tends to describe the values of corporate heroes. [...] (Hence) Founders' and leaders' values become members' practices' (Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G. J. & Minkov, M., 2010, p.348). This means that a minority of people can impact on the behaviour of many others through the normalisation of practices in organizations. Having this in mind, can organizational values and societal values influence each other? According to Robert and Wasti, when referring to Hofstede, this is likely as they say the following (2002, p.546): 'all organizations are embedded within societal cultures, which are likely to have an ambient influence on organizations embedded within them'. But also, research from Tönnies, Blumberg and Winch as well as Riesman et al. conclude that 'society's degree of economic evolution [...] is a major determinant of societal norms' (Hofstede, 2001, p.211). So, organizational culture has an impact on national politics (Bernhagen, 2007). This could also be reflected through an historical framework. At the beginning of last century, the answer to this question could have been that it is the organization that shapes the culture of society. Indeed, what was good for the organization was good for the society. Nowadays, this way of thinking tends to change with the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) trend which is based on the assumptions that what is good for the society is good for the organization (Porter & Kramer, 2011). If the value of profit is related to organizational survival so it is to societal survival. Another question could be asked such as who influenced who first, which would be like trying to answer who came first, the chicken or the egg? But this is not the aim of this article to focus on finding an answer to this. From now on and for the purpose of this article,

organizational culture and societal discourse are considered to be two similar concepts.

After studying Hofstede's work, Schwartz's research clarifies that 'the value constructs appropriate for comparing the culture of societies differ from those appropriate for comparing individuals' (Fischer et al., 2010, p.136). In other words, the values of a group are not equivalent to individual values, rather they are formed from assumptions which 'apply in majority of contexts and to a majority of members of that society' (Robert & Wasti, 2002, p.546). This idea is also supported by Alvesson who says that (2002, p.4): 'In a cultural context it is always socially shared meanings that are of interest, not so much highly personal meanings'. How far can individuals be influenced by the culture of the group and how far can this culture be influenced by individuals? Indeed, according to Robert and Wasti (2002, p.549):

Denison (1996) notes that a fundamental dilemma that is often faced in the literature on organizational culture is that theories tend to posit that individuals influence an organizational culture, and are also influenced by the organizational culture.'

Can these societal and/or organizational values influence individual values? They definitely can influence individual behaviours. The development of learning theories through different models of behaviour modification and modelling used in the arts of management - should they be behavioural like with Pavlov and Skinner's theories or cognitive with Ibarra (Buchanan & Huczynski, 2010), are aimed at controlling the employees' behaviours so they share the same perceptions as the organization's (Robert & Wasti, 2002). But still in this case, individuals change their behaviour to adapt to the context of the group or organization they work for because they adopt an attitude which results from the belief that it is what they have to do, certainly

because they are paid to do so. Also, going back to the idea of profit as value for organizational survival- hence the survival of the society, this value might impact the individuals of these societies too. Indeed, in a society which culture is based on financial growth, an individual with no money would find it difficult to survive. Consequently, some traits like hard working or thriftiness might develop in order to protect this individual against a lack of revenue. Some would also consider greediness as being a trait that develops from profit as survival, but this will be discussed further later on. This idea that the organizational culture impacts on individual traits is reinforced by Schein (2010, p.9) who says:

‘[...] if we understand culture better, we will understand ourselves better and recognize some of the forces acting within us that define who we are. We will then understand that our personality and character reflect the groups that socialized us and the groups with which we identify and to which we want to belong. Culture is not only all around us but within us as well.’

Moreover, Hofstede and McCrae - father of the internationally recognised Big Five Locator personality assessment quote Miller (2004, p.54): ‘contemporary ideas of psychological anthropology [...] hold that culture is constitutive of personality’. Their collaborative work managed to prove that the culture of a group generates individual traits. Now, knowing that personality is what influences how a person behaves and that it is what defines an individual identity (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2010), it is clear that the culture of a group impacts on individual values: how things should be, and vice-versa. Indeed, behaviours results from attitudes that are the results of personal beliefs and values (Huczynski& Buchanan, 2010). But again, what triggers what first? What has got more impact on the other: the society or the individual? In an organizational context, it might well be the organizational culture and its inner value

of making profit that influences individual behaviours. Indeed, organizations are not natural societies in this sense that people are not together because they initially shared a common history and language (Monaghan & Just, 2000), but they form groups based on the necessity of earning a living. The organizational culture is an invention based on a need that is constructed within the context of modern society's economic discourse. The individuals are together in organizations because they have to work (Al-Gini, 1998) not because of kinship relationships. It is true that some people are able to choose to work for a specific organization because they like how they do things there, but it is often that individuals do not really choose and jump on which ever opportunity arises, in order to survive by earning revenue (Al-Gini, 1998). Hence, individual behaviour does not necessarily arise from individual inner values which base its beliefs on what is right and good. An individual could still think that what they do is wrong and still do it. So 'individuals pretend to align their values with those' of the society or organization they want to be part of, in other words they perform impressions (Raghuran, 2013, p.4). This let it be inferred that there might be a dissonance between individual beliefs on what is good and business organizations' beliefs on what should be done to achieve profit. In other words, there might exist a cognitive dissonance between what individuals believe and how they behave. Alvesson (2002) considers that culture is useful when examining organizations as it helps understand the narrative that is used through symbols to express meanings and then look at how people interpret these meanings according to their own beliefs and personal values and finally how they behave as a result of it. In other words, the superficial layers of 'the onion of culture' creates a social meaning from which individuals interpret their own expectations and determine their actions. (Alvesson,

2010). This creates social interactions through relations that create the social structure.

Hofstede explains that culture results from a common history (Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G. J. & Minkov, M., 2010). So it might be relevant to look at the history of organizations to examine organizational culture and its impact on society and individuals. The starting point could be the English Industrial Revolution, even if the analysis could go back to the time when human beings started to organize themselves around agricultural activities. But the industrial revolution is a good reference as from the beginning of the nineteenth century 'the factory, almost for the first time in history, took workers and work out of the home and moved them into workplace' (Drucker, 2002, p.7) to mainly produce goods. This revolution has been supported by the Enlightments - and the declaration of Human Rights, as well as by Darwinianism who were fostering progress as being the natural way for human evolution (Yavuz, n.d.). Yavuz (n.d.) recalls how progress was thought to be achieved through the production of goods. This belief has been fostered by Adam Smith's paradigm considering that wealth should be the only *raison d'être* of a nation. At the same time the world was being colonized by the 'West'. Then, nationalism was supporting monoculturalism which was the basis for wealth created by business organizations on behalf of progress. Hence, it is easy to see how the current system of thinking can be the result of an institutionalised organizational discourse that defines the beliefs of a society and its individuals. As Foucault says, human beings can analyse why they behave the way they do by analysing the history of their thoughts (1983). In the context of organization, it has been discussed earlier that individuals internalize the 'assumptions' of the company which then influence how they behave, and therefore think. Schein considers that this process is



'uncounscious' (2010, p.14). Goffman believes this process is passed into individuals through impression management, as he says that this latter 'incorporates and exemplifies the officially accredited values of the society'" (as quoted by Raghuram, 2013, p.2). The following chapter investigates how impression management impacts on individuals. Post-structuralists and Foucauldians consider that this internalization takes place through organizational narratives and discourses (Alvesson, 2010). As such, this 'programing of the mind' is a discourse that has been shaping thinking until today in a pretty much monoculturalistic manner. Hence, it is easy to realise that the truth which says that survival is about profit through performance, achieving goals, being competitive and so on comes from a dominant discourse. As such, how would individuals think and behave in a society defined by a dominant discourse that would foster survival through the prevention of natural resources scarcity rather than production and financial growth? This chapter has found that individual values are shaped by organizational culture but that an unconscious cognitive dissonance might exist between what individuals believe is good and how they behave. The following chapter analyses how organizational and non-organizational discourses can differ and impact on individual identities.

## **2. Identities and the Self: how work identity influences home identity?**

Different schools of thought have been involved in the study of identity where nurtured versus natured or 'constructionism' versus 'essentialism' have been debated (Alvesson, 2010). The psychological perspective considers the inner self to be the source of individuals' identity. The traditional sociological approach of symbolic interactionism - with Mead or Goffman (Raghuram, 2013), considers that identity is defined by a constant interaction between the inner self and social

relationships and where meaning is given through behaviours. The Foucauldians and the Poststructuralists do not believe in the existence of any self, rather individual identity is defined by external forces. Indeed, (Alvesson, 2010, p.201) says: 'Post-structuralism rejects the notion of the autonomous, self-determining individual with a secure unitary identity as the centre of the social universe'. Callero (2003) talks about a post-modern approach that comes from outside sociology such as philosophy, which sees individual identity being an interaction between discourse, reflexivity and social constructionism and where the situation, the historical and cultural settings have to be looked at. This approach is borrowed from both symbolic interactionism and post-structuralism. This later approach is the perspective that is taken here to look at work identity because it offers a more comprehensive approach to understanding the complex concept of identity. Indeed, social sciences are important to consider facts and philosophy is as important to question the morality of any established beliefs. Also philosophy is embedded in each individual as ideas of how they wish to live their life. As such, this analysis can help look at what happens at work in terms of identity negotiations and what happens within individuals: can they be who they want to be at work and how this makes them feel? Work identity is a famous empirical research topic among organizational behaviourists and psychologists. This concept could be defined by Raghuram as follows (2013, p.2):

'Work identity, consistent with Goffman's interactionist perspective, refers to the self that is present in interactions at work with customers and other organizational members, whereas non-work identity refers to the self that is present in interactions with individuals who are not involved with work.'

Also, Aronson and Smith say (2011, p.434):

‘The literature on work and identity captures the texture of individuals’ efforts to construct acceptable senses of self in the neo-liberal work order. For example, Casey (1995, p.138) conceptualises employees in the business world striving to protect valued identities against the “corporate colonization of self.”’

Thirdly, Alvesson considers this approach to work identity as ‘a synthesis between “authenticity” and organizational/professional adaptation’ (2010, p.199). This chapter analyses work identity and role management through the study of organizational practices such as socialization, change management, workplace design and the fragmentation of tasks.

From the ‘steam engine’ to ‘E-commerce’, the workplace has evolved from an industrial era to a ‘knowledge era’ (Drucker, 2002) and even a learning process era (Dixon, 1999). ‘In past decades it was possible to teach workers how to do a specific task and then set them to doing it’ (Dixon, 1999, p.5), which means that knowledge was key for managers. But as Dixon puts it, ‘in the 1990’s, to work in an organization is more likely to mean manipulating information than raw materials’ (1999, p.4). This information requires being ‘interpreted, analyzed and synthesized’, in other words these cognitive tasks requires ongoing learning processes which are not the panacea of managers only anymore but of any employee. Nowadays, knowledge is not enough; managers and employees have to go through ongoing learning processes to remain competitive and perform well. Indeed, research on organizational behaviour has been focusing on understanding how organizational learning could be applied to increase organizations’ competitiveness and performance in a globalized world, where transfer of information is quicker than ever before and development of new technology constant. Because work happens in a social environment that is different from home, what is of interest is to look at what

impact organizational socialization can have on individual values and identity outside work.

The main organizational literature says that organizational socialization is a tactic that is used to help newcomers reduce their anxiety when joining a new company: 'uncertainty reduction through congruence of values has been the dominant theoretical perspective for the last 30 years' (Cable, Gino & Staats, 2013, p.24). These are techniques of control that show the way to follow in order to integrate and fit in but also so individuals can become operational and efficient as soon as possible. Maneen and Schein, who are both the reference in term of organizational socialization define it as follows: ' process by which an individual acquires the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume an organizational role' (1979, p.3). They also assume that this process keeps repeating during the life-span of an organizational career each time an individual is promoted and changes job. They also consider that it involves a change of values and behaviour in the individual. Certainly, Weiss mentions that Schein also emphasizes that as a consequence, individuals' 'values may go through a number of modifications' during their working life (1978, p.711). To put it differently, socialization allows an organization to 'enculturate' newcomers to their own institutional culture. As such, Cable, Gino, and Staats (2013, p.23) discuss the following:

'Organizations invest considerable resources to locate new employees whose personal values match the organization's culture (e.g., Chatman, 1991; Cable and Judge, 1997), but often it is not feasible to find a perfect match. Accordingly, many organizations use socialization processes as a second vehicle for transforming and maintaining their cultures, such that new employees accept organizational values

and behavioral norms (Chatman, 1991; Bauer, Morrison, and Callister, 1998; Cable and Parsons, 2001).'

Indeed, some empirical research has been looking at the impact of early organizational socialization on individual identity when new employees join a new company. The 'initial stage' of socialization (Cable, Gino, and Staats, 2013, p.2) is a 'full process [...] that lasts for at least six months' (as reported from Bauer, and Callister by Cable, Gino, and Staats, 2013, p.4). This suggests that there might exist tensions between the individual and the organization's values so that the socialization process is a strategy that is used to influence individuals' subjectivity, which results in identity shift. Indeed, Cable, Gino and Staats seem to support this idea when they report that 'because organizations are made up of people, many of whom spend the majority of their waking hours at work, the human drive for authenticity creates a tension for organizations' (2013, p.2).

This leads to consider how individuals manage the 'passage' from being an 'outsider' to being an 'insider' in terms of identity negotiation. In 2013, Raghuram investigated how socialization impacted on employees' identity in a North American call centers based in India: 'the study illustrates how organizational practices have an impact on identities that extend beyond the work context' (p.21). In order to set up the context, it is important to explain that when being recruited by the call centre, Indian employees go through a socialization process where, in addition to learning about the history of the company, they also receive a linguistic training in order to match the vocabulary and accent of their virtual North-American customers over the phone. As such, there is 'convergence' between their linguistics, which is a way to 'reduce [...] social distance' (Raghuram, 2013, p.5). A virtual identity is then created. In addition to this, they have to choose North-American names and introduce

themselves to their customers under this new identity. This technique creates a sort of 'group identity' where Indian employees have to align their behaviour to the other group through language. As such, a work identity is created. But as Raghuram reports (2013, p.11):

'Indian names are often based on religious and social identities (Nandy, 2002). Assuming a different name can potentially signify not only a different nationality, but also a different religious affiliation, thereby generating dissonance'.

Indeed, the findings of this research show that some individuals are conscious of playing a role while at work but many (23%) also bring this new identity back home. In the first instance, impression management can create an unpleasant experience for individuals (as found in 36% of the agents who participated in the research) and might even reinforce 'national identity' because of a feeling of 'cultural imperialism and postcolonial Western exploitation' (Raghuram, 2013, p.3). On the other hand, some people are able to clearly separate work from home in order not to let work identity impact on their private identity. This was the case of a woman interviewed by Raghuram. But it is to notice that this person had been working in the company for six months only. It means that the initial attitude might change with time. Actually, because this impression management requires strong cognitive skills, it has been proven that the internalization of the new work identities ends up happening in any case (Raghuram, 2013). As a result, work identity is brought back home, which happened for 78% of individuals who had been working at the call centre for more than two years. Individuals create a 'third space' between the local culture and the 'Western' culture' (Raghuram referring to Bhabha, 2013, p.4). Again, Raghuram says (2013, p.16): 'These hybridizations were evident in changes in their attitudes

(e.g. towards money), self-esteem (e.g. feeling more powerful and independent), and behaviors (e.g. using a foreign accent). The individuals observed were changing their philosophy of life by embedding more individualistic behaviours, hence personal attributes. Even if this is not necessarily a bad thing for these individuals, it is nonetheless a form of mimicry, which could lead to the following question: if imitation leads to success and respect, could being authentic do too? This example shows that diversity seems to be accepted and respected in India when it is based on a North-American way of living, hence a more “individualistic” culture (Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G. J. & Minkov, M., 2010). In other words, the identity shift is based on a discourse that promotes values such as debt, nuclear families and materialistic lifestyles (Raghuram, 2013). And this discourse is supported by narratives dictated by the workplace.

This market oriented discourse can also be analyzed in Aronson and Smith’s research (2011), when they explored ‘the relations between identity and rapidly changing work organizations’ (p.434) by interviewing women managers at key positions in a social service ‘inside Canada’s changing welfare state’ (p.435). ‘Business principles’ in term of how performance should be managed have been introduced within the social service sector, which is therefore changing to become a ‘market-welfare culture’ (p.434). They explain that (p.437):

‘study participants have witnessed the penetration of managerialism into the work and culture of social services. They are troubled by the resulting reduction of services, by the formulaic reporting requirements that govern and simplify practice, and by inattention to the structural conditions of people’s lives’

They report how management of performance in social services creates tensions for managers who have to deal with resistance because of a dissonance between social justice and performance, which then impact on these persons' identity, sense of purpose and integrity. These tensions produce resistance, which implies 'reflexivity' (Giddens, 1991). This means that these managers have to be conscious of the constant separation between their private self also called 'valued selves' and their organizational self also named 'various performed selves' (p.445). Aronson and Smith (2011) explain that resistance can happen in two ways. It can be a visible resistance similar to activist's demonstrations and actions or it can be invisible by focusing on building relationships with key agents and try to make these persons change their mind in the decision-making process. The latter is proven to be more efficient in the long term but it involves a perfect control of one's self in order not to be sucked by the system that is being resisted. Impression management is used by these managers in order to protect their positions and their influence on key agents and to deliver a work that is respectful of their inner values - such as social justice, at the same time as they try to meet their subordinate's expectations. Many of the participants reported how tiring this continuous exercise was and that it could sometimes put at risk their self-confidence as they could see themselves resisting mentally a certain procedure but behaving differently in order to indirectly get the result they wanted. This 'internally contradictory process in which colonization and liberation, subversion and collaboration are all embedded' (Aronson and Smith, 2011, p.435) can cause stress and anxiety (Swann Jr., et al., 2009); Indeed, as Aronson and Smith (2011) say, these 'multiple performances of self' (p.439) are painful processes and people often give up their resistance after a while. They also quote a woman they interviewed for the purpose of their research who said (p.438):



'I did spend energy at a certain stage in my working life fighting it and battling it and I guess I kind of did when we first went through accreditation. I said these questions are perfect nonsense. But I can't, I've decided I can't spend my energy doing that, that's the way the world is I do not have the ability to change it.'

As such, individuals first resist the influence of organizational practices 'against "subjection, against forms of subjectivity and submission"' (Foucault referred by Macdonell, 1986, p.19), but then give up and reverse this process by resisting the urge to be authentic. Again as reported by Aronson and Smith (2011, p.442): these individuals 'risked losing their connections to the commitments and values with which they had entered the field'. This is also what the author experienced during her career when working as a sales director for a small and medium sized British business organization. It was an environment where she was pulled between the company owner's management style and her team of individuals who often needed to be reassured in a time of uncertainty regarding the future of the company. They could judge her actions and directions to be in discordance with their goals and how they were imagining their roles. Her way to resist was to be as transparent as she could with the team, which did not prevent a feeling of vulnerability and of self-doubt in terms of competence. Aronson and Smith find this as well (2011, p.444):

'Some reflected sadly that the competitive cultures in which they were embedded cut off possibilities for collaboration or sharing of concerns with counterparts and colleagues, and that the idealizing of managers' flexibility made disclosing uncertainty or self-doubt very risky.'

This managerial culture is seen as an inhibitor. Peter Senge explains it as follows (2006, p.XVI):

‘I believe that, the prevailing system of management is, at its core, dedicated to mediocrity. It forces people to work harder and harder to compensate for failing to tap the spirit and collective intelligence that characterizes working together at their best.’

Resistance is somehow resisting against the organization's *raison d'être* which is to perform to be the best: ‘Among businesses competing globally, cost and performance pressures are relentless’ (Senge, 2006, p.XIII). Performance is also controlled and improved through the design of the workplace. Open spaces are an example of how ‘the modern office’ is designed. Western (2008, p.345) links this practice to the Bentham's Panopticon and Foucault's concept of disciplined surveillance. Indeed, the power applied onto employees by management is pretty coercive as they never know when they are being observed. As a result they auto-disciplined themselves so they always focus on their tasks, try not to speak with their colleagues too much and avoid to deal with personal matters during the working hours. The author experienced this in another medium-sized British business organization. Each member of the directing team had their office just behind the employees' desk, all around the open space. These offices were separated from the open space by windows. So, even with closed doors, the person inside could observe the employees or not, without the employees being able to know. It is easy to understand how the internalization of the company's values can be reinforced through such practices. The author used to feel constantly observed, nearly paranoid that if she would focus on something else than work she might be judged not only by her Director but also by her colleagues.

Furthermore, the fragmentation of work which simplifies and rationalizes complex processes and tasks is another way to control performance. 'Much like the story line of a Greek tragedy, the root cause of this alienation comes out on one of the central strengths and benefits of modern industrial capitalism - Adam Smith's principle of the division of labor' (Al-Gini, 1998, p.710). But certainly, individuals are reduced to put into practice specialized skills which limit their creativity: they are deskilled. Again as Al-Gini says (1998, p.710; p.708), individuals become parts of a big machine with an aim that is 'to produce and be productive'. Work design based on specialisation has been defined by scientific theorists. Even if modern organisations deal with less assembly lines and more cognitive-skilled workers, fragmentation of work is still the only way how organizations today conceive efficiency (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2010). This practice might foster personnel development but with the objective of organizational production efficiency, not human being development as such. The next chapter will go into more detail on this. Covey ironically says: 'People are put on the P&L statement as an expense; equipment is put on the balance sheet as an investment' (2009, n.d.). Furthermore, Al-Gini says (1998, p.708):

'As Karl Marx has argued: "What [individuals]...are...coincides with their production, both with what they produce and with how they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production"'

Hence, work organization leverages how a person feels and defines his or her self: as objects. This self-objectification gives human beings a specific meaning to life: do so you can be to consume. Al-Gini mentions Fox by saying that: 'We are also tied to the model of humankind as *homo economicus*, driven solely by the goal of personal betterment and well being. The primary meaning of our work lies solely in what it allows us to get or buy' (1998, p.710). As analysed before, individual identity is

greatly influenced by work, hence this social construct defines individual freedom as being the possibility to get things, or as Al-Gini says (1998, p.712): ‘a chance to freely choose which washing machine or refrigerator one wants to buy’. The same way baby boys and girls are ‘indoctrinated into masculinity or femininity’ by their parents (Bandura, 1969, p.214), employees might be indoctrinated by identification to role models during organizational socialization processes. As mentioned earlier, these processes help reduce anxiety of a newcomer but also help limit the vulnerability of all working individuals nowadays because of the unpredictable market environment (Senge, 2006) - indeed, the economic crisis and climate change create a climate of uncertainty in which the world is living today. So individuals could be compared to babies dependent on their parents to survive within a new world. Bandura calls this “discrimination training” (1969, p.214). In other words, the organizational culture, as much as it gives individuals some directions that help them form a sense of identity - hence existential anxiety is reduced, it also boxes the individual self within a neo-liberal discourse that defines his or her professional and private self as a same reality. Therefore, organizational culture creates a lifestyle for individuals. Giddens (1991, p.81) defines lifestyles as follows: ‘a more or less integrated set of practices which an individual embraces, not only because such practices fulfil utilitarian needs, but because they give material form to a particular narrative of self-identity’. From this, it seems that human beings’ identity, the one which is on the upper layer of the skin and that helps labelling who individuals are, is nothing else than an inauthentic representation of the self. This leads to the following question: is there an authentic individual identity, or what Giddens calls above the ‘particular narrative of self-identity’? This is what the next chapter is looking at.

### **3. Relations to the Self**

This question means looking deeper within the individual. As such, it is about analysing the self. As discussed before, individuals can get a sense of identity through what they do. According to Markus and Kitayama (1991, p.225), Neisser calls this the 'ecological self'. But internal activities like dreams, thoughts and so on show that people have a sense of inner or 'private self', that nobody else is aware of. This is how individuals have a sense of who they are through how authentic they feel. Let's keep this in mind and carry on with the following reasoning.

The mainstream organizational literature research shows that motivation in cognitive-skilled employees can be stimulated by autonomy and mastery (Pink, 2010). So the idea is to allow individuals a certain freedom at work to keep them motivated once they earn enough to cover their basic needs for food and shelter. Schwartz (1982, p.635) says: 'Living autonomously means planning effectively to achieve one's aims instead of simply reacting to the circumstances that face one.' But he also says (1982, p.635):

'being autonomous is not simply a matter of having a capacity. Individuals are only free, or autonomous persons to the extent that they rationally form and act on some overall conception of what they want in life.'

But at the workplace, it is likely that they define what they want based on values which are dictated by the organizational discourse. As Schein says: 'Cultures tell their members who they are, how to behave towards each other, and how to feel good about themselves' (2010, p.29). As such, organizational socialization processes and the work itself is a way for the individuals to gain experience, hence

to learn and know more about themselves. But this self-actualization happens within an institution that functions with authoritative relationships. Consequently, it is important to understand what autonomy means by looking at two different perspectives. As mentioned before, the new big thing to motivate most of employees in our society – those who are not manual workers, is to foster autonomy and mastery instead of giving incentive in order to optimise creative potential (Pink, 2010). As put by Western (2008, p.106):

‘Peters and Waterman (1982), [...] argued that autonomy was increased within the confines of value conformity; organizations with strong cultures could trust employees to act in the company’s best interest and therefore afford them more autonomy and individualism.’

In other words, a strong organizational identity allows employees to align their goals to the company’s goals, so the management does not need to rely on direct control over individuals, but they can control them through processes of trust. Here, autonomy is depicted as a controlled and limited freedom within the workplace, dictated by the discourse of the organizational culture where reality is constructed around efficiency and performance. Hence, from this internalization, individuals can experience a feeling of freedom, but which does not mean that they are indeed free. These authoritative relationships form part of a discourse which makes most people believe that: ‘the more you submit to those in power, then the more this increases your [individual] sovereignty’ (By Foucault quoted by Macdonell, 1986, p.19). A prisoner who would have more advantages than the other prisoners could feel he or she has more freedom, but still, does not this person live in a prison? This is another form of ‘disciplined surveillance’: self-surveillance. This first concept of autonomy is a mean to performance. This is supported by Giddens when he says (1991, p. 9):

‘The reflexive project of the self generates programmes of actualisation and mastery. But as long as these possibilities are understood largely as a matter of the extension of the control systems of modernity to the self, they lack moral meaning. ‘Authenticity’ becomes both a pre-eminent value and a framework for self-actualisation, but represents a morally stunted process’.

So autonomy taken from this perspective is a tool and its morality can be debated. As such, can autonomy be an end? This leads to look at the second approach, which could be analysed through Foucault’s concept of ‘concern for one’s self’ (1983). When he discussed *The Culture of the Self* back in 1983 during a lecture he gave at UC Berkeley on *Western culture’s conceptual development of individual subjectivity*, he argued that the relation to self that human beings have today is the result of historical evolution. He examines subjectivity through the question ‘what are we now?’ which is different from the classical philosophy approach that does so through the question ‘what is truth?’. This philosophical perspective helps ‘understand the relation of power and rethink political freedom and resistance as well as the power relation internal to our self’ (Foucault, 1983). This approach on subjectivity considers that because humans are thinking beings, hence they can analyse who they are through the history of their thoughts, which define ‘the meaning they give to their behaviours’ (Foucault, 1983). So Foucault looks at the relations to the self and the techniques through which these relations have been shaped. He distinguishes the Greco-Roman era when the culture of the self was defined by oneself, not by external forces. The main ethic was to be ‘concerned with one self’. From this perspective, the self is the soul. This process of personal development was key for young people to become good men and good leaders. Foucault mentions Socrates who says that this learning process is not provided by any educational system

(1983). So the soul and the self are the same things and a concern for the self is the admiration of the soul, which means that the connection to the other person and to oneself happens at a deeper level. This can be related to what Brice Taylor discusses in his book called *Learning for Tomorrow* (2007, p.58):

‘We are [...] interdependent beings. I need you in order that I can become me. I also need you to become you in order for me to also become me. We need each other if we are to become more than we currently are.’

As such, these relationships are based on worship and autonomy here would refer to emancipation. The individuals involved in this kind of relationship are acknowledged for who they truly are and there is not one person trying to teach any kind of existing knowledge to the other. In this case, the leader is replaced by a mentor. Sartre’s approach to understanding oneself is conceived through the term inter-subjectivity. He explains (1996) that an individual will identify himself or herself as being jealous for instance, only if others recognize him or herself as such. He also says (1996, p.59):

‘Dans ces conditions, la découverte de mon intimité me découvre en même temps l’autre, comme une liberté posée en face de moi, qui me pense, et qui ne veut que pour moi ou contre moi’.

The English translation could be the following (translated by the author):

‘In this case, at the same time that I discover my intimacy I also discover the other, who appears like a free thought standing in front of me, who defines me in my favour or against me.’



So a person can know who he or she is based on the image that the other projects back to him or her. This image can be genuine or controlling. In term of emancipation, Callero says that it is achievable through agency and resistance to a discourse (2003). This can be carried through reflexivity, which is discussed by Mead as follows: 'It is by means of reflexiveness - the turning back of the experience of the individual upon himself – that the whole social process is thus brought into the experience of the individuals involved in it' (Callero, 2003, p.119). In simple words, it is the ability to reflect on 'one's actions, thoughts and feelings' (p.128). Therefore, here, Callero differentiates self and identity, where the self is a universal individual process which allows to interpret one's life, and 'at its most basic level is a reflexive process that regulates the acting, agentic organism' (Callero, 2003, p.119). Hence identity is given by the social experience that is processed and understood through the self so the individual can give meaning to his or her life. Depending on how conscious individuals are of their self-processes, they will understand how much of who they are is based on social or organizational discourses. 'The self-conceived in this way allows for agency, creative action, and the possibility of emancipatory political movements' (Callero, 2003, p.119). Without this reflexivity and consciousness, it is likely that the individual will assimilate to the dominant culture and end up believing that its discourse is the truth. Consequently, the self can be 'colonized by forces of domination and control' (Callero, 2003, p.119). Indeed, as per Foucault's reflexion (1983), after the Greco-Roman era the 'culture of the self' changed in this sense that individuals were encouraged to pursue a life quest that would allow them to know themselves. This is what Foucault calls 'taking care of oneself' or 'the Christian technology of the self' (1983), which mainly came with Christianity. The dynamics of the learning process changed. Rather than happening

through impartial relationships, it started to happen through authoritative relationships with the institutionalization of the Church for example, medicine (psychiatry), education and through governmental institutions. In other words, the self has become an 'internal finality', independent from others but defined by others. As Baker Miller puts it (1984, p.8):

'In the overall, then, the concept of the 'self' as it has come down to us, has encouraged a complex series of processes leading to a sense of psychological separation from others. From this there usually follows a quest for power over others and power over natural forces, including one's own body.'

Foucault calls this the 'government of individualization', which is 'the practices and discourses which regulate and construct individuals' (Macdonell, 1986, p.19). Should it be considered that Christianity has emerged in the 'Western' world, as a consequence today: 'individuals with a Western background, supposedly those with independent selves, self-knowledge is more distinctive and densely elaborated than knowledge about other people' (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p.231). In simplistic terms, this relation to the self is based on the ego rather than on others and their environment. These relationships impact the negotiation of identities at the workplace and affect self-esteem and self-expression. Indeed, according to Swann, Johnson and Bosson (2009), negotiations of identities can happen in two different ways: 'appraisal effects' and 'self-verification'. The first one is how someone, who is considered trustworthy because his or her social position - like a doctor, or a supervisor in a business organization, hence someone who has got legitimate authority can influence how his or her subordinate perceives himself or herself. For instance, what a supervisor expects his or her subordinate to be will influence how

this subordinate will see himself or herself. Swann, Johnson and Bosson's article (2009, p.85) helps understanding this point:

'when a supervisor requests an identity shift of an employee, targets [employees] will recognize that the organization has the power (and, to a degree, the legitimate authority) to ask for such a shift because it is compensating the target for his or her services. For this reason, targets engaged in such asymmetric identity negotiation processes may be relatively open to assuming (at least temporarily) identities that depart fairly sharply from their chronic identities [...].'

This practice based on dependable relationships is certainly limiting the expression of individuals' talents in the organization. As an example, it is easy to relate to Aronson and Smith's case study mentioned before where some women managers had to implement new managerial practices in the Canadian social services. They had to shift away from their 'authentic self' (Aronson and Smith, 2011) to be congruent with the expectations of their supervisors, from which they developed resistance. Indeed, research shows that this temporary shift can only last for a certain amount of time without provoking resistance and a need for self-verification (Aronson & Smith, 2011; Swann, Johnson & Bosson, 2009). As such, self-verification is another way individuals negotiate their work identity. This is when the others acknowledge an individual core identity or the way he or she sees him or herself, which reinforces self-esteem. Studies prove that this latest process of work identity negotiation contributes to 'connectedness' between organizational members, hence it reduces individual anxiety and as a result fosters creativity (Swann, Johnson & Bosson, 2009). Foucault's concepts of 'concern of oneself' can help understand further this discussion on self-verification. Unfortunately, main research focuses on studying how to make employees fit the organization in order to improve

performance. This area of research looks at 'values, beliefs and goals' (Swann, Johnson & Bosson, 2009, p.100). In other words, it looks at how to manipulate behaviour to align employees to the corporate culture, or as previously called the organizational identity. Cable, Gino and Staats (2013) call this the 'institutionalized socialization tactics' which can 'suppress self-expression' (p.23). On the contrary, their investigations show that employees' 'authentic best selves' could be supported through the process that they call 'individualized socialization'. In this case, individuals would be happier and satisfy with their work for longer because they could reach the level of self-actualization that allows them to feel that their true self is aligned to what they do. Indeed, looking at Maslow's pyramid of needs, the theory - which has never been empirically demonstrated but which is largely used by the art of management (Buchanan & Huczynski, 2010), would like to believe that once a group of needs is met, the individual grows in the hierarchy of needs defined as follows: first come the physiological needs, then the safety needs, the belonging needs, self-esteem needs and at the top comes the cluster of self-actualization, also called being needs. So up to self-esteem a person can be defined on what he or she does while self-actualization is an intrinsic definition of who a person feels he or she is (Poston, 2009). These last needs could only be satisfied if self-esteem needs are satisfied first. Again, Poston (2009) says:

'Self-actualization is the internal dialogue that everyone establishes at some point in their lives. In order to do that, there must be some establishment or satisfaction of the prior needs. Once all of the previous needs have been met, an individual can direct his or her focus toward a true calling.' (p.352)

Self-esteem in that case means both the need to be respected by others and self-respect. As Poston stresses (2009, p.351): 'These forms of self-esteem should not be confused with an individual having high or low self-esteem.' As such, if organizational culture often denies individual self-verification, it is then difficult for individuals to truly achieve self-actualization. Furthermore, if self-actualization as defined by Maslow is about becoming 'people of great accomplishment, such as former presidents, dignitaries and great discoverers' (Poston, 2009, p.352), it means that most people are not able to indeed be who they truly are. On this note, Giddens says that (1991, p.6): 'Holding out the possibility of emancipation, modern institutions at the same time create mechanisms of suppression, rather than actualisation, of self'. In addition to this, Cable, Gino and Staats say (2013, p.84):

'Whereas self-verification often occurs when targets shape their experiences within organizations so as to confirm their identities, fit typically occurs when targets select established (and hence relatively immutable) organizations that match their personal characteristics.'

'Congruence' between individual identity and organizational identity is based on fixed traits. The level of congruence indicates how much fit there is between the individual and the organization so this can help predict individual performance. This process ignores the internal complexity of human beings (Swann Jr., et al., 2009) and the multiple identities displayed according to the situation (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). It is known that in spite of the existence and use of thousands of personality assessments by organizations, it is still very difficult to predict individual performance (Buchanan & Huczynski, 2010). To put it differently, congruence can help with satisfaction and fit but it might well not prevent a feeling of inauthenticity. So a better approach might be to focus on learning how to manage complexity and diversity in

work relationships. Indeed, reciprocal and honest relationships might be re-established and so the relation to the self might also be modified through worshiping. This could have a significant impact on how people think and behave today. How can this be achieved? What would the workplace look like? And how would the economic system be like?

The social learning processes that have been analysed in this paper until now foster the development of what Markus and Kitayama (1991) call 'independent view of self'. This view of the self is "ego-focused", esteemed when differentiated from others who are used as a way of comparison, and the person with this type of relation to the self feels good when he or she is in control of the situation through the 'expression of one's own thoughts, feelings, and actions to others' (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p.246). This is easy to see how competition against each other and control over situations and people come from in the 'Western' business culture epistemology. Nevertheless, in these societies women relate to their self differently. Indeed, according to Miller (1984) the psychological models on which the definitions of the self are based - and which as a result also define what happiness, freedom or fairness should be, are not applicable to women and they say (p.1):

'Modern American workers who write on early psychological development and, indeed, on the entire life span, from Erik Erikson (1950) to Daniel Levinson (1978), tend to see all of development as a process of separating one's self out from the matrix of others [...].'

Contrary to this framework, and according to some researchers, women are 'other-focused' and they emancipate because of their "interdependent" approach to others. Again, Miller says (1984, p.6): 'women probably do talk about relationships more

often, and this is often misinterpreted as dependency'. Markus and Kitayama (1991, p.247) confirm that relationships in this case are as important as being able to perform well at a job to raise 'self-esteem and self-validation'. They explain that the individual is then like a part that only becomes a whole 'when fitting or occupying one's proper place in a social unit' (p.246). Going back to the case study from Aronson and Smith (2011, p.445), women are then

'pressed to perform in accordance with the stereotypically masculine norms that dominate contemporary management practices and education [...]. They were ambivalent about their performances of femininity, knowing that they could be easily trivialised and that they originated in a subordinate power position. They were also at odds with performances of calculating, competitive management that felt alien to their senses of themselves, risked making them unrecognizable to potential allies and ran counter to the value many attached to co-operation and mutual support.'

Hence, individuals valuing worship relationships can feel uncomfortable in organisational settings that focus on efficiency and performance and might find the resistance to these relations based on competition and power exhausting. As Miller stresses, this could help explain why so many women are diagnosed with depression when they might just be struggling with resisting the dominant business discourse. These individuals are not only women. Again, Markus and Kitayama (1991) argue that the other-focused category also includes individuals from 'Eastern' societies such as Japan but also other cultures from Asia, Africa, Latin-America and South of Europe. They say (p.226):

'the individual, in the sense of a set of significant inner attributes of the person, may cease to be the primary unit of consciousness. Instead, the sense of belongingness

to a social relation may become so strong that it makes better sense to think of the relationship as the functional unit of conscious reflection.'

Hence, relations to power are very different according to how an individual relates to his or her self. As explained by Markus and Kitayama (1991), the notion of control in the 'Western' framework is about affirming 'inner attributes' (p.228) by imposing them to others, by influencing the outer world. While control from an 'Eastern' perspective is about controlling one's own inner attributes in order not to break the harmony of the outer world. This can help thinking on the motives of Western colonization. Indeed, as South African poet, speaker and spiritual health coach Mmatshilo Motsei (2012) asked: How would be the world if Africa had colonized it? It could also be added: how would this impact on current business culture? As such, some alternatives to the dominant business discourse could be reflected upon. This is what is discussed in the following last chapter.

#### **4. Why is a paradigm shift needed?**

With the help of Zein-Elabdin (2009), it is interesting to look at culture from an economic perspective and realise that it is certainly part of the colonial discourse. Indeed, the economic framework works on the assumption that modernity - which represents progress and how industrial Europe developed, should spread anywhere else. Hence, this reinforces 'a belief in supracultural laws of economic behaviour and movement' (p.4). This could also link to a discussion on how scientific management has defined our modern way of thinking until today, which could be a topic for another paper. These beliefs have been embedded through technocratic knowledge and its institutional support from business organizations, governments, educational institutions and so on - hence through authoritative relationships, which then spread



in a hegemonic manner through the world. Zein-Elabdin (2009, p.2) defines this as 'cross-cultural hegemony, that is, the creation of a political climate that elicits the subaltern (subordinated) groups' consent to a dominant ideology, and the role of knowledge construction in this process'. As a result, society believes that life survival is about materialistic needs and value is put on producing, getting things and accumulating (Zein-Elabdin, 2009). From there, it is easy to see how capitalism has become the main economic model on our planet nowadays. This capitalistic discourse is monocultural because it is based on positivism. It rejects human complexity, diversity and subjectivity. As Whisnant says (2012, p.5):

'Even though science teaches us that the "real world" is the material world made up of atoms and energy, in a real way the world for most of us is a world of colors, emotions, ideas and life.'

Nonetheless, it seems that this dominant economic discourse is somehow being unconsciously resisted through hybridity. As reminded by Zein-Elabdin (2009, p.8):

'Bhabha used the term hybridity to indicate the natives' tendency to question and appropriate colonial discourse in ways that modified and compromised the original meaning and thereby undermined its authority.'

As such, hybridity is like a resistance to the main discourse which is integrated partially only and adapted to local culture. As such, there is never a complete domination of one culture over another one, rather an impact on the other culture; hence the existences of a variation of capitalism like market, coordinated or social capitalism (Hall & Soskice, 2001). As a result, instead of persisting thinking that modernity is the legitimate and superior discourse over more traditional cultures, it might be worth analyzing the effect of hybridity and see if something can be learned

from these mixed economic cultures. Indeed, the culture of harmony in “Eastern countries” that could have been considered by colonialism to be a display of weakness and inferiority could actually impact on the culture of the ego. As Zein-Elabdin suggests (2009, p.2), it might help ‘imagining different economic relations and social ethics, and thereby aiding in the search for answers to the presently daunting questions of ecological sustainability and social well-being’. The UNESCO does not ignore the impact of culture on sustainability: ‘To the extent that the global crisis facing humanity is a reflection of collective values and lifestyles, it is above all a cultural crisis. Culture therefore, has a central place in the complex notion of sustainability’ (Martin & Murray, 2010).

This macro-perspective could be come down to the process of individual identity negotiation. If business culture is looked through the lenses of colonial theory, it can be said that in the colonization of the self, the ‘Other’ becomes the true-self. In his latest film called *The pervert’s guide to ideology* (2013), Žižek explains that there is no such thing as the Other. By this, he means that there is no such thing as external threats, but the main threat is internal to individuals. In order to deal with their so called existential anxieties, individuals rely on external forces that give them reassurance and comfort. The hegemonic phenomenon and its discourse define individual behaviours so people can make sense of who they are based on what they do and not based on who they really want to be. Indeed, being who they really want to be would require individuals to get out of their comfort zones. In his documentary, Žižek illustrates this very well when he discusses a scene from the movie *They live* by John Carpenter (1988), showing the main character Nada - which means “nothing” in Spanish, trying to convince his friend to wear some magic sun glasses that he found: they allow seeing the world beyond ideologies. His friend does not

want to put the glasses on and resists which shows how uncomfortable it could be to see and live outside the main discourse. This can also be analyzed by looking at Sartre's philosophy of existentialism where the individual is born free so the self is nothing. But to become someone, the individual has to make choices which then define who he is; so the individual becomes a 'being-in-itself' because he constructs himself through his own choices. In this process he loses his freedom (Feinmann, 2013). This is the case when individuals chose to believe in a discourse defined by authoritative relationships. As a result, the combination of both economic discourse and existential anxiety fosters the alienation of the self. The word alienation is used here to stress the fact that the acceptance of the hegemonic discourse still lets individuals starve for fulfilment, because of the constant fight between their need for certainty and their need for true self-expression. Sartre says that this constant quest for purpose is the intrinsic need of gaining back one's freedom. As discussed before, this might be achievable through resistance to discourse. But again, according to Feinmann (2013) - when discussing *Being and Nothingness* (1943) by Sartres, he says that Sartre suggests that freedom is the 'nothingness', hence, to become free, human beings should be able to manage living in uncertainty, which is the way forwards to fight against inauthenticity as then the individual becomes a 'being-for-itself'. Sartre also calls it the 'consciousness' or 'human reality'. As such, alienation can be resisted by developing individual consciousness through being in the present. On this note, Giddens says the following (1991,p.71): 'The "art of being in the now" generates the self-understanding necessary to plan ahead and to construct a life trajectory which accords with the individual's inner wishes'. He also says that existential uncertainty leads people to focus on the materialistic world because it is constant and factual. But as he says (1991, p.73):

‘The harsh psychological truth is that there is no permanence in human relationships, any more than there is in the stock market, the weather, “national security”, and so on... [...] The more each of us can learn to be truly in the present with our others, making no rules and erecting no fences for the future, the stronger we will be in ourselves and the closer and happier in our relationships.’

From this, it can also be understood that because human beings are unpredictable beings, the economic discourse which is based on control and predicting performance is completely utopic, even more so that it is also based on the assumption that resources are unlimited. As such, survival depends on individuals’ abilities to change their way of thinking, in other words: the relation to their self. As Foucault suggests: ‘The problem is not to free the self but to find how it could be possible to elaborate new kinds of relationships to ourselves’ (1983). Indeed, the current situation shows that the belief that freedom is about uniqueness and individualism (as discussed by Hofstede, 2001) is proving to be a wrong assumption for survival. On the contrary, the valid assumption is likely to be that individual freedom is possible through interdependent relationships indeed and not ego-focused relationships. Furthermore, as put by Markus and Katayama (1991, p.247):

‘Even within highly individualist Western culture, most people are still much less self-reliant, self-contained, or self-sufficient than the prevailing cultural ideology suggests that they should be.’

This reinforces the argument that the current economic discourse is alienating as it drives individuals away from their gregarious nature. But at the same time, because individuals are also constantly looking for comfort, they encourage the existence of such a discourse while giving up on their freedom. Nonetheless, it seems that they try to readjust this dissonance by constantly looking for purposes. A new discourse is

needed that acknowledges this phenomenon. Organizational culture, as it is known from mainstream literature, aims at reducing uncertainty by implementing processes that would help control behaviours and results. But maybe if people would integrate a culture that fosters “individualized process” (Cable, Gino and Staats, 2013, p.5), individuals might be able to know themselves better and trust their inner values to decide on their actions and feel more authentic. As put by Cable, Gino and Staats (2013, p.5): ‘research suggests that people hold implicit biases against innovation, and these biases are activated when people feel motivated to reduce uncertainty’. Nietzsche notion of narcissism and God or Supreme Being helps make sense of this. Indeed, because “God” is dead, there is no other world or ‘real world’ above or beyond human’s world (Michalski, 2012). Individuals are not essences anymore but existential beings. As such they have to construct themselves to become someone based on norms and beliefs that would not be given to them anymore by this Supreme Being. A feeling of emptiness and loss of purpose might emerge which creates anxiety. As Michalski rephrases (2012, p.4):

‘The “death of God” places us in an impossible situation. On the one hand, it confronts us with the irrefutable reality of a world of constant change and irreducible difference, and on the other, it deprives us of the tools we have used till now to bring that world to order and, by the same token, to give it meaning and value.’

From a business perspective, this leads to the examination of two elements. The first one is how God has been replaced by organizational discourse and the second is how it is possible to live with uncertainty. To focus on the first point, it could be interesting to transfer Nietzsche’s ideas to the current organizational discourse. Previously, it has been mentioned that organizational socialization is a means to reduce stress and anxiety of the unknown. For instance, newcomers can more easily

make sense of how to act at work and they negotiate their identity based on the organizational culture. It has also been studied how difficult it is to resist organizational discourse and that often individuals resign themselves to just fit and express their creativity within the limiting frame of this discourse because of a lack of political recognition of their resistance. So their creativity is controlled within the context of authoritative relationships. This leads to see how Wootton comments on the different approach to narcissism when comparing Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Nietzsche's *Zur Genealogie Der Moral* in his thesis (2010). He takes the example of what narcissism means from Mary Shelleys' work (p.54): 'a reflection of a movement in the direction of self-creation, but over which God still hovers like a bad conscience.' This self-creation can be related to the creation of an ego which would help escape the restriction put on the expression of the self by external 'strictures', hence the organizational culture. As a result 'self-adoration may be the normal, healthy response for the superior being Nietzsche portrays, [...] before whom this self must cringe in self-abnegation if it wants the benefit of the residual significance emanating from that being.' (p.54). So, for individuals, renouncing on the true self can secure security from the organization. Instead of developing their authentic self, they develop their ego. And this ego can foster negative self-conscious emotions and as Markus and Kitayama explain (1991, p.245):

'A strong, pervasive motive for self-enhancement through taking personal credit for success, denying personal responsibility for failure, and believing oneself to be better than average may be primarily a Western phenomenon.'

From there, if modern business culture is the new "God", it could justify the development of self-conscious emotions such as hubris which might well be the cause of the financial greed that holds the world into the difficult economic situation

of today. According to Lewis (2011), social construction does affect the development of self-conscious emotions in children. He says: 'What is clear is that as we move from early emotions to self-conscious emotions, socialization plays an increasing role in determining what situation elicits what emotions, as well as how they are expressed' (p.4). After the discussion on organizational socialization, it is tempting to believe that this principle can also be valid for newcomers at the workplace. To put it in different terms, organizational culture could be this external force or the God influencing the creation of a "spectral" self (Wootton, 2010, p.XX) also called ego. This process gives individuals pre-defined values and answers about the purpose of life, without them to have to make these decisions consciously and reflectively. From there it is easy to understand how autonomy and mastery help in this process where the organizational norms float above individuals' heads like "God".

But, resistance to the dominant organizational discourse does exist. Indeed, statistics show how more and more people are diagnosed with big fatigues and stress related to work. Amorosi (2013) finds that 28% of workers in Europe are affected by stress at work. In the UK for instance, the rate of long-term sickness absence caused by stress at the workplace has been increasing over the last years. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), which is 'the world's largest Chartered HR and development professional body', explains the causes of work related stress as follows: 'excessive workload, inadequate training, a lack of control or autonomy and poor working relationships, for example a bullying or poorly-trained line manager.' (CIPD, 2012). Likewise, Amorosi (2013) adds to this list the inadequacy of organizational practices and the impact of the negative emotions that are carried from work to home. Moreover, Copper, Dewe and O'Driscoll say in the preface of their book: (2001, p.XI): 'the "enterprise culture" of the 1980s [...]

improved economic competitiveness in international markets, there were also the first signs of strains, as “stress” and “burnout” became concepts in the everyday vocabulary of many working people’. Professor Cyril Höschl, a Czech psychiatrist and fellow of Royal College of Psychiatrists in Great Britain discussed burnout at the Cambridge and Luton International Conference on Mental Health in September 2013. He explained how more and more individuals are diagnosed by their general practitioners with long-term fatigue because they are too concerned with their work as a result of the causes just listed before, and because of low resilience. He explains that burnout, even if it is not recognised as a disorder, is more than just exhaustion, it is depression, hence a psychiatric illness. As Höschl stressed, what is interesting is that burnout is not recognized as depression but as fatigue only. It is not recognized as a mental disease. Would it be too risky to acknowledge that modern work is indeed putting human lives at risk? What is then recommended to individuals to prevent and fight against this problem is to manage one life around these difficulties, through social events, meditation, exercise and so on. In simple terms, it seems that lives are put at risk because of the unhealthy effects of modern work and the solution should be for the human being to adapt to these conditions by learning how to be resilient to stress. Could not it be that the organizational praxis should also change dramatically by acknowledging resistance? Many training can be undertaken in order to increase resilience to stress. But these self-help solutions appear to be like medicines that would relief the pain but not cure the problem. When analysing women managers’ resistance to managerial changes in the social care sector in Canada, Aronson and Smith suggest (2011) that the focus should be on how to be aware of managerial resistance, what to do with it, and acknowledge that this resistance is a political influence and not just a practice influence. Indeed, in the



study, most of the time 'participants themselves construed their tense internal dialogues as personal struggles to be hidden and coped with alone, rather than as political matters warranting collective attention and action' (p.446). Now the question is if these changes in practice can be possible in a global system focused on efficiency, profit, growth, performance, competition and where the objective for organizations is to 'be the best in the world rather than the best for the world' (GRLI, 2012). A new business and organizational discourse would benefit the overall performance of individuals. Indeed, as Swann et al. report (2009, p.91):

'Other research suggests that if acting out of discrepant situated identity undermines targets' feelings of authenticity, emotional exhaustion may result (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002). Emotional exhaustion in the workplace has been linked, in turn, with increased job turnover, physical and psychological distress, and decreased job performance [...].'

The author can relate to this point as she experienced such feelings when in position at three small and medium sized private business organizations (The names of these organizations are not mentioned for reasons of anonymity). Apart from the fact that she suffered from bullying in the first company, she always had this feeling that only one small part of her was able to express itself, that she was much more than just the identity given by her work and work environment but could not explore further because of a lack of time as working for these organizations was taking most of her day time. She ended up feeling a lack of purpose and exhaustion by this inability to feel authentic. Work can create instant satisfaction or happiness but not necessarily lasting well-being. From there it is worth examining the difference between happiness and eudaemonic well-being.

‘Thus socialization practices that succeed in causing newcomers to behave inauthentically might not be sustainable because they do not address broader issues concerning emotional exhaustion and life dissatisfaction’ (Cable, Gino and Staats, 2013, p.3).

Without God, it is up to individuals to define their own values, their own purposes. This reflection fosters eudaemonic preoccupation. As per Ilies, Morgeson, Nahrgang, (2005, p.375): ‘eudaemonic engagement assumes introspective reflection upon one’s values and reasoned choices for engagement in specific activities, and not only hedonic motivation’. If so, it might well be that resisting individuals have indeed accepted God’s death and are looking at feeling ‘alive’ (p.375) and that the business discourse might be a limitation to this purpose. As such, they are after the realization of their ‘true potential across (their) lifespan’ (p.375). Is this achievable in the context of current leadership ontology based on performance? In the leadership literature, this type of leadership is also called management. Ilies, Morgeson, Nahrgang say (2005, p.379) that: ‘performance oriented people focus on task performance and comparisons with others, seek to prove their ability to others, and believe that intellectual abilities are immutable’. On the contrary, if leadership ontology would be based on mentorship – like Socrates and his disciple as per the lecture given by Foucault where the relationship is based on reciprocity and admiration, individuals could grow in an authentic and eudaemonic manner. From there, well-being would not be based on hedonistic happiness only, rather on a general feeling of life fulfillment (Ilies, Morgeson, Nahrgang, 2005). Again, this resistance is a challenge in a society based on an economic culture that encourages consumption through a discourse based on hedonistic happiness. This can be seen in how the terms ‘indulge yourself’ are used and conveyed in magazines and through television (see

also Zizek, 2013). What tends to be denied is that: 'How one lives one's life in relation to oneself and to others is at least as important as hedonic happiness.' (Ilies, Morgeson, Nahrgang, 2005, p.374). Zizek believes that 'happiness is an unethical category' (2012). Happiness is a mean to control individuals who are 'subjects of pleasure' (2013). Nevertheless, what is important is to look at the quality of human relationships at the workplace to help with feeling authentic as discussed earlier and feeling fulfilled. According to Ilies, Morgeson, Nahrgang, (2005, p.376), fulfilment can be achieved through authentic leadership that they define as follows:

'A process that combines positive leader capacities and a highly developed organizational context. [...] It follows that authentic leaders, by expressing their true self in daily life live a *good life* (in an Aristotelian way), and this process results in self-realization (eudaemonic well-being) on the part of the leaders, and in positive effects on followers' eudaemonic well-being'

In this context, relationships are based on self-enhancement and reciprocal trust. This can be linked to what Drath et al. says (2008, p.651): 'individuals meet one another in the middle in mutual transformation'. In other words, it means that for leaders to be authentic, the relation to the self has to change and not exist within any authoritative framework. From this, individuals are given the chance to be aware of their inner attributes and make sense of their emotions as well and become better leaders. As Giddens says: 'Living every moment reflectively is a matter of heightened awareness of thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations. Awareness creates potential change, and may actually induce change in and through itself (1991, p.71)'. Again, this also refers back to Foucault's ideas on being concerned with one's self. So from authentic leadership ontology might emerge a new organizational culture that might as well change the economic discourse. Indeed, this

kind of leadership could help dealing with sustainability, diversity and the respect of human dignity where humans would be ends in themselves rather than means to productivity. Though, to achieve this shift of paradigm is challenging considering Darwinian approaches to survival. Indeed, according to them, survival is about looking at the short-term rather than projecting oneself into the long-term future. But as Chandler and Dawkins (2001) argue, humans have brains. Unlike other animals: 'Big brains allow you to take a long distance view of your own self-interest and allow you to take actions which natural selection per se could never have allowed to you' (p.15). The point that is intended to be made here is that the alienating organizational discourse might be a predicament to the evolution of our 'mental modules' (p.6) as well as a limitation to the growth of our brains. Chandler and Dawkins (2001, p.6) explains the following:

'Don't ask how a middle manager's ambitions for a bigger desk and a softer office carpet benefit his selfish genes. Ask instead how these urban partialities might stem from a mental module which was selected to do something else in a very different place and time. For office carpet perhaps [...] read soft and warm animal skins whose possession betokened hunting success'.

This would mean that despite our incredible technological advancements, our mental software is stuck in primitive age. As John Mole says (1995, pp. 8-9):

'Whether it is national or corporate, culture is a mechanism for uniting people in a common purpose with a common language and with common values and ideas. It can liberate and empower individuals with a sense of self that transcends their own singularity. Or it can create prisoners of a culture no longer appropriate for its time and circumstance, which isolate its members and threatens those outside it.'

Nowadays, it can be observed that change is happening. Not at a political nor exactly at business level, but at individual level. Indeed, more and more people resist the capitalist system through entrepreneurship. They invent new ways of doing business by setting up social enterprises and other virtual trading entities. They also create alternative currencies (Manier, 2012). The concept of sustainability should be revisited as a need not only to protect the environment with the help of technological inventions, but rather through the implementation of deep changes in how human beings think and relate to each other and their selves. But this should not only involve changing how we think about what is consumed and how it is consumed for example. This is not enough. This new way of thinking has to be deeper and bigger through the beliefs of how business should happen and what economy should truly mean. Some might argue that this is already happening through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies. Unfortunately it seems that this way of thinking is still engraved in the same current economic discourse which aims is to carry on producing to increase economic growth. It is easy to verify this by just listening to the BBC for instance. As suggested by Ervin Laszlo back in 1989 (p.27): 'A new insight must dawn on people: you do not solve world problems by applying technological fixes within the framework of narrowly self-centred values and short-sighted national institutions.' What is needed is not easy to define as results are difficult to predict. But some companies have already started to change their mind-sets such as Semco in Brazil (Semler, 1993). In this case, the leadership ontology has evolved to be participative and emergent. The structure of the business is more organic and the organizational identity does not stem from individual leaders' norms only, but from the combination of each individual within the organization. As such, the identity is flexible and in constant negotiation like individual identity. This might help deal with

uncertainty and unpredictability. Also, the author is currently working on a project involving the English company called Bettys and Taylors of Harrogate, famous for their Yorkshire tea. Again, this organization has been working on changing its approach to business by focusing further on people relationships and the planet.

## **CONCLUSION**

To conclude, even if organizational practices can be different from one organization to another one, there is a dominant organizational discourse based on performance and profit. This culture influences the social discourse that has an impact on national politics. As a result, this also fixes individual traits. This discourse shapes individuals' way of thinking which as such controls individual behaviours. Indeed employees align to the organizational value which fosters performance to achieve profit but also growth and competition. Nevertheless, it has been found that a cognitive dissonance might exist between what individuals believe is good and how they behave. This happens through performance management. Like actors on stage, employees perform an act while at work and remove their costumes and put on their own cloth to go back home. Nonetheless, research proves that when work involves ongoing learning of cognitive skills, the internalizations of the organizational culture is blurred with the non-work identity. This hybridity is a form of mimicry that helps develop values initially borrowed from a culture that values ego-focused relationships. Materialism, consumerism and self-objectifications become the norm. On the other hand, this form of hybridity is a way to resist the discourse of a dominant culture by twisting it and adapting it to the local culture. Nevertheless, this phenomenon helps the dominant discourse to spread all over the work in different forms and the main values remain the same: individualism, calculation and control over others. At an

individual level, this resistance happens at the workplace but it leads to exhaustion and anxiety. This process makes people give up on their true selves. It fosters self-doubt and diminishes self-esteem. It also leads to mental illness development. The lifestyle created by the organizational discourse is a barrier to authentic personal development as well as to creativity, innovation and reduction of anxiety. This lifestyle becomes a mean to control subjects: they cannot free themselves to become emancipated beings. Human beings are purely means to economic productivity rather than ends in themselves. This has a big impact on relationships. Indeed, these practices based on dependable relationships limits the expression of individuals' talents in the organization. As such, self-actualization cannot be reached. Furthermore, knowing that individual existential struggles create anxiety, it is to be assumed that the combination of both business discourse and existential self-doubting foster the alienation of the individual self. To liberate oneself, it is necessary to learn to relate to the others and to oneself in a very different way. Women and 'Eastern' individuals would be a very good source of inspiration to see if interdependent relationships based on other-focused self can help create a new organizational model. Power relations at this future workplace would not be based on authoritative relationships, rather on reciprocal relationships. The current time of economic turmoil where the domination of the human being over nature causes the acceleration of climate change, the scarcity of natural resources, issues on migration, and is putting at risk the survival of our planet including our species. It is clear that the human being today is living within a liminal space. As Laszlo says: 'society and the economy are already in the midst of a radical transformation as deep as that brought about by the Industrial Revolution at the end of the eighteenth century' (1989, p.3). It seems that nothing can be learned from the past anymore

other than Modernism is obsolete. Materialistic and technological progresses have been happening without acknowledging human complexity. It means that technocratic nation states, the 'invisible hand' and growth have lost their meaning in a world that has not enough resources to feed its overall population, in a world that sees bigger gaps between poor and rich individuals and in a developed world that is more and more mentally ill. If it was to be agreed that humanism sees a human nature, it is important not to ignore the idea that this nature might be 'fabricated' by discourses. Indeed, 'what Foucault's studies suggest is that 'discipline as a procedure of subjection does indeed tie each individual to an identity. [...] "The individual is no doubt the fictitious atom of an "ideological" representation of society"; but the individual is also put together, "fabricated", by existing practices' (Macdonell, 1986, p.108). As such, a change is possible if resistance is politically acknowledged. This could be a way to foster individual agency.

Further research could help develop new 'knowledge' by analysing the deconstruction of the socially accepted truth of our reality. This process is not an easy one. As Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G. J. & Minkov, M.. put it (2010, p.4-5):

'As soon as certain patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting have established themselves within a person's mind, he or she must unlearn these patterns before being able to learn something different, and unlearning is more difficult than learning for the first time.'

As discussed, resistance to these alienating external and inner discourses can happen by developing consciousness. This process of being more conscious by learning how to live in the present could help organizations to be more organic and flexible. But it would also help the individual find a sense of purpose and fulfillment



and fight the current mental illnesses caused by the modern lifestyle. Control can become a matter of harmony rather than a matter of power and long-term views can be envisaged thanks to other-focused relationships. Throughout history human beings have been fighting against the Other: other tribe members, others from different religions, others from different lands, aliens in movies and terrorists in Middle East and Asia. But it is likely that this Other does not exist anywhere else than just in each of us: it is the true self. It is like human beings programme themselves to fight their inner self, to alienate this self in exchange of security and certainty. Other ways of organizing businesses and society are possible where performance is not linked to growth and greed. There exists examples of organizations that are rethinking their culture and it would be interesting to follow on how successful they are in this endeavour and study how this change of discourse does impact on individuals. The topic of this study is complex and the author is aware that it can only be discussed superficially in this paper. Many other discussions would be worth developing as well as doing empirical investigations. For instance, some studies show how a lack of food reduces and modifies human brains in Brazil (Chomsky, 2003). It would be interesting to research on the impact of work on human brain development and if it reduces human's abilities to be conscious. Also, as the study shows, it is likely that cognitive-skilled employees see their home identity blurred with their work identity. It would be interesting to study this hybrid phenomenon among manual workers and compare the results with further empirical research based on cognitive-skilled employees. It would also be interesting to see if Erikson's life cycles could be found within individuals among hunters and gatherers to determine how much modern work impact on these life cycles. It would also be relevant to look at how working from home impacts on individual identity. Indeed,

because in this case the individual spends more time at home, would this be enough to avoid the alienation of the self by work?

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