

***Big Other is telling you:  
« Competition, Stress and Jouissance »***

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***Some Discourses of Post Modern Subjectivation***

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***Key words : Competition – Stress – Subjectivation –Jouissance - Discourses***

Since the early nineties, any eventual side effects of competitiveness in companies and society as a whole can be measured through the level of stress in individuals. Stress is related to the effort to adjust, and is focused on its physical and psychological consequences.

Nowadays, both scientific data and management concern about stress are getting stronger. Comparisons can then be made and action taken. On the one hand, stress is entering market thinking: it can be sold and managed, while the “benchmarking” of stress is beginning. On the other, the measure of stress, as well as recommendations and actions to develop individual coping resources, are increasing.

We will be linking stress to both the concepts of subjectivation and *jouissance* from a point of view based on competition. The post-modern subject, alternating between his professional work place and the social space, is crossed through by two discourses which both have a major impact on his/her subjectivation, that of the firm where he produces and that of the society where he consumes. We will try to articulate these discourses explicitly and to point out their links with the concept of *jouissance* and its different modalities of expression.

Furthermore, the economic competitiveness and consumerist life-style of our societies go hand in hand with the emergence of a third type of discourse, which we think is articulated to the first two: a discourse on stress.

What kind of “subject” are we producing, when we act upon occupational stress? That is the meaning of the link we make between stress and subjectivation. We are also interested in the way individual coaching (considered as a device of subjectivation) could help people turn a diagnosis of stress into something subjectively creative. In the words of Michel Foucault, we define “actions on stress” as “modes of objectivation” generating a special kind of subject. We will see how rapidly such a subject seems to become a “subject of the definition of stress”. Such a subject has three dimensions: that of suffering subject victim of its environment, that of subject to the deficiencies of coping, and that of guilty subject (guilty of transmitting stress to others, or of generating stress in them).

In the second part of our presentation we will make explicit the links between the idea of stress and the concept of *jouissance*, in order to emphasize how stress can be considered a measure of a systemic *jouissance*. The concept of *jouissance* is related to the work of Lacan, starting from his commentary of Freud’s *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*. Given the influence of both neo-liberalism and the idea of a new economy on both minds and behaviours, could stress be seen as a “clinical sign” of an individual and collective kind of subjectivation called *jouissance*? Is the subject of stress also the subject of *jouissance*? Neo-liberalism and the new economy are both creating a kind of unending competition combined with high-speed changes. No limits to this seem to be able to be clearly identified and a lack of meaning tends to appear. A high level of tension is also perceived both individually and collectively. Does this unending and perpetually restimulated pushing back of every limit, with no break for pleasure, refer to *jouissance*?

Finally we will consider how the discourse on stress might be structuring itself as a tautology with the discourses of the work place and of the social world.

## **Requirements for presentation :**

Video-projector (Laptop and Beamer)