The Rise of Transpolitical Individualism as Expression of the Postcommunist Transition to Democracy. May ’68 as Pattern for Personalising Democracy

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THE RISE OF TRANSPOLITICAL INDIVIDUALISM
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FOR PERSONALISING DEMOCRACY

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to examine and define the transpolitical individualism as expression of the postcommunist transition to democracy, based on the analysis that Gilles Lipovetsky devoted to the French revolution of May’68. This historical moment has been regarded not only as a powerful instrument to achieve the so-called privatization of postwar lifestyle, enhancing a new perspective on the public and civil perception of authority, in the manner suggested by Alain Touraine, but also as the beginning of a new democratic age. At the core of my paper lies the correspondent analysis between the three elements of the process of power transition – disciplinary, revolutionary and conventional practices, and the types of individualism identified by Lipovetsky. My hypothesis is that to each element of the political order discipline-revolution-convention, corresponds a certain form of individualism from the three recognised by the French philosopher – responsible, hedonist and narcissistic individualism. Such forms of individualism are conceived as paradigms that shape and personalise the democratic culture, at the end of which the ideology of the transpolitical individualism rises. Transpolitical individualism suggests, in fact, a product of the historical transition from one regime of power to another and the source of our contemporary consumerist society. The last part of my research will be focused on analysing two possible consequences of accepting transpolitical individualism as expression of the transition’s process. I will argue that May’68 experiences democracy as a continuity of a certain perception of autonomy from modernism to postmodernism. Inspired by this assumption, I will criticize Luc Ferry’s argument that the French manifestations can be

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tracked as a rebellion of individuals against norms, that lead, through the hyperbolic affirmation of individuality, the destruction of the classical notion of the Subject.

**Keywords:** post-communism, democracy, transpolitical individualism, transition, Gilles Lipovetsky, Daniel Bell, Luc Ferry, May '68, Subject, consumerism, capitalism.

One may argue that the most important cultural and political heritage reflected by the fall of communism is democracy. But there can be no transition to democracy in the absence of the rise of transpolitical individualism, not because the dynamics of this social and ideological paradigm challenge is authentically expressed only by the postmodern history of ‘trans’-, regarded as an active principle that crosses, historically, everything that goes ‘beyond’ the red flag of communism. The aim of my research is to justify transpolitical individualism as product of the post-communist transition. Nevertheless, a sensitive precaution is required by the insertion of individualism in the post-communist discourse as value of a Subject that abolishes both the class’ action and consciousness, as well as the collective production and consumption. And yet, at least for Marxist capitalism that occasionally inspired unconventional interpretations, the mass itself acts like an individual and is disciplined as one. The class, in this case, is a monolithic structure for a plurality of individuals. Consequently, at least in terms of this ideological context, modestly sketched in a couple of words, the transpolitical episode appears to be “signalling the end of the revolutionary age and the birth of a new, more individualistic one” (Lilla 1994, 211).

From the individualism of the class to the individualism of the individual, the transpolitical movement ensures the post-communist transition to democracy. Individual freedom, personalised, diversified, seduced by consumption, explains the manner in which “alienation in the classical Marxist sense is therefore over, but it has been replaced by the inauthentic search for satisfaction in an endless stream of fleeting experiences” (211). Equivalences, in this case, or simple social replacements of the communist symptoms of individualism with democratic ones, are regarded as experiential intervals that create and spread practices of transition.
I. The post-communist transition to democracy as transpolitical individualism

How can we consider the transpolitical individualism a paradigmatic product of the historical transition from communism to democracy when, at a first glimpse, individualism is regarded not as a reactionary movement, but also as a continuing reform of the tradition of the Subject, by shifting from holist to individualist expressions, from masses to social atoms?

Lipovetsky’s opinion is that transition involves a multidimensional crisis examined in “the spirit of May”, that “can only truly be understood in the context of the rise of modern individualism” (Lipovetsky 1994, 212). In Tocqueville’s acceptance, individualism keeps the pattern of the intimate, particular way of life, often reflecting the wakening social bond. What does individualism originally mean?

On the one hand, it means withdrawal into private life: individuals turn in upon themselves, pursuing only their own, private interests. On the other, it indicates an indifference to public life: individualism is equated with ‘de-politicization’, that is, with limited participation in communal activities and little interest in maintaining ties to the collectivity. Given the understanding of the term, it might be difficult to see May ’68 as a movement promoting individualism. (213)

And yet, we have already proposed transpolitical individualism as transition from the communism to democracy. As any revolutionary movement, the event from May ’68 represents a mass-action, a collective mobilization

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2 Beneton and Touchard formulated eight possible hermeneutical approaches to the event: “May ’68 as a conspiracy, the de Gaulian inspiration being the principal motor of a subversive conspiracy of the representants of the revolutionary moment; 2. May ’68 as a university crisis, the resistance of the masses to bureaucratic and communist oppression being an intellectual attitude and threat; 3. May ’68 as an outbreak of adolescent rebellion and fever; 4. May ’68 as a crisis of civilisation, seduced by the consumer society, the social nihilism of particular values or by new trends in the future released society; 5. May ’68 as a new type of class conflict, generated not by economic criterions, but by social, cultural and political directions; 6. May ’68 as a social conflict of a traditional type, configured as an eruption of a certain class/social groups; 7. May ’68 as a political crisis, affected and stimulated by ministerial conflicts; 8. May ’68 as a chain of circumstantial
that expressed the need to reinforce the values of individualism as symptoms of the crisis of capitalism, as well as a common principle to politicize the popular discourses seeking an ideal of solidarity among demonstrators. The proletariat was not only accepted and accommodated, but it was converted into a revolutionary class whose consciousness, detached from the image of a dictated sequence or a normalized reaction, created a set of clear individualist claims and aspirations.

May ’68 is the main European refusal to a disciplinary way of life. Revolution becomes necessary, even if it is followed by conventionalism. On the one hand, I argue in favour of interpreting the May ’68 historical event following the equation discipline-revolution-convention, announced at the beginning of this research, as origin for the rise of transpolitical individualism. On the other hand, this pattern allows explaining transition not only as a mechanism developed in the three mentioned phases, but also as a boundary between ‘before’ and ‘after’; transition means, in these terms, prospecting possibilities for a new regime.

Lipovetsky considers that the specific individualism promoted by May ’68 is a hyperbolical variation of the project of individualism advanced by Dumont, whose doctrine was “simultaneously affirming the ideals of equality and the individual autonomy by placing the social atom fist” (214). The individual is privileged in an absolute form during the revolutionary effervescence of May ’68: absolute freedom is, in this case, the source for the first imperative of any democratic society: “it is forbidden to forbid”, as the revolutionary motto recalls. Therefore,

events, as a hybrid of social, political, cultural, even religious and intellectual reasons.” (P. Beneton, J. Touchard 1970, 503-504).

Lipovetsky argues that “even if there was no clear objective, even if the movement never had as its goal the total overthrow of power, even if it distinguished itself with its complete indifference to specifically political solutions, May’68 must take its place within a revolutionary tradition that sought to transform society from bottom to top. The intent was to exacerbate conflict and promote social agitation, to oppose the establishment, and to incite a permanent struggle that could mobilize young people and workers against the very structure of the ‘proprietary police state’. The May movement wanted to create a break in history and fix a boundary between ‘before’ and ‘after’. If only for a few weeks, it opened up the revolutionary possibility that ‘anything is possible’” (Lipovetsky 1994, 213).
freedom and recognised individualism are required. The political machine embodied by the oppressive state needs a society opened to the opposite: against dictated structures, freedom calls for individual creation. “Power to the imagination!” is one of the popular ideals shouted in the public space as the main expression for the will to power. It reminds that France, at that time, was not covered by social practices that prohibited the free expression of opinion, but it was severely restrictive with individual motives for social actions. Communism, in its own manner, normalized public and private conducts. They could have been self-criticized, but for social behaviour, any action had behind it a *dictée*. This is why, at a first glimpse, an argument might be easily conceived pleading for the acceptance of the fact that “moreover, May ’68 established a new, antiestablishment and utopian individualism” (214). With the strength of a public manifesto in favor of individualism, the May ’68 demanded an “antibureaucratic, antihierarchical and antiauthoritarian order” (214), as Lipovetsky observed.

Hence, the rebellion signified, in these terms, a rejection of a political persuasion, born for an individual sovereignty. As any revolt, it was cultivating its own utopias and, at this level, it cannot be denied the existence of certain utopias that empowered communism. In this sense, the entire analysis that Lipovetsky provided on the fall of the communist regime as origin of the transpolitical individualism concentrates on arguing that the social voice of the mass called for the recognition of individuality, individualism and individual rights and practices. Consequently, Lipovetsky’s investigation, performed with ‘the mass’ eye’, insists on the fact that the most fashionable utopia was that of realizing the impossible. The entire social movement was concentrated on assessing the chances of democracy of being a social order of opened possibilities for the individual’s existence regarded as private and public dimension: “*Be realistic. Demand the impossible!*”. The message, converted into an expressive graffiti, was an exponent of the “irruption of this poetic and hedonist utopia” that “could be found on walls everywhere” (215). What might seem unimportant from the backstage of the May ’68 episode, but is far from that, is the abolishment of the impersonal value of the mass itself. The austere manifestations were substituted by personal imperatives, and, in this case, what is
personal must be understood as individual. As quips and slogans were writing and yelling freedom in an authentic formula – “Life is elsewhere!”; “I love you, Revolution”; “I am a Marxist... Groucho faction” – a passionate individualism was overcoming, by celebrating the free expression of the human being in all the aspects of his private life, starting with conceiving an adequate perception of the life as vital value to which the taboo discourse of the sexual expression has been added, as Lipovetsky noticed. Why are these contents relevant for defining transpolitical individualism?

The prevailing mood of May was not a petit bourgeois individualism, but an individualism that can be called transpolitical, in which the political and the existential, the public and the private, the ideological and the poetic, collective struggle and personal gratification, revolution and humor, all become inextricably intertwined. (…) May ’68 blurred the line between public and private, just as it scrambled the traditional codes of militancy (Lipovetsky 1994, 215).

But, in Lipovetsky’s terms, this movement is regarded as a manifesto for the consumption society, one that argued freedom and individualism in order to let the human being transpose hedonism into a universal principle of private and public action, no longer isolated. Gaining individualism, the May ’68 launched a cultural revolution “demanding everything right now!”5, including freedom and the individual’s reaction. The individual himself is a product of the ideology of the modern hedonism: otherwise, he could have never fight for autonomy, conceived as possibility to perform unconstrained options of satisfying personal and personalized capitalist needs.

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4 “Change life!”, in this scene, means changing the society, in Lipovetsky’s opinion. Revolution and individualism are principal coordinates for the new society, one that has the new function to please the individual by letting him to express his own pleasures.

5 “Yet, in this own way, the spirit of May recaptured what historically has been the central tenet of the consumer society: hedonism. The ideology of modern hedonism – a phenomenon inseparable from the rise of democratic individualist society – was that consumer society made hedonism the universal goal by entirely redefining lifestyles and personal aspiration (...)” (216).
By emphasizing permissiveness, humor and fun, the spirit of May was largely molded by the very thing whose damaging effects it denounced on the euphoria of the consumer age. Mass hedonism, leisure time, and increased choices made possible by economic abundance all played a role in reinforcing and legitimizing the need for personal happiness and personal autonomy. May ’68 gave only the impression of opposing the capitalist creation of needs. In reality, it was the dynamic of capitalism that multiplied cravings for independence and the emergence of the hedonist utopia, a cultural revolt. (Lipovetsky 1994, 216)

The sensitive allusion is that a certain pathological evolution of capitalism required the annulment of the communist regime. Demanding everything right now, including individualism, the mass revolted using the same instruments shared by communism – the creation of needs, the feeling of alienation, the absence of leisure time. Thus, such values and instruments of social life have been reinvested in new needs that embraced a transpolitical formula. Somehow, at this time of the revolution, mechanisms of imposing discipline and conventions cooperated. Based on Lipovetsky assumptions, I consider that transpolitical individualism, as a trademark for process of transition from the post-communist social paradigm to democracy, “is undoubtedly the result of this combination of ideological escalation and mass hedonism” (216).

Is transpolitical individualism the result of a revolutionary ideology? It is, if we agree that this kind of ideology, created by principles and practices of a social and political revolt, promoted hedonism in the name of the culture of mass consumption. What was revolutionary was to find a path to satisfy and not to suppress desires. The specific pattern of any revolutionary practice involves applying a contraposition of a mass-resistance to another mass (or class) oppression. Individualism is just a demand and, at the same time, the main trait of a revolted group that fights against collective, amorphous, thus communist behaviors. The beginning of the transition movement originated into a mass attitude, meaning a non-individual one:

However, the logic of revolutionary organization denies the supremacy of the individual. It demands perfect sacrifice and complete subordination of its members to the party, the proletariat, or the revolution. While revolutionary discourse affirms individualist values in theory, in practice it destroys their underlying principle in the name of collective action, history, and the construction of the future society. (Lipovetsky 1994, 217)
Transition begins with a paradox and Lipovetsky’s statement seems to support this argument rigorously. Problematic is not the product itself, because claims and demands are clear, as well as their practical instruments, but the time in which such product appeared as a representative entity for a domain of historical and ideological intervention. When does transition begin? Apparently, it originates in the revolutionary event itself. Nevertheless, the simple eruption of a rebellion does not necessarily involve the acceptance of the imposed challenges. Reactive, the revolution is a production of social practices for moral and political standards assuming a direct rejection of a recent past: time is denounced, in any manifestation of this nature as a progressive denial of intervals of compromise and sufferance. Even so, a revolt is directed toward the future as an immediate concern: challenges are projected, anticipated, in a word, premeditated. For ‘the real life’, the past and the future are developed as times for contemporary political movements and, being an atypical revolution, May ’68 not dedicated to the past, nor to the future. It deals with the present, with the instance that obsesses the individual, quartered in the narcissistic time of consumerism, immediate self-realization, and social liberation.

Lipovetsky conceives this revolutionary effervescence as a symbolic breaking with the past, followed by the contemporary withdrawal into the private dimension of the human being “where subjectivity rules supreme, and where mass discipline and constraints are rejected in the name of hedonism and relaxed moral standards” (217). Requiring and forcing a normal way of life, without moral hyperbolas, the mass as collective Subject dissolves, individuals being attached to a lax dimension of moral standards and practices. As voluntary dictées, the hedonist criteria continue the memory of rejection of mass discipline at a smaller scale. Therefore, as a set of practices, the cluster of ‘trans’ elements (transpolitical, transnational, transcultural, etc.) involves scrolling and crossing over the extremes: transition means correspondence. As a temporal process, from the hermeneutic expression of its proceeding, transition means actualization, more specifically, bringing-to-presence of social freedom and individualism. The transpolitical movement required, as it might be considered, the privatization of postwar lifestyle, reforming the authority perception, in the manner suggested by Alain Touraine.
Individualism glorified the civil society postulating democracy through a modest intervention of the technocratic contents: because of these aspects, prevailing the temporal incursions launched by the revolution, Touraine’s perspective (who claims that the May ’68 movement is a typical revolution which “has no tomorrow; it has a future”) may be easily rejected. The privatization of the social sphere seems to have been the only element applied for a suitable transition from the post-communist context to democracy. If we remain loyal to Lipovetsky’s position, the last authentic revolutionary spirit died at once with May ’68. It was a moment of consciousness, and transition involves the results of a process of consciousness.

Twenty-five years later, after the exhaustion of these political opposition movements, we can see that May ’68, had no future. It was not the avant-garde of social conflicts yet to come but a final mass irruption, haunted by an obsolete revolutionary imagination inherited from the past. In no way did May announce the restricting of the society; indeed, it signalled the very opposite. It was a psychodramatic and parodic end to the revolutionary age. (218)

The transition to democracy did not mean rebellion or retirement of the individual into an autonomous, intimate space of his consumerist life. It is rather based on a conventional continuity of the results gained by a successful revolution. I consider that any revolt followed by a conventional, retired, individual life pattern, plays a decisive role in setting up the process of postmodern personalisation of democracy. Lipovetsky argued that May ’68 was a revolution born not against totalitarian oppression, but against a sort of dictée that guided and normalised social reactions and behaviours of the Subjects whose right to free expression has no longer been constrained. This specific situation evokes, through the existence of certain rights and moral standards, the first age of democracy: May’68 was a manifesto for a total and undoubttable democracy, which I would like to call part of “the second age of the contemporary democratic regimes”. It enhances the role of the

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transpolitical individualism declared by Lipovetsky in dissolving traditional
democratic values, such as egalitarianism, justice or civism.

The second part of my research aims to justify this thesis by explaining,
in the background, to what extent, the triad discipline-revolution-convention, a
pattern developed by Lipovetsky in L’ère du vide. Essais sur l’individualisme
contemporain, can be accepted as the equation of transition.

II. The second democratic revolution as a second age of individualism:
transition in a hedonist era. Why is transpolitical individualism
the result of discipline abolished through revolution and followed
by conventions?

Modern individualism addressed by Lipovetsky is usually recognised as
symptom of contemporary societies condemned for carrying “an orphan
culture of its moral traditional contents” (Tremblay 2002, 136) in which
the entertainment becomes a core value. On the contrary, Lipovetsky is
one of those contemporary voices who considers, inspired by Daniel
Bell, that the hedonist era relies on the consumer revolution developed
in the middle of the 20th century, representing no plausible threat to the
capitalist order, constituted on the values of work, proletariat and
sacrifice. For the French philosopher, consumption, through its hedonist
ideology, holds the paternity of a second democratic revolution. The
prevalence of the postmodern seduction of the relations of power, the
neuralgic contents of the contemporary public and political discourses,
the cult of corporeality, the obsessive psychologizing of interpersonal
relationships or the ludic and humoristic ways of life provoke, according
to Lipovetsky, the dissolution of the main ideologies.

Taking into account this complete set of observations, the main
challenge is to prove the validity of this context assimilated as the
inheritance of transition, meaning not as a process of undermining the
contemporary values of democracy, but as a manner to enhance what
Lipovetsky recognised as “the second age of individualism” (Lipovetsky
1983). This period is represented by the fact that the individual, understood
through a specific figure of the autonomy of the Subject, reconsiders
freedom under new circumstances and conditions, exercising democracy
in the formula of the transpolitical individualism. By this, transpolitical individualism reveals being the product of the process of transition. There is a correspondence between the three stages of the process of transition – one of disciplinary practices – one of revolutionary mechanisms – and one of rising conventions for a new social order – and the types of individualism identified by Lipovetsky. I will argue that to each element of the political order configured by the succession discipline-revolution-convention corresponds a certain form of individualism from the three recognised by the French philosopher – responsible, hedonist and narcissistic individualisms\(^7\). They are all regarded as intervals of personalising the democratic culture, at the end of which the ideology of the transpolitical individualism rises as a product of transition and primary source of the consumption society.

II.1. Transition means personalising democracy: a new political utopia, the liberal democracy

In the second age of democracy, personalising (Lipovetsky 1983) contemporary political regimes can be understood through the triad discipline-revolution-convention, which allows the concentration of individualism, otherwise hostile to any collective regimentation formula, on a new dimension of disciplining and normalising the Subject obsessed with constructing

\(^7\) This thesis is supported by a point of view that conceives that any totalitarian regime is acting as a disciplinary social and political form of control, proposing an oppressive normalising process to a Subject that reacts to it by a revolutionary manifestation born in the name of its autonomy. Any victorious democratic gesture obtained in this manner is followed by a conventional context that dominated the individuals’ ways of life: silence and rehabilitation begin with its specific normalisation process, but it is a discipline imposed and controlled by the individual itself. In these terms, individualism gains the entire postmodern arena by making the individual responsible for its own decisions and social actions, for the care of the self and for the self-governance cultivated, despite anything else, by a narcissist imperative that dictates hedonist interventions, the orientation to the satisfaction through consumerism, abundance, disqualification of the work-value and welfare. These latter elements explain the particularities, in brief terms, of the responsible, hedonist and narcissistic individualism discussed by Lipovetsky.
new instruments to politically implement personal societal aspirations. According to Lipovetsky, the order of these elements represents the morphological structure of personalising postmodern democratic societies that radically shape two historical eras: modernity and postmodernity. Consequently, “if the modern period is dominated by production and revolution, the postmodern era is represented by information and expression” (Lipovetsky 1983, 26). The latter is characterised by the informative seduction of the public sphere that entertains globalisation through the powerful emergence between the political sphere and the managerial trend in creating orders, even social ones. Attitudes and moral contents such as cordiality, confidence, proximity, decentralisation, authenticity and individualist-democratic values support the consecution of disciplinary forces, whereas liberating revolutions and normalising conventions express the obvious tension between the hyperinvestment of the private dimension in the community’s life and the demobilization of the public space through a “social desertion” of traditional values and institutions. The transition is, in fact, a progressive accommodation of the individual with the private space as coexistent and legitimate dimension to the public one. But I have already agreed that transition means, by all its resources, a process developed through the three phases mentioned above. Keeping the rigorous consistence of all the terms of my analysis, it appears that transition means personalising democracy.

This is why the main objective of the second section of my research is to justify that the postmodern society advances a model of democracy inspired by the narcissist autonomy for which the social individualist logic is both therapeutic and psychologizing. The Subject is reporting exclusively to itself and to its own body, by creating and managing a personal time. Personalising democracy means creating democracy as a self-construction. The ironic political culture and the social sanctions are opened by the entertainment that performs a double function. It allows the individual “to conceive the understanding of its own destiny, of the self-evidence, of conventions, following freely the spirit’s freedom”, and it creates a space for the individual “to strength his ego, expressing the self-dominance without impulsivity or political violence” (26).
This picture refers, in Lipovetsky’s perspective, to the historical dignity of an individual who assumes the revolt of the social vide, the violence which belongs not to the classes, but to the grounds of our society, to each individual in part. At the beginning of any revolution, violence is entertained by media instruments that export the consciousness of the individual in the public sphere. In fact, Lipovetsky observes that in postmodernity, democracy cannot support any other political project excepting liberal democracies, whereas partidism has detached itself from the process of the violent deconstruction. Media is launching “an allergic reaction to the aggregation of the political homogenous visions about the world”, encouraging the generalisation of the pragmatic spirit of any community, the mobilisation and the taste for individual autonomy. Transition becomes, under these circumstances, a project of the “post-ideological emotions of the social movements” animated by the entire media system, meant to construct “postmodern democracy in accord with the individual wishes and tendencies for the Subject’s autonomy and for self-government” (Lipovetsky 2000, 137-138).

Lipovetsky’s perspective is an opposite theoretical position to that of Baudrillard, who claims that released masses from the oppressive control of the dominant culture are exponents of a new cultural paradigm, which we might understand as a process of personalising democracy. Unlike Baudrillard, Lipovetsky argues that the dominant culture lacks the disciplinary power, which represents an indispensable source for the individual freedom. Taking into account this context, I consider that societies released from the order discipline-revolution-convention can produce a personalized democratic culture by fulfilling “the vide of a new political utopia – the liberal democracy” (Lipovetsky 1983, 112) of a regime devoted to normalise the Subject’s most intimate wishes, through the new ideology of consumerism. In terms of consumption, the Subject performs three different types of individualism – which Lipovetsky recognises as hedonist, responsible or narcissist. However, I consider that there is a fourth structure of individualism, that I assumed being the transpolitical one, regarded as main consequence of personalising democracy and developing transition. But if Lipovetsky’s critical position on May ‘68 is accepted, and thus we accept expressing the utopic individualism by creating a regime opposed to the hyperbolas of bureaucracies and
hierarchies, then it is impossible to say that the social conduct inspired by the victory of the revolution can be associated with any pattern of social disorder. This is why I claim that this phenomenon recommends understanding revolution as a shift from discipline to convention. In these terms, personalising democracy is conceived as creating individual conventions for a social collective dimension.

II.2. Democratic revolutions as a possible heritage of capitalism.

Daniel Bell, Gilles Lipovetsky and Luc Ferry on two fundamental consequences of the post-communist transition to democracy

To put all in a nutshell, transition was inspired by the modern gesture of assigning to capitalism “the principle of renewal”. It would be an innovative argument to express the discipline and obedience proper to communism as an asceticism created from “the valorisation of work and effort”\(^8\), aspects recognized by Daniel Bell as patterns of the first phase of capitalism. From asceticism to the hedonist culture, capitalism privileged the appearance of consumption, but is consumption one of the most authentic and correct aspects and manifestations belonging to transition? Bell would deny it. The corporatist gratification which takes the individual as an emancipated prisoner and the ludic pattern of the intimate life oriented toward the cultural exigency to satisfy personal desires are subjected to an incommensurable incompatibility.

In Bell’s view, this first contradiction risks creating a second one, between the cultural (hedonist) order and the politico-judicial one, theoretically dominated by the principles of democracy. If the need for efficiency is seriously disturbed by the demand for pleasure, the risk of economic recession appears, creating the frustration of the satisfaction of desires that can favour resorting to a seemingly capable, heaven-sent someone to correct the situation, even at the sacrifice of democracy. This is the source of Bell’s political pessimism in predicting the inevitable decline of the principal of democratic legitimacy. (Ferry 1990, 50)

\(^8\) Daniel Bell \textit{apud} Lipovetsky 1983, 92.
But, for Lipovetsky, this argument is not sufficient in order to destroy the power of the secular construction of democracy based on the sovereignty of the individual. I rather prefer the contrast between the Lipovetskyan paradigm and the one proposed by Bell, because it appears to be understood by Luc Ferry as a formula of transition loyal to the movements specific to our contemporary times. Such arguments synthesize the entire construction about transition agreed as source of the transpolitical individualism understood in terms of a process developed in two phases.

The first one expresses transition as succession of modern and postmodern figures of equality and “sets in motion the act of legitimizing all subjects” (Lipovetsky 1983, 99), as Lipovetsky argued. Capitalism, through its dynamics, in a sense, insists on the acceptance of the fact that “modernism and postmodernism are merely the continuation of the democratic revolution by other means” (98).

The second one is developed in the direction of arguing “the transition from modernism to postmodernism as a consequence of the rise of consumerism in the postwar period” (Ferry 1990, 51). The 1960s became, in this context, a moment of coagulation certified by a rupture: democratizing the hedonist logic seemed right at that time, the protest being not generated by a string political framework or by a program, but by the need to attest social differences as an exigency. “Modernism and postmodernism are thus linked during the ‘68 period, as the hot moment and the cool moment in a single process” (51).

This is why le désordre nouveau was a perfect mechanism for transition: discipline was substituted by the satisfaction of individual desires. At this instance, I strongly believe that Ferry noticed accurately that

[i]n one sense, May was indeed a revolt of subjects against norms, in the sense that individualism was being defended against any claims for the universality of norms. But at the same time, the hyperbolic affirmation of individuality set in motion a process that led quite predictably in the direction of the disintegration of the Ego as autonomous will, the destruction of the classical idea of the subject. (Ferry 1990, 64)

Unconstrained consciousness is, authentically, a proper term for freedom, seduced by a contemporary narcissism. Paradoxically, intersubjective
relations between the exponents of the so-called "revolutionary class" are a perfect proof for the impression of the Subject’s death. Lipovetsky concludes that “the mode for understanding other people is neither that they are equals nor that they are unequals” (Lipovetsky 1983, 186-187). Hence, once that individualism is powerful, the pattern of thinking the intersubjective relations is transposed in a new paradigm in which actors are mutually assumed as ‘loony gadgets’, as simple revolted and dissatisfied masks. The Other counts because he has his own exigencies on the same principles for freedom and individuality: starting from this point of view a radical critique of subjectivity is conceived, one which pretends that “the subject dies with the birth of the individual” (Ferry 1990, 66). And, to maintain the coherence of the current analysis, this statement will impose a different conception of the process of transition, regarded as the interval meant to produce, by all its resources and instruments, the disappearance of the Subject. Even if the current analysis has no aim in solving this potential and pertinent dilemma, what is representative at this level is the struggle that the philosophy of the sixties had with the destruction of the Subject and with the critique of the Subject that developed in the following two decades.

III. Conclusions

At the end of this analysis, it is fair at least to admit the fact that the transition to democracy reveals the nature of a process that makes the Subject responsible for his own narcissist, hedonist, intimate desires, continuing to be disciplined, as long as discipline means understanding and performing certain roles of the Individual. Maintaining several social practices from the old regime with the exigency of performing them in the name of different values, moral standards or vital principles, the age of the new individualism proposes the ideology of trans- as an honest and complete request. Transition is the continuing revolution of the individuals, even if, taking into account all the partial conclusions of the previous analysis, one might argue that it has generously and superficially given to the individuals just a collective sense for a private
way of life full of conventions suggested by the consumerism and the innovative patterns of capitalism.

Assumptions such as Ferry’s ones opened the possibility of the only crime that this second revolution of democracy could be blamed of: the disappearance of the Subject. But this simple interrogation turns us back to the need to construct a consistent explanation for the mechanism that concreted the dominant figure of the Subject being given by the Individual’s sovereignty, as well as a good argument for extracting a plausible explanation for any democratic revolution as a personalizing process of an existent political regime in three phases. First, by rejecting a given form of discipline; secondly, by destroying it publically, in revolutionary backgrounds and thirdly, by creating a new order, assimilated as a source for new life-conventions. The replicative equation of a disciplinary regime, that is simply changing the author, from the politicized, oppressive sovereign, to the released and autonomous Individual, is not the only relevant content of the current analysis. Acknowledging the new democratic age, grounded on transpolitical individualism, might enhance a paradigm of new excesses, as the hyperbolic affirmation of individuality confronts us with the possibility of thinking transition not as an ended process, but as an interval of affirming democracy still being, following Wilentz’s observation, ‘a work in progress’.

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