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Revista de Filosofia Aurora, vol. 35, e202330887, 2023

Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Paraná, Editora
PUCPRESS - Programa de Pós-Graduação em Filosofia

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1590/2965-1557.35.e202330887>

Available in: <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=673374964037>

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Vitalist Capitalism, Ethos and Lethalism

Capitalismo vitalista, ethos e letalismo

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Como citar: FRAUSTO, O. Vitalist Capitalism, Ethos and Lethalism. *Revista de Filosofia Aurora*, Curitiba, v. 35, e202330887, 2023. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.1590/2965-1557.35.e202330887>.

Abstract

New vitalism has established a connection between vitalism and ethos, maintaining a normative understanding of life that acknowledges opposing forces like pain, suffering, illness, and mortality as beneficial attitudes that enhance vitalism. I contend that the new vitalism holds a normative standpoint that is significant in Canghilem's appreciation of life. This article explores the relationship between vitalism and ethos within the context of vitalist capitalism. In this article, I explain the connection between vitalism and ethos within the category of vitalist capitalism from a descriptive standpoint. This concept is fueled by four distinct philosophies, namely Christianity, Aristotelianism, Mechanism, and Biologism, which all interact and produce a new form of lethalism.

Keywords: New Vitalism. Ethos. Capitalist Vitalism. Lethalism.

Resumo

O novo vitalismo estabeleceu uma ligação entre o vitalismo e o ethos, mantendo uma compreensão normativa da vida que reconhece forças opostas como a dor, o sofrimento, a doença e a mortalidade como atitudes benéficas que reforçam o vitalismo. Defendo que o novo vitalismo mantém um ponto

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de vista normativo que é significativo na apreciação da vida por parte de Cangilhem. Este artigo explora a relação entre o vitalismo e o ethos no contexto do capitalismo vitalista. Neste artigo, explico a ligação entre vitalismo e ethos na categoria do capitalismo vitalista de um ponto de vista descritivo. Este conceito é alimentado por quatro filosofias distintas, nomeadamente o Cristianismo, o Aristotelismo, o Mecanicismo e o Biologicismo, que interagem e produzem uma nova forma de letalismo.

Palavras-chave: Novo Vitalismo. Ethos. Vitalismo Capitalista. Letalismo.

Introduction

There has been a prominent schism between vitalism and ethos since the emergence of the vitalism school in the 19th century (Weik, 2022). In spite of the fact that theorists of the new vitalism have noticed the connection between these two categories in recent years (Greco, 2021; Osborne, 2016), they have done so through the lens of life and death, conceiving ethos as a way of thinking primarily derived from Canguilhem's normative perspective. However, ethos encompasses diverse perspectives. Bolívar Echeverría possessed the ability to identify different forms of ethos and understand their spatial arrangement and hierarchical and historical connections. The new vitalism could benefit from comprehending the diverse ethos present in various schools of thinking in connection with I call the vitalist capitalism. The normative definition of life, as embraced by new vitalism, incorporates ethos, pathos, sickness, and death. This paper seeks to explore the emergence of the vitalist capitalism and its potential implications for advancing our comprehension of different ethos approaches. This study examines the categorizations proposed by MacIntyre, Taylor, and Echeverría to provide insight into this topic. In this article, I will adopt a descriptive approach rather than a normative one to examine the detrimental impact of the broadening concept of sickness and death on society. The emphasis on human life within Western ethos is exaggerated, leading to a disregard for other dimensions of life. Consequently, this emphasis inadvertently contributes to increased environmental destruction and human fatalities. The concept of life through ethos suggests that life is the convergence of various ethos forms and their respective conceptions of life. This essay aims to delineate four distinct types of ethos that pertain to comprehending contemporary society, specifically in relation to capitalism. One perspective posits that life, within a spiritual context, underscores the cultural imposition and dominance inherent in the Christian concept of eternity, which necessitates physical suffering through acts of service. The second issue pertains to Greek anthropocentrism, which serves as a justification for the destruction of nature. Furthermore, the concept of life is portrayed in mechanical physics, emphasizing the significance of artifacts and artificial entities. This highlights the exceptional nature of life, which has been overshadowed by the dominance of machines over human lives in our current society. The fourth perspective is biologism, which tacitly acknowledges social injustices and inequalities due to the inherent unfairness of nature.

New vitalism

Vitalism is a school of thinking that emerged in Europe during the second half of the 19th century as a type of metaphysical approach to understanding the origin of life favoring physical and biological perspectives over other disciplines. Physics sees life as a mechanical process with a complex system of chemical reactions guided by physical laws. Biology sees life as various processes allowing organisms to grow, reproduce, and survive in their environment. Yet, physics and biology's notions of life have been extrapolated to other scientific disciplines (Canguilhem, 2008). This hierarchical and, for some, imperial structure of science is a form of domination and imposition, which is the clearest distinction between humanity and nature, life and death, humans and nonhumans.

In the last decades of the 20th century, vitalism has been questioned and even considered obsolete in derogatory terms, mainly because of vitalism's acceptance of the theory of evolution to explain the notion of life. Back when the theory of evolution was not accepted, vitalism was distrusted. Critics of the theory of evolution have questioned its validity by asserting that the proposed

mechanism of the drive to live is inadequate. Some proponents contended that natural selection and life-sustaining processes are characterized by their lack of consciousness, intention, and mechanistic nature. (Dawkins, 1988). Also, they acknowledged that there are other perspectives in which the term life is appropriate in certain areas and disciplines, but when it is extrapolated to other regions it is unsuitable (Prigogine and Stengers, 1984). For others, the very term vitalism is ambiguous. How life is defined and originated must be clarified because life's properties can simultaneously come from chemical and biological forces. It is clearly a challenge to establish how life arose (Lecourt, 2006).

To have a proper conception of life, some academics have proposed a renewed vitalism in which there are attempts to make distinctions between mechanism, materialism, and vitalism. Others have focused on establishing metaphysical principles and specific teleological directions. Regarding theorists attempts to create a more apparent difference between life and nonlife, Benton (1974) posits that there are different types of vitalism, such as physiological vitalism, chemical vitalism, organic behavior, phenomenalist vitalism, nomological vitalism, and morphogenic vitalism. This classification seeks support to clarify the limits and frontiers of the physical and biological spheres. Wuketits (1989) proposed another interesting perspective of vitalism, distinguishing between animalism and naturalism. The first has a clearer view of metaphysical principles and a teleological orientation. The second one is moved by organic natural laws that go beyond physical rules.

For some theorists, it is important to revisit the ideas of Georges Canguilhem, who plays an important role in the history of vitalism and whose philosophy is nourished by a metaphysical approach to life. Canguilhem defines life from a normative perspective rather than using a positive and explanatory framework. His definition of life is based on a self-regulation process that separates life from non-life. This notion of life is a value. Canguilhem's central concept, echoed in current discussions, posits that the cognitive faculties of living beings constitute a prerequisite for their existence as living beings. Normative epistemology precedes ontology. In other words, normative epistemology comes before ontology. Bergson's philosophy inspired Canguilhem regarding one of the *elan vital*, or the vital forces, which is a critique of the mechanical conception of the living. Bergson's philosophy was an ethical reflection that questions the false intertwining of mysticism, romanticism, and fascism. For Canguilhem, Bergson helps find a balance between the machine and the organism by treating machines and artifacts as extensions of biological organisms. Machines are not physical objects but cultural constructions. Technics is a part of human experience. Machines are organic human extensions. After studying philosophy and epistemology, Canguilhem (2013) studied medicine for a more specific and concrete exploration. Based on his studies, he wrote *La normalité et la pathologie*, in which he questions Pasteur's notion of pathology, defined as an external phenomenon that affects the internal parts of the organism. Canguilhem argues that disease originates in the organism because the organism cannot establish its norm over the environment. For Canguilhem, sickness is always a value, i.e., constructed by the individual, which judges the relations and interaction with what is outside of the individual (Lecourt, 2008). Pathology is a state in which the individual does not function according to his/her values and norms. In conclusion, Canguilhem proposes a form of vitalism opposite to the mechanism. In this framework, the tool associated with the mechanism is more aggressive towards nature because it comes from an artificial notion that tends to dominate nature instead of adapting to it. He argues that vitalism is more respectful of life in general and might be a better way to approach philosophical problems to contrast the increasing influence of society's technification.

New vitalism is reinstating Canguilhem's ideas, mainly because of his emphasis on a normative approach and how values establish circumstances and possibilities to understand life. The "Vitality of Vitalism," as Greco (2021) titled her article in reference to her new categorization of a new vitalism, is a revival of Canguilhem's thinking that actuality lies in establishing differences and similarities among disciplines such as physics, chemistry, and biology. In the end, the vitality of vitalism requires that we think about life once again. We return to the reflection that life is not based on a method, as Canguilhem suggested, but on an ethical system that allows us to establish values about life. Here, Greco indicates that it is necessary to connect vitalism with ethos precisely because ethos presupposes ethical values, customs, characters, and dispositions supporting a way of life. The vitalist ethos differs from modernity which emphasizes the control of human desires, being indifferent to nature, and ignoring cultural traditions. Contrary to modernity, the vitalist ethos teaches us to be comfortable with uncertainty and open to pathos, a sensitivity that is the foundation for another ontological norm, in Canguilhem's terms; thus we should not consider it an exception as modern thinking does. Instead, the sensibility of pathos allows death, pain, suffering, destruction, and disintegration to become the norm and not the exception in life.

Skeptical vitalism is another philosophical feature that new vitalism acknowledged based on Canguilhem's ideas. This skeptical vitalism, rather than providing a positive definition of life arising mainly from the physical and philosophical disciplines, expands skeptical questions into different fields to detect problems to be solved and to avoid reductionist conceptions of life. Due to the difficulty, we have in agreeing on what the unique source of life was, it is better to look for uncertainties inspired by skepticism if we are to continue improving relations among scientific disciplines. This is why Canguilhem's idea of vitalism as a duty rather than a determination or generalized concept helps keep the terminology of life open to discussion. For Canguilhem, life is mostly a milieu or a medium in which the organism constantly interacts with the environment. The milieu is not fighting between opposing forces; rather, it is balancing them. Instead of expanding on the conception of life and finding life in other matters, Canguilhem is seeking life-based origins in different disciplines, accepting, and assessing opposing definitions of life. Rather than life being determined, life is an act of normative determination. Life is constantly posing problems concerning the environment. In conclusion, the originality of life is a precondition of our being and our way of thinking and acting. Life is investing in norms, and norms are producing life. This is the normality of life.

Some critics of Canguilhem's notion of life argue that he cannot escape from the biological foundations of life, and his vitalism in the end is biological reductionism (Lecourt, 1998). Canguilhem aimed to challenge the dominance of biology over other disciplines, although some argue that he inadvertently employed a different form of imperialism. In this case, the imperial disciplines refer to a philosophical approach that prioritizes values centered on uniquely human knowledge of life (Haraway, 1991). Other authors say that Canguilhem's notion of life is insufficient to understand new advances in society in which life is further extended to different dimensions, such as animalism, physical entities, or cybernetic dimensions. Some even propose abandoning Canguilhem's philosophical project of defining a normative life, because only humans can explain it, and even that definition is still substantive. With the new technological advances in genetics and molecular biology, his notion of life is no longer adequate (Rose, 1998).

There is another current in understanding the new vitalism that arises from reinterpretations of Whitehead, especially with Deleuze's greater emphasis on comprehending the process and the

becoming of living organisms and nature as opposed to social and cultural entities (Stengers, 2011; Fraser, Kember, and Lury, 2005; Lash, 2006; Deleuze, 1991). This perspective is not centered on biological disciplines. Still, it highlights the importance of the becoming in which there is an increasing interaction of interdisciplinary understanding of the phenomenon of life. The notion of life encompasses dimensions that have not been previously considered alive, such as physical forces and cybernetic operating systems. This conception of becoming is also inspired by Bergson's belief that humans are not divided into body and spirit but rather into two material bodies. The two bodies are related to each other through perception and image. They vary according to different interests. Bergson defines the two bodies as matter-image ontology. Bergson introduces the notion of memory. Memory is the equivalent of life, an inward flexion, and an interval between action and reaction. This reflective moment is a loop of self-organization. To Bergson, immanence is not flatness, but an inward flexion, known as the virtual. This notion inspired Deleuze, insofar as the virtual can be explained as the plane of immanence, which comprises transcendental empiricism. Deleuze and Guattari talk about "desiring machines." The forces of vitalism and organicism subsume the mechanism. For these authors, labor is replaced by desire as capitalism's moving force. Capitalism has become schizophrenic. Processes of life are characterized by radical relationality. Social and natural worlds are open-ended relations. There are no pre-existing entities and objects but reciprocal and contingent relations. This relation goes beyond the previous distinction of culture, nature, and artificial. They are conglomerates that interact in a new becoming. The conception of time and space are not outside but within the processes. Change does not occur in time and space; time and space change according to their specific position. Another vital aspect is that becoming is more important than being. It is the flux of life that only can be understood as a passage (Fraser, Kember, and Lury, 2005).

One of the more important criticism of this perspective questions whether a broader and more extended notion of life might not lose some of its original and specific conceptions involving, for example, human beings. One such critique is articulated by Osborne (2016), who proposes that pathos is a more straightforward concept that captures the actual dimension of life. His epistemological strategy consists of employing Canguilhem's vitalism of value, combining it with Nietzsche's concept of death and life, and rejecting the will to power. According to Osborn, machines have teleologically directed purposes and functions. Unlike artifacts, biological organisms are susceptible to pathos. Canguilhem establishes a distinction between normality and pathology, which he defines as a reduced order rather than an end. Osborn argues, influenced by Nietzsche, that life is experienced through pathos. Therefore, vitalism is predominantly pathological rather than morally affirmative. It would be better to recognize that vital organisms might fail and then get sick and die. Summarizing, life is not an affirmation of life, but the opposite; life is a death sentence. However, this emphasis does not mean we should be pessimistic or miserable. Osborn notes that Nietzsche differentiates between pathos and ethos. Pathos is an emotion searching for knowledge through art with the particularity of seclusion from life forms expressed in ethos. Pathos and ethos are opposites.

New vitalism enables us to comprehend that life has an ethos with a normative or evaluative quality. New vitalism is missing that ethos has a tradition with a place and a time, i.e. situated in a particular historical era. Traditions have a way of perpetually enacting themselves, but they allow individuals to question and expand them in specific ways. As Alasdair MacIntyre explains, ethos is comprised of historical traditions that have both constrained and enabled it. In the following section, I must return to the beginning. I will explain what ethos means. There is no straightforward research

on this concept alone. Secondary references and descriptions of ethos can be found in the works of Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor, and Bolívar Echeverría, which I will outline in the next section. MacIntyre associates ethos with a dynamic and discerning tradition that has been superseded by historical developments. Taylor connects ethos with pathos as a form of ethics of recognition. Echeverría is bringing diverse and multiple geographical ethos.

The notion of Ethos

In this section, I discuss ethos. To start, I need to make a distinction regarding the German notion of *lebensphilosophie*. The phenomenological concept of life has its roots and intersections in Husserl and Dilthey. Husserl's notion of *Lebens* is a method of understanding the world where human intentions play a crucial role in how we experience and make sense of the world around us. This is more powerful than merely observing objects, as promoted by positivism. Instead of examining the world passively, the structure of consciousness and its intentionality is active and gives enormous power to subjects to embrace reality and act on it. Our consciousness is directed toward objects and imbued with meaning. For Husserl, bracketing is a natural attitude of human beings. There is a natural way of absorbing the world, but there is also another reflexive level that brackets that natural world.

Ethos, however, encompasses a different approach regarding the lifeworld. In ancient Greece, ethos means a speaker's position in a linguistic game. According to Aristotelian rhetoric, philosophy projects an image of a rhetorical speech that aims to persuade its audience. Ethos is one of the persuasion techniques that focuses exclusively on the speaker's persuasive skills, such as logos, which is the content of speech and argument, and pathos, which targets the audience's emotions. These persuasion techniques are connected with the good sense of practical knowledge expressed by virtue and good sense.

The notion of ethos has a Greek etymological root meaning "habitual place of residence", i.e., "domicile" for people or "stable" for animals. Another meaning alludes to habit and custom, and another meaning denotes mentality or way of thinking (Gandler, 1999). Ethos also contains a crucial cultural element since it originally was only a German word and did not previously exist in Spanish, English, or French academic jargon. In German, ethos is a common word. The term was used by 18th-century philosophers, although it became popular in the 20th century. The meaning of ethos refers to a social group's moral norms that drive action. Some consider that ethos has a connection with ethics. However, it more accurately indicates a morality or what is involved in a profession. Some fundamental theorists directly use the notion of ethos as a theoretical approach concerning the cultural-historical horizon in an effort to better understand late capitalism.

Alasdair MacIntyre explains his initial position on ethos in *A Short History of Ethics*, arguing that moral concepts cannot be examined beyond contextual history. Ethical concepts are only elaborated on and are constitutive of a particular interior social life. MacIntyre believes that European thinkers such as Locke, Hume, Moore, Stevenson, etc., took up Greek and Christian moral concepts, embedding them without historical contexts and acknowledging the changes of those traditional ways of living, exposing difficulties and divergence of moral significations based on their conditions of life in relation to the meanings of ancient concepts. For MacIntyre (2010), the most important aspect is to respect the historical context of how the concepts were formed. MacIntyre keeps developing the same theme in his *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, notably adding the Weberian critique of the loss of meaning by the instrumental rationalizations that accompany modernity and have destroyed ancient

ethical knowledge. MacIntyre believes that there is a deviation from the Enlightenment, which incorporated a reductive teleological and logical understanding, leading to some systematic failures of perception and human actions: 1) a reduced experience by accelerating instrumental rationality and business effectiveness; and 2) a lessened interpretational and empathic capacity of the social science to better understand the social crisis. Contemporary ethics has lost its meaning because all it analyzes are unfinished fragments of the great traditions and knowledge from the past. One of the fragments of the past that MacIntyre (2009) wants to re-claim is Aristotle's thought and notion of virtue, especially *eudaimonia*, which he thinks would help improve social practices expressed in the life of individuals and communities.

The bridge to Aristotle is Thomas Aquinas, who MacIntyre considers a reformer of Aristotle, mainly because Aquinas connects Aristotle's thinking with the Christian notion of *charity*. This intellectual integration widens one's affection for people in vulnerable situations. MacIntyre argues that returning to the Aristotelian tradition will help us eliminate our vulgar passions, replete with individualism. The modern ethical approach centers its reflection on emotivism and liberalism, mainly promoting neutrality within notions of the good life in the public social spaces created by the modern national state. MacIntyre's fundamental argument is that tradition constructs ethos. Each ethos is incommensurable with other traditions, and in its ethos interior there exist internal contestations and controversies. It is not rational thinking that makes different ethos understand each other. Instead, empathy and practical morality make the traditions understand each other (Frausto, 2020).

Another thinker who recognizes the importance of ethos is Charles Taylor (2007). Rather than begin with Aristotle, like MacIntyre, Taylor begins with Hegel, criticizing the formalism of Kantian ethics. Taylor believes that modernity has turned into a disenchanted vanishing of magical powers of objects and the world. Also, modernity has dissipated a profound connection with the sense of the cosmos and a transcendental entity that makes societal order deterministic, benefitting some elites. Taylor believes that these two orders have disappeared and have become an immanent framing. Through work and production of natural sciences, humans reproduce the best of nature in favor of human will, and this same belief applies to social science, i.e., that scientific knowledge should be able to obtain the best from human beings. However, natural and social sciences produce a reduction of expertise because such expertise needs a connection with a good and plentiful life. Taylor traces the origins of the "self" beyond modernity, which implicitly continues to operate within the deism of the Christian God, manifested in individual responsibility as a person or subject who has more to say regarding his/her destiny. The origin of the self has been lost in the confusion and fragmentation of modernity, producing individualism based on internal characteristics and personal desires. Taylor argues that the self is deeply connected and intertwined through interactions with others. We need an ethical motivation to awaken those relationships with others. A rational argument alone cannot lead us to the fulfillment of the good life. We need to expand it to the aesthetic narrative revealed in the tradition of pathos in the thinking of Schiller, Nietzsche, and Benjamin. Taylor intends to unearth notions of the good and the good life that the disenchantment of modernity has hidden. The idea is to discover and empower those worlds by recognizing them in art pieces, such as puzzle parts left by modernization. For Taylor, there is still some hope in the tradition of Judeo-Christian theism. Taylor analyzes the four maladies of modernity: individualism, the primacy of instrumental reason, technological capitalism, and the despotism of political systems. They all produce a loss of meaning, an

eclipse of the ends and goals, and a loss of freedom. Amid this confusion, an ideal of authenticity appears and develops.

The origin of authenticity arises with the disenchantment of rationalism. It had to happen this way because there was a determining moral realism. Yet, various interpretations found a common point in agnosticism, allowing a more flexible moral framework and different belief systems. Another form in which authenticity was manifested was through the reflective self-exhibition by the atomism of the community, open to dialogue with other views. The authenticity is similar to dialogic emerging with the signification and the acceptance of others. In brief, the construction of identity is updated under distinct processes. On the one hand, identity is constructed by differences that arise from familiar horizons. On the other hand, identity requires recognition of others. Taylor's quest is the universal recognition of difference or the *politics of recognition*, which requires continuous dialogue and the struggle of the signifier with others. Taylor conceives the notion of ethos as a way of life situated in a given cultural environment with economic resources and social capital, promoting a sense of rightness and obligation, establishing codes and standards, and openly declaring a way of life and an artistic expression that inspires that group to create and live.

Bolívar Echeverría believes semiotics shape modern capitalism's ethos. Echeverría examines use value, which he believes reproduces European modernity. Karl Marx's framework for capitalism focuses on use value. Marx notes that exchange-value production increasingly dominates capitalist use value production. Echeverría concludes that capitalism has different expressions. He uses Ferdinand de Saussure's theory that "langue" is an underlying system shared by its speakers using diverse languages, while "parole" is the spoken manifestation of language by a specific group of individuals and their speech capacity. Echeverría uses this theory to define concrete universalism in response to abstract universalism, specifically Eurocentrism. Echeverría studies Eurocentrism-influenced capitalist modernity. Echeverría emphasizes modernity's geography, unlike Benjamin's suggestion of reversing historical continuity. The conformation of ethos explains the religious differences within Christianity, such as Protestantism versus Catholicism, and how those religious interpretations were imposed and accepted or rejected in colonial spaces like the Americas, making other modernities resistant.

Echeverría argues that ethos encompasses a wider scope than Marxist ideology. Marx posits that ideology is shaped by the interests of the ruling class. The proletariat, or working class, needs to overcome their ideological delusion and cultivate a class consciousness aimed at achieving emancipation. Classlessness fosters genuine consciousness in contrast to the false awareness perpetuated by the system. According to Echeverría, ethos can be understood as the routine engagement in the creation and consumption of useful objects, which involves the generation of signs that require interpretation. Echeverría philosophically categorizes Marx's use value theory, which has no linguistic theory. As opposed to linguistic theories that focus purely on signification, Echeverría considers extending this theory using a materialistic approach. This new integration allows him to question Marx's conception of natural social reproduction as the basis of surplus value or labor productivity. Echeverría argues that value is determined by culture rather than being inherent in nature, which contrasts with Marx's perspective. Echeverría contends that Marx's failure to recognize these cultural dynamics can be attributed to his limited understanding of human practical existence. Echeverría considers valuable life as a concrete form of production and consumption of use values and praxis in the way it shapes and constructs the world, not transforming it in an emancipatory and

revolutionary way. Echeverría believes that the particularities of traditions must be respected rather than erased from a general concept of history. Hence, he sees limitations in Marx's conception of use value. The problem with Marx is that, historically, use value is defined at the moment capitalism emerges. The notion of use value is relatively brief and quickly determines exchange value, which has become the most recurrent value in capitalism. Use value, as defined by Marx, refers to mechanical materialism. In explaining Latin American baroque ethos, Echeverría anchors himself to modern ethos by preferring Aristotle's definition of use value, which refers to the good life as well as the market. Echeverría's ethos is culture, not high culture influenced by lofty artistic visions, but tradition, freedom, history, and geography. It seeks tangible universality in tension. This revisits semiotics, moving away from Saussure's psychological approach and toward political economy. It examines sign construction's signifier-signified relationship. The passive-active meaning of ethos is Echeverría's most intriguing idea. The passive one recognizes that ethos is based on habits that order the world in a specific way. The active one corresponds to the creation of the world of life.

Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* also influences Echeverría's capitalist ethos. Weber's notion of ethos is called "spirit," which has explicit and implicit moral values that promote a specific form of capitalist life. Weber argues that protestant ethics is prominent in shaping the values most prized within capitalism. Those values include work discipline, worldly asceticism, virtuous and moderate behavior, productive rationality, and continuous profit (Traverso 2016). Echeverría (2000) mentions that ethos has a historical quality, meaning that specificity and localized construction of a way of life are implemented in reduced and limited timeframes. He also describes the capitalist ethos in four idealized manners. One type of capitalism is produced by capital accumulation that erases its contradictions between the world of life and capitalist modernity. Two, capitalism thrives on corporate spirit, preferring the use value over other types of values, thus negating the contradiction. Three, capitalism has a romanticized principle of sacrifice based on the neoclassic aesthetic, somewhere between what is perceived and what is imagined, which recognizes the paradox as inevitable. Four, the way in which interiorized capitalism in ordinary life is like a baroque ethos, i.e., a form of resistance to the use value.

The baroque is strategic insofar as it is a living contradiction while recognizing it is possible to transcend this incongruity. Contrary to the capitalist ethos that establishes a clear frontier between religion and state stemming from secularization, Echeverría argues that one of the motors of modern ethos occurs when humans, during the Renaissance, learned to think and conceived a project by themselves and did not follow God's rules and commandments. Baroque ethos is not religious. It is aesthetic. Therefore, there is no secular separation between religion and ordinary life. Aesthetics gains from this integration of spiritual and religious dimensions and captures the contradictions of capitalist ethos.

Based on the authors that have been examined thus far, I find the following concepts to be particularly noteworthy. I appreciate MacIntyre's conception of ethos as a tradition that persists throughout history. However, it is evident that Aristotle's anthropocentrism has had a detrimental impact. I understand that MacIntyre is influenced by Aristotle's ethics, which is important to recognize. Inspired by MacIntyre's historical approach, I intend to develop a descriptive framework that classifies four schools of thought for understanding what I consider to be the implicit notion of life of capitalism, which I term vitalist capitalism. The current trajectory of the four conceptualizations of life, namely Christianity, Aristotelianism, Mechanicism, and Biologicism, is leading towards a modern form of lethalism. This lethalism is characterized by the recognition of death and the perception of it as a social system that is both

responsible for and perpetuating death in various contexts. The motivation behind my interest lies in Taylor's conceptualization of aesthetic pathos as a variant of ethos, which serves as a means to critically examine the phenomenon of modernity. However, I perceive the concept of pathos not as a transformative aesthetic revelation, but rather as a descriptive phase in which modernity is already in progress. Death is an inherent component of the social structure, serving as a means to perpetuate the prevailing societal framework through the processes of mortality and violence. I concur with Echeverría's concept of the baroque ethos, which emphasizes the significance of spatiality and the geographical formation of ethos. This is a pending assignment that is not elaborated upon here. Echeverría's work has had a significant impact on my understanding of the significance of reevaluating Marx's theory of value. Specifically, Echeverría's emphasis on a vitalist conception of life has contributed to the development of a concept known as vitalist capitalism.

Vitalist capitalism

New vitalism and ethos theories described by MacIntyre, Taylor, and even Echeverría are primarily founded on an ethical life. As I explained above, new vitalism also approaches pathos, sickness, and pain from a normative perspective. My intention here is to conceptualize a descriptive, materialistic, vitalist capitalism, starting with Marx's capital theory. Based on this theory, I will describe different dimensions that interweave it. The point in capital theory is how industrial capitalism creates value, as explained by Marx. He uses the C-M-C formula, which describes how raw materials go through assembly lines. Entrepreneurs advance money for wages and machines, producing commodities and surplus value.

Capitalism is a social system with an implicit or explicit notion of life, with four dimensions that interact to define life. Christianity provides a picture of universalism, and conversion promotes the idea that capitalism must be implemented throughout the world. Also, there is a depreciation of the body as an entity that must suffer as it provides service to one's neighbor. Taking its cue from Aristotelian vitalism, capitalism promotes rational anthropomorphism and, simultaneously, the devaluation of nature. Mechanistic vitalism absorbs the prevalence of natural and straightforward laws over social laws and the depreciation of the body with the replacement of technology. Artifacts, then, are even more valued than human lives. And biological vitalism justifies natural inequality and the distinction between life and death that allows the expansion of human and capitalist forms of life.

Christian conversion and unpaid labor

Some Christian traditions embrace a dualistic view that emphasizes a clear separation between the body and the spirit. However, other Christian traditions take a more holistic approach, emphasizing the unity of body and spirit. Overall, the soul is the spiritual entity that transcends the physical world. Every soul comes from another dimension, a spiritual world cohabiting with other souls and a transcendental human God in a pre-existing world. Every human being is a unique son or daughter of God and should be willing to accept the Christian gospel on earth. It is fundamental and imperative to convert other people to Christianity even at the world's last frontier. Here, the modern notion of universality appears as a truth everyone must accept. The soul is a transcendental entity that knows no boundary and can be similar to use value. Like the soul with the potential for extending eternity, use value is expanded, going beyond its geographical and temporal limits, and imposing its mark on different cultural backgrounds. It is well known that Christians consider the body to be sinful

because it represents a physical prison gnawn by desires of the flesh, including the sexual drive and the body's necessities. The body has to be mastered and controlled through spirit. There is a justification for enslaving bodies to pursue God's designs quietly. The body's suffering and pain are sources of salvation and liberation. In capitalistic terms, working is painful, and because suffering is associated with work, there is hope that humanity can be saved. To be saved, it is necessary to sacrifice the body's desires and serve God and other humans. Service plays a vital role in the communitarian way of life. Service is unpaid work that every person must offer to other people. In capitalism, the body is what is most sacrificed. The labor undertaken by the body is the primary source of use value. There was a time when workers' bodies were exploited in factories, fields, construction, and general physical labor. It is as if workers offered to live at use value in order to undertake an underpaid or basic service. This principle is fundamental in the accumulation of capital. Again, the body is dominated and controlled not necessarily by God's designs, but by capitalist dominion.

Spiritual and Rational Anthropocentrism

Nature has a secondary role either in Christianity or in rational thinking. Both promote anthropocentrism, in which the central focus is the human being above all other living beings. Nature does not speak. Only humans can speak, have moral judgments, and have communities in which all humans, together by political alignments, can progress by finding solutions to their problems. For Christianity, nature is there to be dominated and controlled for the use of human beings so that they can be saved. Humans can name animals and organic and geological species; this fact expresses God's human nature and his domination over creation. In the case of rational thinking, one of the most prominent figures is Plato, who defines human life as rational. Plato's definition differentiates three types of life: plant, animal, and rational life. The human being was always conceived as animal and rational life. Regarding animal life, Plato defined human beings as plucked bipedal animals. Plato conceives of human beings based on a presupposition of rationality, which presumes a given, innate, preset notion that does not depend on humans. Far from emphasizing the eternal dimension of the rational human soul, Aristotle inclined much more toward the earthly life, for human beings would be nothing without the existence of the polis of the city. In "On the Soul," Aristotle explains that biological and non-biological substances are self-reflexive forms with a sovereign quality of assembling the here and now. The difference between them is that the non-biological substance exists, and the animate thing has an internal dynamic of potentiality from its birth. Aristotle turns to an argument based on the soul to nuance the distinction much more clearly. He said that human beings have an animal dimension because humans share with other animals their sensibilities and need for sexual life and satisfiers of physical energy such as food, etc. For Aristotle human beings are political animals integrated into social and collective life. Human beings are rational because they have language and thus can communicate with other members of society with ethical thinking. Human beings' exclusive rationality has promoted a form of capitalism that values human life more than other living beings. Human life is rational, eternal, transcendental, and abstract that can extend, expand, and conquer other living beings. Nature is seen as an exploitable object or a means to increase capital profits. Nature is only a conduit that is consumed and destroyed. Anthropocentrism, then, means increasing human life while condemning nature to death. This is why the effects of nature have called into question the future of human life, as well as life on the planet.

Spiritual and Rational Anthropocentrism

Descartes's mechanical notion of life is fundamental to capitalism. This philosophical mechanism is articulated using Newtonian physical laws. Life processes are peaceful mechanisms that unfold silently within the laws of nature. Descartes explains human beings based on the automaton, a figure that responds to elements that interact through causal and necessary relationships. The human body is a machine, i.e., it contains mechanical processes that are a collection of solid components that are in motion and interact. Descartes claimed that humans have two dimensions: the *res extensa* and the *res cogitans*. The *res extensa* is an extension that can be measured by length, extent, latitude, and breadth, extending and expanding to everything corporeal except for thought, which is located in the soul. The limitation of this perspective is that it understands life as divided: mechanical/spiritual, rational/irrational, freedom/determinism, culture/nature, and thought/emotions. Another problem with this Cartesian mechanistic notion is that it needs to explain why this human-machine was constructed in this way rather than another. This mechanical view is evidence that there is no telos in that construction, i.e., no valuation. Yet, life has value. There is a valuation in life. Moreover, the mechanic notion of life is relatively rigid and determined without variations (Bacarlett and Fuentes, 2007). In terms of human labor, the mechanistic perspective highlights the importance of technology and the use of machines in creating value under capitalism. Through technology, living human labor increases profit and surplus value increases it even more. Technological advances decrease the importance of living human labor, making it disposable. Thus, a significant rise in unemployment or low-paying jobs affects people's lives, increasing the number of people in poverty or living in misery. At the same time, the accumulation of wealth among the super-rich increases. This unequal logic of capital destroys the planet and leaves millions of people in misery and hunger.

Biological Inequality

The biological concept differentiates between living organisms and non-living entities. These entities are distinguished by their adherence to specific laws and rules, rather than possessing material or physical qualities. The study of electricity and the oxidation of organic bodies in the late 18th century prompted debates about the significance of life, considering the vital and electrical stimuli observed in living organisms (Steigerwald, 2013). Biological notions of life are separated from mechanical ones. While the automated image assumes that causal relations exist, there are not necessarily causal relations in the physical dimension. However, self-organizing and self-referent capacity may exist, i.e., cause and effect of themselves. Volta and Galvani's experiments with electricity on frog legs led to the conclusion that chemical processes are fundamental to life. There is a spiritualist dimension; for instance, Georg Ernst Stahl's chemistry research in the 18th century led him to posit that life was a force expressed in the soul or anima. Life is like a resistance to the decay and decomposition that follow the laws of nature. The notion of life is an exception to the laws of nature. It does not correspond to the biologicistic conception of the evolution of life forms that self-organize and become highly complex. Nevertheless, one of the problems here is that this notion of life qualifies and differentiates living organisms from non-living entities. Another characteristic of living organisms is the capacity to be active, sensitive, growing entities. According to biologism in the 19th century, certain organisms can adapt more than others. This field even thought that human communities were parasites or viruses that must be annihilated. Biologics used in social theories are a defense of social

inequalities. Thus, society is the mirror of nature with all its cruelty and brutality. Capitalism has used biological defense mechanisms based on the adaptation and social immunity principle to maintain order and control.

Lethalism

Lethalism is a way of thinking about death. Inflicting death implies violence. Violence made humans turn nature into their servant based on a system of labor and exploitation, using nature to justify inequalities between races, ethnicities, genders, and cultural systems. The human being is a sick animal with a metaphysical telos that reproduces itself in nature, destroying its bio-diversity. First, by assuming that language, politics, and culture are part of a specific culture. Second, by placing nature within a mechanical structure; and third, by naturalizing inequalities and social injustices using a scientific biologic narrative. Lethalism questions Foucault's notion of life, which is mainly controlled by science and technology that bifurcates into a notion of biological life based on hygiene and health to prolong and intensify life. However, in its biopolitical form, this notion of life no longer adheres to the neoliberal acceleration of death. There is an increase in the death drive, which vastly heightens the danger to life. Only a few survive the threat. There is a devaluation of life, so it is easy to accelerate the world where death is visited on the population and nature through increasing criminality and illegal economies that kill and annihilate human lives and destroy the natural environment. Such activities include drug trafficking, human trafficking, forced prostitution, illicit animal markets, illegal fishing, money laundering, cybercrime, corruption, and hiding income in tax havens.

Conclusion

As I have demonstrated here, new vitalism and ethos theories focus on a prescriptive perspective. Contrary to the ethos theories that emphasize life, new vitalism highlights death as pathos in a normative way. As I explained, I addressed herein a death dimension of capitalism that is descriptive. I use Marx's C-M-C formula in connection with a notion of life that produces death as an unintended consequence. I delved into four schools of thinking that I see as historical traditions. Christianity contains a dimension that propagates capitalism: universal conversion and expiation of the body that needs to suffer to be saved. Rational anthropocentrism depreciates nature. Mechanism paradoxically devalues human action by trusting in technology. Finally, biological approaches account for social inequalities. In the last section, I endeavor to explain a new school of thinking that I call lethalism, in which the center of attention is a philosophical reflection on death.

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RECEBIDO: 23/10/2023

RECEIVED: 10/23/2023

APROVADO: 19/11/2023

APPROVED: 11/19/2023