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Bourdieu, Foucault and the politics of precarity

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Abstract

Precarity is widely regarded as a defining condition of advanced capitalist societies. Given its existentially troubling character and a range of movements condemning its social consequences, several contemporary analysts have sought to diagnose the prospects for liberating society from its rule. Many of those accounts have been inspired by the post-structuralism of Michel Foucault. It is nevertheless argued here that Pierre Bourdieu offers more suitable conceptual tools for diagnosing precarity-induced domination and making sense of resistance in the contemporary age of precarity. With a focus on Foucault's neoliberal 'art of government' and Bourdieu's concept of 'symbolic power,' this article exposes the differences between each theorist's account of precarity. While doing so will help grasp the complex and singular character of the operations of power today, it will also serve to highlight the merits of Bourdieu's work for capturing the limits of, and cracks within, precarity-induced domination. Realising the full potential of his own approach for conceptualising resistance, however, rests on supplementing it with insights drawn from intersectionality theory.

Introduction

Although the term precarity first appeared in France in the 1970s (Standing, 2011; Hardy, 2017), it is today widely recognised as a central object of sociological concern. Firmly entrenched in public and social-scientific discourse, it is often used to capture socio-economic developments thought to have marked the advent of a distinctive form of 'ontological experience' (Neilson and Rossiter, 2008). As such, precarity tends to be characterised as a defining feature of contemporary economic and social life (Sennett, 1998; Bauman, 1999; Beck, 2000; Standing, 2011). On the one hand, the term denotes a condition induced by economic transformations such as the introduction of 'flatter, leaner, more decentralized and more flexible forms of organization' (Jessop, 2002: 100) and reduction of a range of safety nets such as welfare provisions and labour rights, by the neoliberal state (Standing, 2011). On

the other, precarity is said to capture a range of experiences engendered by those measures. These include such phenomena as the lack of a 'secure identity or sense of development achieved through work and lifestyle' (Standing, 2011: 16), combined with the sense that existing conditions 'threaten life in ways that appear to be outside of one's control' (Butler, 2009: i). Construed in those terms, precarity has both an objective and subjective dimension. It is, at once, a term capturing structural transformations, marked by the flexibilisation of the workplace and labour market, and one capturing the 'deepest socio-psychological impact of flexibility' mainly characterised by a 'situation of endemic and permanent uncertainty' (Bauman, 1999: 29).

Taken together, those two dimensions are, more often than not, said to constitute defining features of the present social malaise, on the basis of which several contemporary commentators have diagnosed the prospects for political action (see for example: Butler, 2004; Neilson and Rossiter, 2008; Standing, 2011 and 2014; Lorey, 2015; Schram, 2015). Any such diagnoses, however, must first rest on a robust understanding of the operations of power under neoliberalism and, more specifically, the role precarity plays in domination. For those reasons, this article proposes to tackle the politics of precarity predominantly through the prism of two scholars' work, whose insights into neoliberal power have become highly influential: Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault. Notwithstanding some observable overlaps between their accounts of neoliberalism (Laval, 2017), each provides a unique understanding of the relationship between subjectivity and objectivity in the contemporary operations of power. Consequently, each also offers a different basis upon which to conceptualise the politics of precarity. To begin with, Foucault's own approach to power will be discussed. It will be shown that, despite some notable merits, reading precarity-induced domination through the lens of the neoliberal 'art of government' prevents critique from adequately realising the contemporary potential for emancipatory political action. Then, I turn to Bourdieu's concept of symbolic power. Here, it is shown that Bourdieu succeeds in overcoming some of the limitations of Foucault's work. Finally, the value of the concept of 'symbolic power' for thinking emancipatory resistance is assessed in the light of Butler's post-structuralist approach, which offers a possible avenue for theorising collective action in the age of precarity. It is argued that rather than abandoning Bourdieu's approach in favour of Butler's own, the task of conceptualising resistance to precarity is better served by complementing the French sociologist's insights with those emanating from intersectionality theory.

1. Foucault, precarity and the neoliberal 'art of government'

When Foucault devised the concept of 'governmentality', aimed at capturing what he regarded as an entirely new regime of power, neoliberalism was at its infancy. Yet, by demonstrating 'great foresight'

(Laval, 2017: 64), the concept has influenced a broad range of contemporary analyses of neoliberalism[1] and diagnoses of precarity, more specifically.[2] The concept's appeal stems from its capacity to recognise that 'operations of power have become detached from recognisable structures of political responsibility and accountability' (Cronin, 1996: 55); a claim bearing particular resonance with contemporary forms of life subjected to the rule of increasingly flexible, unpredictable and globalised financial and labour markets. In Foucault's work, such a diffuse form of power is thought to succeed in securing domination through the cultivation of an entrepreneurial subjectivity, at the core of which lies a uniquely articulated exercise of freedom amidst insecurity. It is in his analysis of the neoliberal 'art of government' (2008) that the French philosopher provides some of his most valuable insights into the role precarity plays in domination.

Before directly tackling the issue of precarity-induced domination, it is first essential to clarify what Foucault had in mind by construing power in terms of governmentality:

> The exercise of power consists in guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome. Basically power is less a confrontation between two adversaries or the linking of one to the other than a question of government (Foucault, 1982: 789)

Under such a reading, power is neither possessed, nor does it lead to a repressive form of domination, whereby individuals' conduct is consciously manipulated by other individuals. Power, in fact, 'doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no' (Foucault, 1980: 119). Instead, it is 'productive,' insofar as it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms of knowledge, produces discourse' (Foucault, 1980: 119). To suggest that it is 'productive' means that power is not so much responsible for prohibiting particular practices, as it is instrumental in guiding and normalising particular conducts. It means directing one's attention to the conditions under which subjectivity is produced and generalised through the 'discipline of bodies' and 'regulation of the population' (Foucault, 2009). Thus, rather than acting as a repressive force as, for example, a 'right to *take* life or *let* live' (Foucault, 1990: 138) power turns the body into an 'object of political strategy' (Foucault, 2009: 16) that, in the form of 'biopower,' aims to either '*foster* life or *disallow* it to the point of death' (Foucault, 1990: 138). In his genealogy of the neoliberal subject, Foucault provides an insight into the kind of biopolitics marking the neoliberal age. More specifically, he traces the emergence of an entrepreneurial subjectivity, understood as the contingent outcome of biopolitical state interventions guiding 'the possibility of conduct' through 'competitive mechanisms' that 'play a regulatory role at every moment and every point in society' (Foucault, 2008: 145).

The neoliberal art of government's success, therefore, lies in its capacity to compel the individual to become an 'entrepreneur of himself [sic]' (Foucault, 2008: 145), by adopting the form of conduct thought to be most appropriate for the various challenges posed by the 'dynamic of competition' (Foucault, 2008: 147). Since individuals are active in its production and because it is 'generalized to all aspects of existence' (Lazzarato, 2008: 121), that entrepreneurial subjectivity is all-encompassing and, consequently, acts as a prism through which all decisions come to be rationalised and individuals come to 'accept,' and adjust to the reality of personal responsibility, competition and precarious life (Foucault, 2008: 269). It follows that no analytical or empirical distinction between the 'subjective' and 'objective' interests (Lukes, 2015) of individuals can effectively be made, for no true or real interests are said to exist outside the subjectivity in question. Truth and interests can change, but in virtue of their discursive character, they are dependent on the emergence of an entirely new regime of truth; of a new subjectivity.

But how can the successful operationalisation of neoliberal governmentality be explained? I propose to answer this question by probing how Foucault made sense of the historically distinctive interplay between freedom and precarity in advanced capitalist societies. Let me begin by tackling the role played by precarity in the operation of neoliberal domination. With the subjection of society to the imperatives of the market, 'individuals are constantly exposed to danger, or rather, they are conditioned to experience their situation, their life, their present, and their future as containing danger' (Foucault, 2008: 66). This is explained by the 'permanent fear of failure' (Lemke, 2012: 49) induced by the individualisation of risk and responsibility. The constant necessity to adjust to unpredictable and rapidly changing circumstances underpins the normalisation of behaviour. Under such a state of affairs, precarity performs the role of central regulatory mechanism in society, for by 'perpetuating a "mobilizing" uncertainty' (Lazzarato, 2009: 119), it compels individuals to act as entrepreneurs and accept the imperative of self-adjustment. Drawing on Foucault's own approach to domination, Isabell Lorey (2015: 111) depicted 'precarisation' as a process 'designed to make individuals governable' (Lorey, 2015: 111). Put differently, 'fear' turns into 'the basis and motive for the constitution of the responsible, reliable, and rational self' (Lemke, 2012: 50), which are defining features of a conduct appropriate for an 'enterprise society' (Foucault, 2008: 147). Neoliberal governmentality, then, thrives on 'a culture of danger' (Foucault, 2008: 66), which various forms of state intervention, such as the withdrawal of welfare provisions, privatisation programmes, the financialisation of the economy and flexibilisation of labour markets play a key role in cultivating. But as we shall now see, those interventions also serve to mobilise a drive to 'produce' one's 'own satisfaction' (Foucault, 2008: 226), inseparable from the 'culture of danger' depicted above.

Indeed, in an effort to understand what is historically distinctive about the operations of power in advanced capitalist societies, Foucault provided several illuminating insights into the search for satisfaction marking individuals' conduct. Under this reading, satisfaction is said to presuppose freedom, namely the freedom to choose. But like risk and responsibility, satisfaction is individualised. Individuals have effectively become personally responsible for choosing their own desires and securing the means for realising them. This contemporary 'man [sic] of consumption,' Foucault goes on to argue, 'insofar as he consumes, is a producer. What does he produce? Well, quite simply, he produces his own satisfaction' (Foucault, 2008: 226). As Anthony Giddens (1994: 54) himself noted, contemporary consumers have 'no choice but to choose.' Choosing, here, means to take risks, or as Dardot and Laval (2013: 276) put it, '[t]o follow one's desires is to run risks.'

Here, one can begin to appreciate two core features of neoliberal governmentality. On the one hand, this new art of government rests on the mutual reciprocity of freedom and precarity: to run risks, individuals have to be made free, but to exercise this freedom, they must be in a position to take risks. In fact, like the culture of danger, freedom has to be 'constantly produced' (Foucault, 2008: 65), and both reinforce each other in compelling individuals to adopt an entrepreneurial conduct. On the other hand, one observes a striking paradox. For, amid a culture of danger individuals exercise their freedom in such a way as to adjust to reality. They use their freedom to adjust to the principles of a market society. So, while they are free, they are effectively *free to adjust*. Freedom, therefore, acts as an instrument of subjection to the established order.

However, while Foucault recognised the generalised and all-encompassing character of entrepreneurial subjectivity and insisted on the combined operationalisation of danger and freedom in its production, he anticipated the possibility for resistance to pre-existing operations of power in the form of 'counter-conducts' (Foucault, 2009). To resist power in this way entails a 'struggle against the processes implemented for conducting others' (Foucault, 2009: 268) holding 'the promise of becoming a new form of conduct itself' (Larsen, 2011: 42). Since 'power is everywhere' (Foucault, 1998: 63) and can never be fully eliminated from social life, Foucault does not wish to suggest that power itself ought to be overcome. Instead, he conceptualises resistance as a conduct based on an autonomous and independent mode of subjectivation. Rather than anticipating collective action, in the form of a movement or a party both directed at institutions and seeking to overcome particular structures of oppression, Foucault insisted on a form of resistance 'that tries to avoid the managing of population policies and institutions by acting differently' (Lilia and Vinthagen, 2013: 121).

Such an approach to resistance is echoed in the work of post-structuralist theorists of precarity and resistance, influenced by the French philosopher (see for example Butler, 2004; Neilson and Rossiter, 2008; Dardot and Laval, 2013; Lorey, 2015; McCormack and Salmenniemi, 2016). With

Foucault, they recognise that contemporary power is such that one ought to turn away from a conceptualisation of resistance postulating a collective subject. This rejection of a philosophy of consciousness effectively means a rejection of resistance construed in terms of 'international solidarity' or a 'struggle for mutual recognition that binds subjects in relations of identity and difference' (Neilson and Rossiter, 2008: 65). For Butler (2004; 2011), precarity is even said to offer fresh opportunities for resistance, albeit of an entirely new kind. In virtue of marking a universally shared ontological experience, precarity holds the potential for eliciting a 'vulnerability to loss and the task of mourning that follows' (Butler, 2004: 19), highly productive for the recognition that '[f]reedom does not come from me or you; it can and does happen as a relation between us or, indeed, among us' (Butler, 2011: 7). Drawing from such claims, and in an effort to 'develop a political and social theoretical perspective that starts from the connectedness with others and takes different dimensions of the precarious into consideration,' Lorey (2015: 15) provides an insight into the kind of 'counter-conduct' appropriate for the age of precarity. Here one finds a plethora of 'singular refusals, the small sabotages and resistances of precarious everyday life' (Lorey, 2015: 111) that 'focus on care' and intend 'to acknowledge our relationality with others' (Lorey, 2015: 94), against the 'disciplining of governmental precarization' (Lorey, 2015: 111) based on 'possessive-individualist self-relations' Lorey, 2015: 29). Thus, it follows that

> [t]o neo-liberal governmentality as a specific way of conducting the conduct of others, we must […] oppose a no less specific double refusal: a refusal to conduct oneself toward oneself as a personal enterprise and a refusal to conduct oneself towards others in accordance with the norm of competition (Dardot and Laval, 2013: 320)

In order to resist precarity, Foucaultian approaches of the kind discussed above propose to turn governmentality against itself. For, they propose to harness the productive and potentially subversive character of individualising processes of neoliberal subjectivation for the adoption of a conduct opposed to entrepreneurialism. Here, fear and danger are channelled into a conduct marked by the acceptance of vulnerability (the mourning of precarity), on the basis of which a recognition of one's relationality with others can begin to be subjectivated. Subjectivation may be autonomous and independent but it is one capable of asserting our connectedness with others. While neoliberal subjectivity entails individuals conducting themselves as free beings pitted against other beings, precarity holds the potential to open up the scope for conducting oneself as a being asserting their freedom relationally.

While Foucault's post-structuralism offers immensely valuable insights into the operations of neoliberal power, it nevertheless faces a range of non-negligible conceptual difficulties when confronted with the task of grasping the nature and full potential of resistance under the contemporary age of precarity. Let me begin by reviewing its core merits. As emphasised above, Foucault expressed a particular concern for explaining how, in their experience of being a (neoliberal) subject, individuals are confronted with a unique interplay between freedom and precarity, said to perform an essential function in securing their subjection to the 'dynamic of competition.' Under such a reading, domination is experienced neither as manipulation nor as repression. Instead, it thrives on the freedom neoliberal subjects exercise in their continuous attempt to rise to the perpetual challenges posed by precarity. Thus, because individuals actively participate in their own subjection to the established order, this account of power can help understand elements of the logic through which the neoliberal political-economic order succeeds in maintaining itself. The imperative to choose to adjust oneself to a rapidly changing and unpredictable environment confronts neoliberal subjects as a force promoting adaptation, while undermining the value and desirability of conducts that fall short of facilitating it.

But, by recognising the effects of the process through which risk and responsibility are individualised, i.e. precarisation, on society at large, Foucault was in a position to identify additional obstacles to resistance. Indeed, drawing from Foucault's work, Lorey (2015: 9) observed that the 'precarious' are 'isolated and individualized' subjects. They also tend to experience their precarity as an 'anxiety towards others who cause harm' (Lorey, 2015: 21). The age of precarity, then, does not only compel individuals to favour adaptation over subversion, but also tends to pit individuals against one another, thereby posing numerous challenges for collective action. Those remarks may not only explain, at least partly, the failure of such an internally differentiated anti-austerity protest movement as the Occupy Movement to materialise into large-scale social change, but can also shed light on the factors leading to divisive electoral campaigns such as the 2016 presidential election in the US or the EU referendum in the UK. While the former struggled to assert unity in the face of seemingly conflictual interests (Taylor et al. 2011), the latter could be regarded as political responses symptomatic of an anxiety-induced form of othering, whereby the 'permanent fear of failure' turns into a source of self-defence, amid a shared but differentiated condition of precarity between American rustbelt workers and immigrant workers, and between UK citizens and immigrant EU workers.

Despite those strengths, it is possible to observe some non-negligible limitations. While those are predominantly associated with the conceptualisation of resistance offered by Foucaultian approaches, they can be traced back to the treatment of the 'subject as an effect of disciplinary

technologies' (Cronin, 1996: 73) and a failure to appreciate the diverse social positions from which individuals differentially come to adopt the entrepreneurial conduct. Concerning the first issue, it is important to note that while construing power as diffuse and examining the conditions responsible for upholding an entrepreneurial subjectivity, are crucial steps towards understanding the logic of precarity-induced domination, they need not entail the postulation of an all-encompassing subjectivity 'float[ing] free of any specific social relations' (Cronin, 1996: 60). While doing so 'runs the risk of reducing power to a play of forces unconnected with recognizable human concerns' (Cronin, 1996: 60), it also means rejecting the possibility for individuals to discern the 'better from the worse sets of practices and forms of constraints (Fraser, 1989: 32). Power, here, turns out to be not only diffuse but also impersonal. The source of domination and enemy of struggles of resistance remains faceless. For, neoliberal subjects are said to be confronted with an all-encompassing and all-absorbing process of subjectivation divorced from recognisable structures of oppression and outside of which 'no objective standpoint […] from which the truth could be ascertained' (Cronin, 1996: 62) can exist. Thus, because the subject is understood as an *effect*, his approach fails to open up the scope for contesting the legitimacy of social relations and practices and, with it, that of a life governed by precarity. In turn, it becomes difficult to grasp how neoliberal subjects could eventually be motivated to engage in counter-conducts.[3]

But as noted above, approaches inspired by Foucault's work have sought to ground the possibility for resistance in the productive power of precarity. For Butler (2004; 2011) and Lorey (2015), the condition of precarity holds the potential for recognising our relationality with others, providing they are in a position to embrace their vulnerability. Whether construed in terms of 'bodies in alliance' (Butler, 2011) or as conducts that focus on care (Lorey, 2015), relationality is conceptualised in such a way that it offers insufficient scope for thinking resistance in terms of a collective mobilisation *against* practices social agents wish to be liberated *from*, and in *defence* of those they wish to realise freedom *with.* Counter-conducts, in this sense, are not expected to be regarded as more legitimate than entrepreneurial conducts, but simply opposed to them. Those approaches, therefore, suffer from a lack of insight into those mechanisms capable of collectively asserting the legitimacy of particular conducts and translating individual counter-conducts into institutional change. Just like Foucault, they fall short of demonstrating how dispersed micro-level struggles can 'become stabilised into enduring strategic patterns' (Cronin, 1996: 63).

This leads me onto a final issue Foucault fails to address adequately, namely the differentiated experiences of the burdens of risk, personal responsibility and precarity, more generally. While reading his texts on neoliberal governmentality, one could be forgiven to think that neoliberal subjects exercise their freedom and negotiate the imperatives of the market in a uniform manner. This is

because Foucault did little to reflect on the way one's position in society can affect how social agents conduct themselves as entrepreneurial subjects. Take the example of ridesharing workers such as the 'self-employed' Uber drivers, who are free to decide when to work and where to drive, but have to bear the responsibility for their car's maintenance costs, along with little or no access to a range of employment rights and benefits such as those enjoyed by salaried workers. Some of those drivers have a regular and stable job but choose to earn extra cash at weekends. Others are full-time Uber drivers. Both types of drivers are indeed likely to relate to precarity in a very different way. This, in turn, points to the importance of adequately recognising the extent to which one's economic (and cultural) resources shape one's own experience of precarity.

By contrast, the strength of Bourdieu's work lies in its capacity to grasp the importance of individual agents' own social position in understanding the role of precarity in domination. His work can also help overcome other problems found in Foucault's work, such as its incapacity to anticipate agents in a position to assert the legitimacy and illegitimacy of particular practices. Let me now turn to a discussion of his work.

2. Bourdieu, precarity and 'symbolic power'

Bourdieu and Foucault rarely discussed each other's work publicly. This may seem particularly surprising given their shared interest in neoliberalism and, of course, the fact that both held a chair at the Collège de France, albeit at different time-periods. Bourdieu did nevertheless write a poignant obituary entitled 'The Pleasure of Knowing'[4] (1984), mourning the loss of a 'friend' and celebrating the genius of Foucault. Despite the immense intellectual respect Bourdieu held towards the philosopher, the few scattered references he makes to his work indicate a rather critical appraisal of Foucault's ideas (Callewaert, 2006).[5] Take, for example, the following passage:

> There is, it is true, a side of Foucault's work (there is of course, considerable more to this work than that) which theorizes the revolt of the adolescent in trouble with his family and with the institutions that relay family pedagogy and impose 'disciplines' (the school, the clinic, the asylum, the hospital and so on), that is, forms of social constraint that are very external. Adolescent revolts often represent symbolic denegations, utopian responses to general social controls that allow you to avoid carrying out a full analysis of the specific historical forms, and especially of the differential forms, assumed by the constraints that bear on agents from different milieux, and also of forms of social constraint much more subtle than those that operate through the drilling [*dressage*] of bodies. (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 195–6)

By evoking the image of the adolescent in depicting Foucault's work, Bourdieu wishes to convey the message that it excludes from its scope the analysis a range of mechanisms the French sociologist deems essential for understanding the operations of power in society. The mechanisms in question are those involved in the internalisation of schemes of perception or, put differently, the objectivation of particular representations. But what exactly limits Foucault's capacity to engage in such a theoretical exercise? In my answer to this question, I intend to expose the distinctive features and merits of Bourdieu's own approach to domination. I begin by tackling Bourdieu's attempt to overcome the tension between subjectivism and objectivism. I then turn to his analysis of the various mechanisms involved in what he called 'symbolic domination,' in an effort to examine how, under its guise, domination through, and resistance to, precarity come to be conceptualised.

In the *Logic of Practice*, Bourdieu (1990: 25) famously claimed that '[o]f all the oppositions that artificially divide social science, the most fundamental, and the most ruinous, is the one that is set up between subjectivism and objectivism.' Subjectivism sets out to research the social by examining agents' subjectivity, i.e. their experience of social reality. The objectivist, on the other hand, is interested in studying the regularities of social life. In order to do so, he/she will seek a focus on the forces, structures etc. responsible for the regularities or patterns in question. For Bourdieu, reducing the sociological endeavour to one or the other task is mistaken and sociologically pernicious, for there is no such thing as a social world either external to individuals' own practices or inseparable from the knowledge of agents. Adopting one or the other stance would ultimately mean ignoring a range of mechanisms essential for understanding how the social world operates. It would make it impossible for the sociologist to explain 'the coincidence of the objective structures and the internalized structures which provides the illusion of immediate understanding' (Bourdieu, 1990: 26). In short, it would prevent the sociologist from understanding how social reality comes to be experienced by agents as 'truth' or a 'self-evident' reality, 'established, settled once and for all, beyond discussion' (Bourdieu, 2000: 174).

Seen in this light, the charge levelled at Foucault in the previous section of this article begins to be fully appreciated. While probing modes of subjectivation, as Foucault does, can shed light on the way individuals come to conduct themselves, a predominant focus on them turns attention away from the 'objectivity that runs through the supposed site of subjectivity' in the form of 'social categories of thought, perception and appreciation which are the unthought principle of all representation of the "objective" world' (Bourdieu, 1990: 21). In short, while we find discussions of discursive forms diffused through a range of institutions, no explanation of their conversion into schemes of perception structuring subjectivity is offered. As a result, it excludes an account of the *modes of objectivation*,

through which particular representations of the world are internalised and integrated into agents' conducts.

It is by paying attention to the way 'dominant representations come to be objectivated perpetually in things' (Bourdieu and Boltanski, 1976: 55) that Bourdieu could be said to fill the gaps of Foucault's approach to power. While, like Foucault, Bourdieu (2000: 141) recognises that '[w]e learn bodily,' he emphasises that we do so from the 'positions [we] occupy in an objective space of constraints and facilitations and with cognitive tools issued from that very space' (Wacquant, 2013: 277). The social space in question is said to be responsible for producing 'systems of durable, transposable dispositions, […] which generate and organize practices and representations,' otherwise known as the '*habitus*' (Bourdieu, 1990: 53). As such, the concept aims to capture a set of mechanisms instrumental in organising conducts and directs attention towards the 'necessity of the social world' (Bourdieu, 1990: 52). Put simply, one's social position shapes the *habitus* which, in turn, produces regularities and patterns of action that cause agents' practices and experiences of reality to be socially structured. With this concept Bourdieu is not merely 'concerned to understand the logic of practices' (Bourdieu, 1990: 16), he also wishes to explain the 'practical experience of the familiar universe' (Bourdieu, 1990: 26), or how, from their own position within a given social space, agents come to treat reality as self-evident. Thus, he intends to overcome the tension between subjectivism and objectivism by exploring how 'incorporated cognitive structures attuned to the objective structures' (Bourdieu, 2000: 178) are produced.[6] This is achieved by a consistent focus on 'conditionings imposed by the material conditions of existence, by the insidious injunctions and "inert violence" […] of economic and social structures and of the mechanisms through which they are reproduced' (Bourdieu, 2000: 141).

However, according to Bourdieu, agents equipped with their *habitus*, also have to confront a state that 'institutes and inculcates common symbolic forms of thought, social frames of perception […] practical schemes of perception, appreciation and action' (Bourdieu, 2000: 175). Here the state is said to act as the 'foundation of […] an immediate, prereflexive consensus on the meaning of the world' (Bourdieu, 2000: 172). As such, it plays a central role in the production and diffusion of precisely what comes to be internalised, namely the 'systems of classification and of mental structures' (Bourdieu, 1991: 169). But, insisting on the significance of the socially organised character of society, Bourdieu adds that those schemes of perception turn out to be 'objectively adjusted to social structures' (Bourdieu, 1991: 169), in such a way that the meanings associated with a phenomenon like precarity, are differentiated according to one's own social position.

To construe the exercise of power in the above terms, then, entails exploring the processes and forces at play in the production, cultivation and diffusion of symbols successful in securing

individuals' adjustment to reality. It means to speak of a 'symbolic' kind of power and a 'symbolic' kind of domination. But to be successful, that is, to secure adjustment to, and acceptance, of reality, this form of domination must first ensure an 'apprehension of the established order as natural (orthodoxy)' (Bourdieu, 1991: 169). It must cultivate the self-evidence and, therefore inevitability, of the given social reality or, as Bourdieu himself put it, secure the 'doxic submission to the established order' (Bourdieu, 2000: 178). Construed as an organ of domination, the state is the outlet through which agents who 'had an interest in giving universal form to the particular expression of their interests' (Bourdieu, 2014: 175) can effectively impose their own schemes of perception on society at large. Contrary to Foucault, then, Bourdieu chooses to ground power in '*domestic political decisions* that reflect the tipping of the balance of class forces in favour of the owners of capital' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2001: 4; emphasis in original), who possess 'the means of making' their interests 'come true' (Bourdieu and Boltanski, 1976, abstract). The result, Bourdieu (2000) further contends, is a state of 'misrecognition,' whereby agents adhere to an arbitrary reality. But Bourdieu insisted that '[a]ll symbolic domination presupposes, on the part of those who submit to it, a form of complicity which is neither passive submission to external constraint nor a free adherence to values' (Bourdieu, 1991: 50-1). The so-called 'fit between the subjective structures and the objective structures' (Bourdieu, 1977: 168), secured by the structuring role of the *doxa*, and regulated by the *habitus*, is in this sense the outcome of an active construction of social reality by the agents themselves.

What, then, could be the role of precarity in such a state of affairs? In an intervention made in Grenoble (France), entitled 'Job insecurity is everywhere now,' Bourdieu (1998) drew the contours of the operations of power under the guise of precarity:

> Casualization of employment is part of a *mode of domination* of a new kind, based on the creation of a generalized state of insecurity aimed at forcing workers into submission, into acceptance of exploitation. To characterize this mode of domination, which, although in its effects it closely resembles the wild capitalism of the early days, is entirely unprecedented, a speaker here proposed the very appropriate and expressive concept of *flexploitation*. (Bourdieu, 1998: 85)

While precarity is not new, its early manifestations failed to provide, as Eric Hobsbawm (1975: 260) noted, a 'really effective general mechanism for keeping labour hard at work.' Today, however, the 'generalization of precarious wage labour and social insecurity' plays a much more subtle and insidious role in society. It is now a 'privileged engine of economic activity' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2001: 3), which economic and political elites come to justify on the basis of an imperative to maximise

the economic competitiveness of their economic space. But, to become such a central economic principle, precarity had to be made inevitable. It had to be naturalised.

The various discursive strategies adopted by political elites in the West, particularly those aimed at promoting labour market flexibility, provide a rather striking illustration of the operations of symbolic domination. Take, for example, the case of newly elected French President, Emmanuel Macron. Central to his campaign manifesto was the conviction that politics must create the conditions that will enable each individual to become masters of their own destiny, exercise their liberty and autonomously choose their way of life (Macron, 2016). To realise this so-called 'promise of emancipation' and release the creative energies of individuals, the French economy first has to be modernised (Macron, 2016). But by 'modernisation,' Macron means something very specific, namely removing a range of constraints allegedly responsible for a stagnant and encumbered labour market. In other words, modernisation means flexibilization. What one finds in this manifesto, then, is a principle of flexibility symbolically cultivated as a liberating and enabling operating principle of economic life, 'touted as a virtue for capital and labour alike' (Harvey, 2005: 53).

So, while in the work of Foucault the acceptance of risk and responsibility surfaces as an outcome of an almost magical interplay of various contingent forces compelling individuals to adopt an entrepreneurial conduct, Bourdieu offers a range of conceptual tools capable of grounding it in the actions of political elites aimed at cultivating flexibility as an empowering and economically beneficial principle of economic and personal life. But like Foucault, he recognises the unique mutual reciprocity between freedom and precarity. Bourdieu, in fact, went as far as claiming that the 'distinctiveness of symbolic domination lies precisely in the fact that it assumes, of those who submit to it, an attitude which challenges the usual dichotomy of freedom and constraint' (Bourdieu, 1991: 51). Under such a reading, constraints emanating from flexible markets come to be symbolically cultivated as empowering, and adjustment to the established order as a form of liberation. The naturalisation of precarity, namely its apprehension by agents as an inevitable condition of existence, could, in this sense, be regarded as the outcome of an ideological manoeuvre capable of securing the 'correspondence of structure [i.e. social agents' *habitus*,] to structure [i.e. *doxa*]' (Bourdieu, 1991: 169).[7]

But precisely because of the ideological character of precarity, Bourdieu anticipated the possibility of an incongruity between subjective and objective structures. As such, he opens up the conceptual scope for a 'margin of freedom' (Bourdieu, 2000: 234) missing in Foucault's work. In a rare burst of optimism, he even depicted the contemporary age of precarity as one particularly auspicious for demands for political liberation:

On the one hand, the generalization of […] occupational insecurity tends to multiply the situations of mismatch, which generate tensions and frustrations. There will be no return to those social universes in which the quasi-perfect coincidence between objective tendencies and subjective expectations made the experience of the world a continuous interlocking of confirmed expectations The lack of a future, previously reserved for the 'wretched of the earth', is an increasingly widespread, even modal experience. (Bourdieu, 2000: 234)

Life under the guise of precarity is here said to hold a rather large potential for recognising the arbitrariness of the established order and, consequently, questioning its legitimacy. To be sure – and Bourdieu fully acknowledges it by insisting on the socially relative character of the *habitus* – ontological experiences and apprehensions of precarity vary widely. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine, for example, national industrial workers relating to precarity in a manner identical to migrant workers or precariatised university lecturers. However, despite such pronounced differences, the age of precarity is such that the 'fear [of] losing [one's] status and secure place in the world' (Millar, 2017: 5) is affecting an ever-greater proportion of workers across a wide range of occupations (della Porta, 2015: 214). Consequently, all are also potentially united in exposing and condemning the tension between the symbolically cultivated ideal of individually responsibilised selves, accepting and thriving under the risks precarity throws at them, and the means they have at their disposal for meeting this ideal.

Thus, like Foucault, Bourdieu provided valuable insights into the role precarity plays in domination. But the French sociologist's constructivist structuralism succeeds where Foucault's post-structuralism tends to fail. On the one hand, by equipping critique with the conceptual tools, e.g. *habitus* and *doxa*, capable of capturing the various subtle mechanisms structuring agents' subjectivity, he is in a better position to complement the analysis of subjectivation with an account for the socially differentiated modes of objectivation responsible for individuals' adjustment to the social world. On the other hand, by anticipating the possibility for 'an objective crisis, capable of disrupting the close correspondence between the incorporated structures and the objective structures which produce them', Bourdieu is able to postulate a moment for 'political subversion' (Bourdieu, 1991: 128). Little, however, is said about how the 'cognitive subversion' (Bourdieu, 1991: 128) this moment rests on can effectively lead to emancipatory political action (Cronin, 1996). This issue is tackled at length in the next section.

3. Thinking emancipatory political action in the age of precarity

In his famous work entitled *The Precariat*, Guy Standing contends that the contemporary age of precarity offers fresh opportunities for 'emancipatory egalitarianism' (2011: 156). However, Standing's diagnosis of the prospects for emancipatory political action rests on two problematic presuppositions: the somewhat taken-for-granted capacity for highly diverse groups of precarious individuals to unite against precarity and the lack of attention paid to its ideological deployment.

Indeed, under Standing's reading, the 'graduate with no future,' as Paul Mason (2011) put it, the 'precariatised' male service worker, the 'precariatised' migrant workers etc., are all said to share the same 'class' conditions (Standing, 2011), with the potential to coordinate their actions and become a political subject *sui generis*. However, one is justified in questioning the capacity of these very diverse experiences of precarity to become the basis for a coherent programme of political action. While many of 'precariatised' groups may want greater 'control over life' (Standing, 2011: 155), what such demands specifically mean to these different groups may significantly differ. For instance, the demands for control of a national industrial worker may significantly differ from those of a migrant service worker. More therefore needs to be done to be able to elucidate the conditions favourable for unity amidst the diverse experiences of precarity. More problematically, however, Standing's approach to emancipatory action fails to take into account an absolutely crucial characteristic of contemporary precarity, namely its function as mode of domination. While reading his work, one would be forgiven to think that advanced capitalist societies have witnessed immensely profound structural changes marked by the inexorable advance of temporary work. A close look at employment survey data both before and after the 'Great Recession' nevertheless reveals a strikingly different state of affairs. In both cases, long-term employment[8] has increased among both female and male workers and both part-time and full-time jobs (Doogan, 2009 and 2015). The form of *material* precarisation Standing claims to be inflicting those societies does not, therefore, stand the test of evidence.

A turn to Bourdieu, however, entails recognising the part-manufactured character of precarity, which Standing, along with a range of contemporary social theorists (Bauman, 1999; Beck, 2000; Giddens, 1991), fail to appreciate. They share the view that 'structural change […] largely explains and expresses the subjective experience of widespread job insecurity' (Doogan, 2015: 49). But, while Bourdieu (1998: 83) himself upheld that 'objective insecurity gives rise to a generalized subjective insecurity,' he regarded the correspondence in question as an outcome of the labour of symbolic power. For, under his reading, subjectivity is not merely structured by material forces such as labour markets, it is also structured by symbolic constraints such as those embodied in the *doxa*. Thinking politics in the age of precarity, therefore, ought to include an account of such operations of power. But, it too ought to understand symbolic power's limits, along with the symbolic contradictions it inevitably engenders.

Let me illustrate how the latter task could be undertaken. Take the example of Uber and Lyft drivers in the U.S. (Malin and Chandler, 2017) or conveyor belt workers in Bulgaria (Kofti, 2016). Many American ridesharing workers 'overwhelmingly see their work as something flexible, fun, and even beneficial to the larger society' (Malin and Chandler, 2017: 384). Several female conveyor belt workers also see flexibility as a source of 'freedom' and 'independence,' in contrast with the relations of dependence experienced in the household (Kofti, 2016). Now, to analyse those phenomena through the prism of misrecognition entails highlighting the role of symbolically cultivated symbols, such as individual empowerment, in the rationalisation of precarity. But it also entails revealing the possible cracks in the process. The Uber and Lyft drivers were, for example, conscious of 'a number of anxieties and risks that mitigate this flexibility and freedom, such as having to deal with the uncertainties of their independent status' (Malin and Chandler, 2017: 384). The female conveyor belt workers were conscious of the 'exploitative' nature of the 'shop floor' and 'complained about inequalities at work' (Kofti, 2016: 445). By experiencing a 'splintered precarity' (Malin and Chandler, 2017: 384), namely one situated between unfairness/risk and reward, they are forced into a position whereby precarity is rationalised on the basis of contradictory symbols or, as Luc Boltanski (2011) put it, a situation of 'hermeneutic contradiction.'[9] It is this contradiction that could potentially lead to the kind of 'objective crisis' Bourdieu alludes to in his work.

Conscious of the 'symbolic work needed in order to break out of the silent self-evidence of *doxa*' (Bourdieu, 2000: 188), Bourdieu chose to devote his theoretical work on resistance to this more specific task, albeit at the expense of imagining the content of counter-symbolic struggles united against neoliberalism. But with such concepts as *habitus*, *doxa* and 'objective crisis,' Bourdieu sets up an analytical framework with the potential to think emancipation in terms of a struggle capable of reconciling what Duggan (2003) regarded as 'unproductive battles over economic versus cultural politics, identity-based vs. left universalist rhetoric' (Duggan, 2003: xix). However, it falls short of spelling out clearly how this can be achieved. For, thinking emancipation presupposes three conceptual moments: that of critical reflexivity performed at the individual level, that of cognitive subversion performed collectively and the passage from the former to the latter. Since Bourdieu's work lacks, as Cronin (1996: 74) himself deplored, 'a theory of individualization and hence of individual identity,' it can offer little in the way of understanding how social agents come to cultivate 'non-repressive structures of self-identity' (Cronin, 1996: 79). As a result, it lacks some of the insights that can help understand how the moment of cognitive subversion can be converted into a shared normative outlook. Before exploring the role intersectionality theory can play in filling those gaps, let me begin by reviewing the potential I alluded to above and addressing in greater detail Butler's own

attempt at conceptualising collective resistance to precarity, which will help better understand the value of complementing Bourdieu's approach with insights drawn from intersectionality theory.

As a condition marked by both economic and cultural processes structuring the social world, precarity is both a socio-economic and 'cultural condition' (della Porta, 2015: 213). The concept of *habitus* itself aims to capture structuring mechanisms that are both material and cultural, with the potential to grasp how one's class position, but also one's gender (McCall, 1992; Laberge, 1995) and one's race (Sallaz, 2010; Perry, 2012) shape how precarity is both experienced and apprehended. The concept of 'objective crisis' entails the possibility for social agents to recognise and contest the arbitrariness of precarity secured by the *doxa*. As such, it rests on harnessing the presence of contradictory symbols with which one's own relationship to precarity is rationalised for recognising the narrow interests lying behind dominant representations of precarity. But for an emancipatory struggle to emerge, individuals must be in a position to contest the self-evidence of precarity *collectively*. Since individuals share the structuring influence of the neoliberal *doxa* on their subjectivity, the labour of 'cognitive subversion' identified by Bourdieu holds the potential for serving as a basis upon which to form a shared symbolic struggle, amid the diverse experiences of precarity-induced domination. But, while his work succeeds in capturing some of the shared *and* differentiated components of the structural organisation of subjective experience under precarity, it falls short of spelling out the form of resistance a collective contestation of precarity entails.

Although Butler, like Bourdieu, recognises that the experience of precarity is 'differentially distributed throughout society' (Butler, 2015: 15), her work sought to provide a more detailed and complete picture of the process of collectivisation in resistance than the one found in the work of the French sociologist. Drawing on Foucault's concept of biopower, namely the power to 'foster life or disallow it to the point of death,' she depicts the singularity of the contemporary age of precarity as a new manifestation of the 'idea that some populations are considered disposable' (Butler, 2015: 11). Under such a reading, individuals with diverse experiences of precarity are said to share the ontological experience of disposability and, consequently, hold the potential to act in concert to 'ward off the prospect of oblivion' (Butler, 2015: 181). But, instead of anticipating a counter-symbolic struggle resting on a collectively shared cognitive subversion *à la* Bourdieu, Butler understands resistance in 'performative' terms, that is, as a form of bodily enactment realised through assemblies such as those making up the Occupy Wall Street movement. 'Bodies in alliance' perform the 'right to appear,' call into question the legitimacy of precarity and enact a 'demand for livable lives' (Butler, 215: 218). Thus, individuals united in resistance do not so much draw their unity from a collectively rationalised subversion of structures of oppression as from a recognition of their shared vulnerability

and 'mutual dependency,' thought to 'open the way to a form of improvisation in the course of devising collective institutional ways of addressing induced precarity' (Butler, 2015: 22).

In contrast with Bourdieu, whose concept of *habitus* tends to emphasise the regulated character of bodily acts, Butler is keen to expose the empowering character of such acts and defends her own conception of resistance on the fact that 'what is bodily in speech resists and confounds the very norms by which it is regulated' (Butler, 1997: 142). Like Foucault, then, she construes resistance in terms of counter-conducts, or bodily enacted refusals to 'conduct oneself towards others in accordance with the norm of competition.' But in an effort to overcome a limitation of his approach identified in the first part of this piece, she insists on showing how it can be performed collectively and without 'making presumptions about who is included and who is not' (Butler, 2015: 4). Resistance, in this sense, is both collective and plural. However, because resistance is construed as performative and, as such, relies on the indeterminacy, instability and temporality of bodily enactments, it remains difficult to grasp how collective counter-conducts can be expected to turn into 'enduring strategic patterns.' Little is in fact said about the kind of cognitive labour that will eventually be required to address the diverse experiences of precarity in the struggle to 'devise institutional ways of addressing induced precarity.' Furthermore, while it is reasonable to treat vulnerability as a 'condition of resistance' (Butler, 2015: 184) in an increasingly insecure and uncertain world, it would be unreasonable to suggest that it is a sufficient one. For, despite the existence of 'neoliberal forms of power' destroying the possibility for meeting the moral ideal cultivated by 'neoliberal rationality' itself (Butler, 2015: 14), precarity continues to reign supreme. More than a reliance on a merely shared condition of vulnerability and bodily enacted 'demand for livable lives' may therefore be required for fully grasping the prospects for lasting resistance under the contemporary age of precarity. Thus, while Bourdieu may have insufficiently accounted for the conditions under which resistance comes to be collectivised, Butler's own conceptualisation is limited in its capacity to anticipate the conversion of a moment of collectively performed subversion into a potential force for institutional change. As a result, the scope of her analysis excludes an explanation of the way in which the ontological experiences of precarity can be traced back to the structures of power and domination engendering it. Such a shortcoming is attributable to the post-structuralist stance she adopts and the concomitant refusal to accept that a meaningfully plural collectivisation of resistance can *emerge from* a shared recognition and condemnation of the mechanisms responsible for securing precarity-induced domination.

How, then, can a process of collectivisation capable of accommodating plurality in a shared and rationalised contestation of precarity's self-evidence be conceptualised? To answer this question, I propose to turn to intersectionality theory. As an 'analytical tool' (Collins and Bilge, 2016) central to

identifying coalitions, even between seemingly disparate forms of domination, it can perform an essential role for rationalising domination and guiding collectivisation in resistance. It is, first and foremost, a tool concerned with 'the way things work rather than who people are' (Chun, Lispitz and Shin, 2013: 923). More specifically, it is concerned with accounting for 'multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed' (Crenshaw, 1991: 1245). Experiences of precarity are, it follows, differentiated according to one's class, gender, race, nationality etc. How one apprehends the reality of precarity, therefore, depends on one's social position, itself the outcome of overlapping structures of power and domination. It follows that a white working-class male, for example, will experience domination and apprehend the reality of precarity differently from a black working-class woman. But structural intersectionality does not so much wish to highlight differences in domination and resistance as open up the scope for a deeper 'understanding of social, political, and economic injustice' thought to be 'vital' for 'individual transformation' *and* 'the direct experience of new forms of connection and solidarity' with other dominated groups (Chun, Lispitz and Shin, 2013: 934). It does not consist in denying the possibility for collective action; rather, it presupposes that unity against a condition like precarity can only be fruitfully mobilised by recognising within-group differences and preventing the subordination of a set of interests to another (Crenshaw, 1991; Chun, Lispitz and Shin, 2013). Unlike Foucault and Butler, then, this approach to resistance presupposes a collectively articulated *subject* of resistance. But intersectionality theory anticipates the formation of such a subject through the connections it is in a position to inform by making explicit the overlapping structures of precarity-induced domination, while, in a manner echoing Butler's own concern, rejecting 'the subordination of one oppression to another' (Chun, Lispitz and Shin, 2013: 918). By demonstrating the role intersectionality can play in challenging power 'in multiple sites and on multiple scales,' Chun et al. (2013: 929) were in a position to explain how such an analytical tool can turn into a 'social movement strategy' for, on the one hand, individual empowerment and, on the other, asserting unity amid diverse experiences of domination. Such a post-identitarian form of collective resistance, therefore, holds the potential for accommodating the plurality of precarity-induced experiences, while providing insights into the kind of cognitive labour required for forging lasting strategic alliances.

Furthermore, intersectionality theorists recognise, like Bourdieu, that despite developing a subjectivity conditioned by their position in society, which presupposes that '[e]ach group speaks from its standpoint and shares its own partial, situated knowledge' (Collins, 2000: 270), dominated groups can engage in a collective 'conversion of the vision of the world' (Bourdieu, 1991: 128). In intersectionality terms, this entails a 'counter-hegemonic and transformative knowledge production' (Bilge, 2013: 405) or, to put it differently, a cognitive − as opposed to bodily − enactment of a

'collective we' (Collins and Bilge, 2016: 135). Intersectionality, thus, provides an analytical tool with which the ontological experience of precarity is rationalised as the outcome of (overlapping) structures of power and domination. In this sense, the process through which individuals come to both elucidate the conditions responsible for their *individual* experiences of precarity and rationalise 'non-repressive structures of self-identity' results from, rather than underpins, the recognition that precarity-induced domination is imbued with a systematic and differentiated character. Through the prism of intersectionality, 'people derive their identities from their politics rather than their politics from their identities' (Chun, Lispitz and Shin, 2013: 937). Empowerment, that is, the state of asserting one's dissatisfaction with existing social reality, is at once individual and collective. Finally, and crucially for the goal set out in this article, by 'developing awareness of inequalities along multiple dimensions [that] is achieved organically over time' (Cho, Crenshaw and McCall, 2013: 803), intersectionality could be understood as facilitating the rationalised contestation of precarity's self-evidence. Put differently, it facilitates the recognition of seemingly impersonal operations of power as personal relations of domination. For, under its guise, one comes to grasp the values and interests structuring social reality, in such a way that inequalities are no longer perceived as personal shortcomings or that the individualisation of risk and responsibility contributing to the precarisation of life comes to be grasped as the result of decisions aligned with the values and interests of the socially dominant.

In sum, while intersectionality exhibits an emancipatory intent in line with Bourdieu's own vision of resistance, it also acts as an analytical tool particularly adequate for delineating the power relations making up social reality and facilitating the collectivisation of resistance. As such, it provides the conceptual means for capitalising on the 'objective crisis' he anticipates.

Conclusion

Despite inspiring a range of contemporary theorisations of politics in the age of precarity, Foucault's conceptual apparatus falls short of equipping critique with the appropriate tools for calling into question the inevitability of precarity. By postulating a subject understood as an outcome of all-pervasive disciplinary techniques with uniform effects, Foucault's post-structuralism tends to under-appreciate the importance of accounting for the diverse experiences of precarity. Furthermore, his analysis of the processes involved in the production of the subject lacks the sort of conceptual resources adequate for grasping the objectivating mechanisms involved in structuring social agents' subjectivity. As a result, critique is left with very few means with which to anticipate a moment of

cognitive subversion that, while socially differentiated, provides a political impulse for resisting the shared but repressive structuring processes supported by precarity.

Bourdieu's concept of symbolic domination, however, goes a long way towards overcoming those limitations. It not only offers a conceptual frame of analysis concerned with grasping the interplay of modes of subjectivation and modes of objectivation involved in cultivating the self-evidence of precarity, but also arms critique with the penetrating insights for apprehending the limits of, and cracks within, the neoliberal regime of symbolic domination. It was nevertheless suggested that in order to enhance critique's capacity to subvert dominant symbolic forms, more needed to be done regarding the conversion of cognitive subversion into a basis for collective action. While the work of Butler raises a range of important issues for theorising collective action, such as the value of cultivating plurality in resistance, her work is, like Foucault's, limited in its capacity to envisage lasting alliances. For this reason, it was argued that the task of conceptualising resistance in the age of precarity is better served by supplementing Bourdieu's own approach to domination with the analytical tool offered by intersectionality theory. For, the latter holds the potential to assert, cognitively, unity amid the diversity of precarity-induced experiences, and facilitate the formation of lasting alliances around a shared opposition to diverse relations of domination.

Despite its divisive and existentially troubling character, therefore, precarity does offer some non-negligible opportunities for emancipatory political action. To be sure, under the present situation, such a prospect seems like a rather distant one, not least because of precarity's tendency to provoke reactionary political responses, as exemplified by recent political outcomes in Europe and the US. But, while neoliberalism has undeniably succeeded in '*making itself true* and empirically verifiable' (Bourdieu, 1998: 95; emphasis in original) through the generalisation of insecurity and fear, it is also responsible for generalising a condition of servitude gradually becoming intolerable for a large proportion of the population, both within and outside Western capitalist societies. Success in capitalising on a possible 'objective crisis' in the neoliberal regime of symbolic domination may nevertheless depend on forms of political action substituting an all-too-widespread defensive and potentially reactionary look into the past, with the hopeful and potentially progressive outlook of a shared and collectively cultivated vision of the future.

21

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[1] See, for example: Rose (1999), Miller and Rose (2008), Dardot and Laval (2013) and Lazzarato (2009).

[2] See, for example, Butler (2004), Lorey (2015) and McCormack and Salmenniemi (2016).

[3] Some, such as Zamora and Behrent (2016), have even gone as far as suggesting that Foucault can, at times, appear to endorse neoliberalism.

[4] This is my translation of the original French title 'Le Plaisir de Savoir'.

[5] For a more detailed discussion of Bourdieu's stance towards Foucault's work, see Callewaert (2006)

[6] Bourdieu's consistent focus on mechanisms structuring social action has earned him the charge of objectivism (Jenkins, 1982). This article nevertheless shows that, by discussing his work in its own terms, it is possible to develop a robust diagnosis of the politics of precarity.

[7] Bourdieu's own ideological account of power must not, however, be confused with Marxian accounts of domination. As Cronin (1996: 75) put it, the 'theory of the habitus suggests that relations of domination are more deeply entrenched and resistant to change than the critique of ideology would suggest because they are based on bodily schemes that agents, and especially those who are culturally disenfranchised, can reflexively grasped and control only within limits.'

[8] Long-term employment is here defined as a tenure of ten or more years (Doogan, 2009; 2015).

[9] For Boltanski, this 'hermeneutic contradiction' makes critique possible. It is 'constantly in the consciousness of actors or, at least, on its edges, and liable to be resuscitated every time an incident - be it a dispute or a simple maladjustment between the elements that make up the environment - reawakens doubt about the content of reality' (Boltanski, 2011: 86). While he was critical of Bourdieu's own approach to domination for being 'too powerful and too vague in character' and for directing critique at a form of 'symbolic violence' or domination 'which invariably is not experienced as such' (Boltanski 2011: 20), the interpretation proposed here partly aims to show that the latter can provide the conceptual tools with which to grasp the 'hermeneutic contradiction' at the heart of Boltanski's own approach. In this sense, it is aligned with Terry Eagleton's own interpretation, which recognises Bourdieu's capacity to offer an insight into the '"microstructures of ideology"' (1991: 158).