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CHAPTER 5

Dialectics of Alienation and Abnormality

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter we describe a complex, dialectical 'system' of psycho-sociality. The system has four aspects, which we will discuss in relation to one another: alienation, 'authenticity strain', fear and normality/abnormality. We begin by defining our use of the term 'alienation' here, where we will focus more on Fromm's theory of alienation than Debord's, although in the society of the selfie Debord's and Fromm's respective models of alienation can be understood as two wings of the same bird.

Up until now we have primarily discussed the topic of alienation in terms of Marx's theory of the fetishism of commodities, as taken up in Debord's theory of the spectacle. Here, social alienation in the sense alluded to in Marx's early essay on estranged labour, and taken up as a central component of Fromm's psychosocial analysis of modern capitalism, begins to occupy a central role in our analysis. There is debate among Marxists whether it is appropriate to consider Marx's early thought (e.g., the estranged labour essay of the Paris manuscripts of 1844) as essentially the same or different from his later thought (e.g., *Capital*), but for our purposes here, the difference does not need to be weighed or arbitrated. We might conjecture that the later theory of the fetishism of commodities could be 'folded into' the earlier theory of estranged labour without problem, but even this is not crucial for us. Instead, the utility in referencing

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both as related to different aspects of alienation under capitalism, is that alienation under capitalism is multifaceted, and so is best understood using a multipronged approach. If the theories directly contradict one another in a way that poses unreconcilable, substantive flaws in our analysis, then it may be best not to use them in such a constellation as we display in this book. Yet in our assessment the difference between them is not so problematic, and so we choose to use both of them in our constellation, to illuminate different aspects of the society of the selfie.

This new aspect concerns a different dimension or form of alienation from the sense of alienation as mediation of sociality by commodities or by the spectacle. That form of alienation concerns the mystification of the social and economic life that runs underneath the spell of capital, that social and economic reality being in fact the foundation of capitalism and its final word, despite the contrary illusion that the 'phantasmagoric' world of commodities and images presents to people. This new aspect of the society of the selfie that we now turn to, concerns alienation as estrangement from self and others. It is a type of alienation that translates into feelings of loneliness or meaninglessness. It is alienation in the sense of feeling cut off from one's 'authentic' inner self, and cut off from 'full' connection with other people. The division between the two types of alienation – Debordian alienation as mediation and Frommian alienation as estrangement – is useful analytically to identify certain dynamics with greater clarity and theoretical precision. Yet we maintain that the two types are related when the issue at hand is the social impacts of communication technologies. The mediation of sociality is also a kind of social distancing, and the effects of technological change on the social structure is likely – or inevitably – to involve transformations in the texture of human relatedness and the scope and activities of social networks. Because these two types of alienation overlap, our discussion here necessarily includes the issue of mediated sociality, although our concern with it in this particular chapter regards its role in social and self-estrangement.

Our aim here is not simply to give another lamentation about the loss of community and meaning in modern life. This has been treated extensively by plenty of authors already. And such lamentation can easily lapse into a distorted idealization of pre-modern life. Instead, we are concerned with this estrangement as part of a dialectical system where the alienated society is simultaneously a society fixated on authenticity and connection. And to the extent that alienation might be seen as a form of social pathology, so too we view the hunger to overcome alienation by obtaining a greater experience of authentic relatedness as caught up in the same pathological system. The integral underside to the fixation on alienation and authenticity is the fixation on normality and abnormality, which co-form one another in dialectical interaction, much the same as alienation and the reaction against it operate in dialectical mutuality. The psychosocial problems that populate this dialectical system are propelled by a tendentious relationship between fear of others' transgressions on

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the one hand, and the strained desire to overcome alienation with authenticity on the other hand. It is a system that permits no simple 'sane' solution on the individual level. This does not mean that every individual is equally 'crazy' or tormented or incapable of living a satisfying life or hopeless to develop and maintain rewarding and 'healthy' relationships with others. Surely alienation and fear impact different people in different ways and with different intensities. Yet as an individual living in a society where sickness imbues the status quo, it is impossible to be 'healthy' and 'normal' simultaneously, and to the extent that abnormal people are prone to be alienated and alienation is unhealthy, it is structurally impossible to purify oneself of the complex social sickness (Fromm 1955). The game must be played because it is the only game in town, and leaving town is not only a scarce possibility, it is also already written into the game. Theodor Adorno's adage that 'wrong life cannot be lived rightly' is particularly pertinent. The only real way out of the damning system is to change the damned system, and for this, pursuing revolutionary social transformation is the only possible route of agency. The sense of this necessity is one of the key products of the system's machinations.

Below, we explain our concept of 'authenticity strain' in relation to alienation. In brief, the society of the selfie includes the simultaneous promotion of alienation on the one hand – both in the Debordian sense of alienation as mediated sociality and the Frommian sense of alienation as estrangement from self and others – and fetishization of authenticity on the other hand. Authenticity strain is the tension that arises from the gap between experienced alienation and desired authenticity. We then discuss fear and risk avoidance, which Giddens and Beck identify as a defining characteristic of contemporary 'risk society'. One of the fixations of pervasive contemporary fear is the threat of other people who are dangerous, deviant or 'abnormal'. We finally describe how the fear of abnormality buttresses and possibly reinforces 'normal' alienated life in the society of the selfie, while authenticity strain – which is partly provoked by alienation – inspires the 'abnormal' desire to transgress social boundaries. The parts are intertwined and the system reinforces itself. It runs on and generates psychosocial unrest. As the system grows in preponderance throughout society, the possibility disappears of individuals independently avoiding or transcending it.

5.2 Alienation and Authenticity Strain

Despite the trends towards narcissism and solipsism that accompany the spread of the society of the selfie, despite the growing ubiquity of neoliberal impression management and self-expression, people still live in a deeply social reality, where at minimum they long to receive positive metrics on their posts. Generally, people still long for numbers, words and images to emerge from the invisible audience, with real names and avatars attached.

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Yet it is not only that the social element *haunts* the culture of the newsfeed, nor even that it still *defines* it, albeit in an estranged and mediated form. With the ubiquity of surfaces, there has also risen a celebration of depth. With the ubiquity of artificiality, there has also risen a celebration of the organic. While much of their interaction is alienated through tailored digital avatars, people hold *authenticity* in high esteem. The moral valorization of authenticity is part of a long historical trajectory of the full expression of subjective feelings dating back to the early Romantics in the late eighteenth century (Frank 1989; Williams 1976), especially in the paradigmatic works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Johann Gottfried Herder. This tendency puts a strong emphasis on radical individuation and the notion of originality as a source of the self. The expressive self-articulation intensifies the sense of depth and produces a tension with disengaged rational constraints and all kinds of artificial control provided by mainstream rules over individual inwardness (Taylor 2001). It is both ethically elevated and hungered for. The desire for authenticity, and the moral sense that surrounds it, dovetail with the frustrated voyeurism of life under the Debordian spectacle.

As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, the popularity of reality TV testifies to the hunger, as also does the trend of 'found footage' style horror film, with the enormous popularity of *Blair Witch Project* and *Cloverfield*. Whether real, fabricated or somewhere in the middle, spectators long for the feeling that they are getting a real look into somebody else's experience, in Goffman's terms, beyond just the 'front stage' of crafted social encounters, reaching instead into the more authentic 'back stage', to experience others in all of their imperfection and vulnerability. On the one hand, this indicates a human longing for real connection, and a trend of turning away from the artificiality of airbrushes and avatars. On the other hand, the trend also stretches into increased voyeurism, which is facilitated considerably by the internet. The selfie phenomenon participates in the blurring of the boundaries between public and private space, many selfies showing people in spontaneous, private situations, yet viewable by potentially thousands of people. And finally, the turning away from the spectacular and glossy to things that feel more authentic, brings authenticity itself into the orbit of the spectacle. One consumes the experience of others' authenticity, and one offers up one's own authenticity for others to consume, as a selling point on what Fromm (1947) denoted 'the personality marketplace'.

If the Romantic celebration of authenticity was a moral protest against the rise of the Enlightenment ideal of instrumental reason (Taylor 2001), in the society of the selfie authenticity may be the superficial sign of a rejection of alienation and narrowing communication. However, it fails when it comes to try to overcome the reified sociality. In Chapters 3 and 4, we emphasized authenticity as a dialectical protest against the reification of a self that seeks to affirm its originality via impression management and self-expression before an audience. Self-exhibition and the need for an authentic way of being are

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nothing but a subjection of the self to the cultural jargon of an age that, under maxims like 'never hide' and 'broadcast yourself', is immersed in brandings dedicated to turn life itself into a self-alien commodity and to dissolve it into representation via the spectacle, as Debord described. Moreover, neoliberal impression management itself, under which every form of the spectacular self articulates its authentic expression amidst an intangible stream of data and images, is a product of this reified sociality.

Yet, the free, authentic, individual self remains a hallmark ideal of contemporary life under capitalism (Taylor 1991). It is a modern ideal that emphasizes the moral content by which each individual has an original way of being human. The diffuse promises of authenticity as self-fulfilment and self-realization entail a subjectivist exhibition of personal choices and lifestyle as being all worthy, that is, a soft relativism permeates modern culture. If via impression management the individual tries to define themselves meaningfully, the spectacular self promotes a self-centred culture in opposition to the commons demands of society. It can favour a kind of fragmentation (amplified by echo chamber effects) by which the sense of collectivity is eroded by partial groupings and tribalism. Political citizenship and collective commitment to polity, thus, turn out to be purely instrumental and dependent on 'one-dimensional' or 'split' communication – ironically, authenticity eventually feeds its opposite, that is, instrumental reason and the damaged ties of sociality.

The free, individual and authentic self is also an ideal that has been continuously frustrated by the modern world, with all of its zones of conformism and artificiality. In this sense, authenticity and the spectacular self also promote a demand for recognition (Taylor 1991) in which people identify themselves by their social roles through profiles, personal updates, etc. There is a superposition within this impression management: if the promises of liberal democratic societies and social media imply a growing sense of horizontalization between citizens, this formal principle is contradicted by the exhibition of social hierarchies – as soft as they may appear in profiles and avatars. Liberal-democratic capitalism is self-agitating in this way, that freedom, individuality and authenticity are stifled at the same time as they are celebrated. The ubiquitous, shifting challenge to the status quo of counter-cultural niches, are a reproduction of this contradiction at the same time as they are defections from whatever norms flirt with hegemony at a given place and time. The hippie and punk movements, for instance, were very similar in that they were often touted by members as zones of cultural liberation; and yet there were particular styles of consumption which one had to ape and even flaunt – styles of music, clothing, etc. – if one were to convincingly belong to these allegedly free, authentic and nonconformist creeds, who stood in defiance of the confining conformist world of mainstream society.

Regarding this ethical side, people also tout the capacity of the selfie to bring a new kind of authenticity via self-expression online, and much of the pro vs. anti

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selfies discourse revolves around the perception of the selfie as either artificial or authentic. Some social media 'influencers' come under immense criticism for seeming inauthentic or impersonal. Others boost their celebrity careers by adhering to the authenticity imperative, keeping in touch with a wide fan base in a 'personal' way, and divulging information about their private lives, or images and videos of themselves with their families, etc.

The search for authenticity and the blurring of boundaries between public and private spheres are part of the transformation of individual inwardness and personal relationships. Anthony Giddens (1992) theorizes that modern society is undergoing a 'transformation of intimacy', where love and sex are freed from patriarchal traditions, and people increasingly value 'pure relationships' where authentic connection is the only motive, and can be fully realized. The process deals with a broader transformation of the self in modern culture: the same subjectivist principle that makes every life-style worthy also makes the individual more malleable to volatilize a preordained state of affairs of traditional values and strict moral norms. In the society of the selfie, the whole of life is under the pressure of a growing need for disclosure and it implies the production of new intersubjective pressures. The pervasive presence of digital surfaces blurs the modern separation between public and private realms and induces the individual to be available 24/7 not only to consume, but also to interact with the many others. Authenticity, in this sense, becomes an impression to be managed, that forces one to express how good one's life can be, despite the reified and damaged content of sociality.

The volatilization of the difference between the public and the private space reveals the power of 'extimacy' (Tisseron 2001, 52–54), that is, a movement of intimacy towards self-disclosure and the exposition (emphasis on the Latin prefix *ex*) of fractions of individual life that was formerly confined to individual inwardness. And here the relational aspect is important, because the desire for 'extimacy' goes hand in hand with the creation of new social needs grounded in the reaction of the generalized other. Be it the reactions on the newsfeed or the followers and comments a virtual self deserves, those new needs are dependent on the self-spectacle. This 'appearance of the self' (*démonstration de soi*) (Tisseron 2001, 68) is connected to the new symbolic signs of recognition embedded in digital images: digital images are intersensory, because the spectacle is a rhapsody of means of reproduction (personal videos, selfies, avatars, memes, etc.) and synesthetic stimuli (sounds, colours, movement and sensations). 'Extimacy' expresses the centrality of self-expression to give voice to individual's own narratives against the pressures of reality and despite the persistence of traditional, more selective forms of spectacle (like TV corporations and mainstream newspapers).

The investment in self-image is a constant flux of rationalization regarding the best angle, the most appropriate phrases, what is trending, how the invisible audience reacts to certain contents, etc. For Giddens (1990), thus, as a 'consequence of modernity', the self is a reflexive practice, because the individual must

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construct it amid the many paths and promises for self-fulfilment as well as the pressures of an inhuman amount of abstract information. In this sense, the self is modelled and continuously examined under the sociocultural pressures of incoming information. If authenticity promises the opening up and projecting out of the self into the spectacle as commodity and representation (via the exhibition of intimacy and inwardness), it also builds new forms of personal trust mediated by images. The relatedness with 'absent others', since face-to-face contact becomes phantasmagoric and geographically distant (and almost irrelevant), demands the exposition of the individual profile to the invisible many by hazard. The construction of trust in digital milieu is not a pre-given datum, but rather a project for self-presentation that needs to be *worked at*. Sociality is dependent on a mutual process of self-disclosure in which individuals express their lives and views as worthy of being shared and commented.

So far, we have described the desire for authenticity in terms of its origins in Romantic thinking, associated with freedom and individuality; and yet frustrated no end by the alienation and artificiality that consumer-oriented, spectacular capitalism engenders. In this sense, modern capitalism suffers from internal contradictions that reach deep into people's emotional lives, into their longings and capacities – and lack thereof – for intimate connection. The alienation of the human subject under the reign of the Debordian spectacle is accompanied by a persistent and insatiable desire for reconciliation and recognition, for connectedness with the 'real' and 'authentic', for unmediated intuition and for unqualified use-value. This hungry desire is continuously frustrated both by rampant social alienation and by the lack of any clear exit of consciousness, much less of social life from mediation by the spectacle. The festering alienation and frustrated longing for authenticity feed into patterns of aggressive transgression, or in other words, to violent forms of deviance.

'Alienation' is a broad concept that resists simplistic definition. Arguably because of this, but also likely for more political reasons (e.g., its association with Marxism and youth rebellion) it has not commonly featured in mainstream sociology over the past few decades. Yet in terms of the actual substance of a variety of sociological theories, the notion of alienation is still very influential, underneath alternative labels and guises (Seeman 1983; Smith and Bohm 2008). Appreciatively, Kalekin-Fishman and Langman (2015) have referred to alienation as 'the critique that refuses to disappear'. Seeman's typology from 1959 identifies several branches of alienation theory, respectively stemming from Marx, Mannheim, Durkheim, Nettler and Fromm (Tatsis and Zito 1974; Smith and Bohm 2008). Criminology has taken great influence from the Durkheimian tradition concerning 'anomie' as well as from the 'social integration' tradition of the Chicago School. For our purposes here, we are primarily interested in the branches that can be traced to Fromm and Durkheim.[1]

Fromm (1947, 1955) suggested that people have a collection of needs, satiation of which can be sought in positive or productive ways but can also be sought in more negative or destructive ways, when positive satiation does not

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appear to be an option. Whether the 'productive orientation' will flourish is influenced by social and structural conditions, and the particular flavours of surrogate satiation will also be contoured to the prevailing society. In nineteenth century capitalism, exploitative and hoarding orientations were promoted by society. In the twentieth century, he says receptive and marketing orientations were promoted.

Unavoidably, people are born into a context of ambivalence regarding freedom and its negative relations to belongingness and security (Fromm 1941). This is intrinsic to human life, and yet it is exacerbated under conditions of modern capitalism. Fromm frames this in terms of the connectedness that children experience, first within the womb, second within the family. The child progressively separates from their parents, with each step of separation, achieving newfound strength in their individuality and autonomy. And yet this new independence is always accompanied by anxiety – a sense of vulnerability and aloneness. Ultimately, the child's developmental trajectory is to become an independent adult. Ideally, they are able to connect with their families of origin in new ways that are still profound, and this transformative *re*connection is only possible based upon the child's successful development of a secure, autonomous sense of self, which requires the courage to *dis*connect.

In traditional societies, there is perhaps not such a great distance between the family and the community, and so 'striking out on one's own' still entails a basic modicum of rootedness, belonging, and so forth, even perhaps living very geographically close to one's family of origin (Fromm 1941). But in modern capitalism, the adult individual has to 'strike out on one's own' in a more severe way, facing a 'society' of millions of people in an individualistic culture and a competitive marketplace. In some important ways this provides an even greater potential for adult autonomy and self-creation, and at the same time, the situation is perhaps exponentially more anxiety-provoking than in societies of the past. When people encounter newfound freedom, accompanied by anxiety and aloneness, they can relate to this freedom in one of two overall directions. In the first, one can rise to it, and learn to reconnect with others, rooted in the strength of one's new autonomy, with an authentic self-knowledge. In the second, one can retreat from it, and regress into various 'mechanisms of escape', these being sadomasochism, destructiveness and conformity. Fromm's analysis is primarily intended to point towards the sociohistorical conditions that give rise to fascism, and in the next chapter, we will make more explicit these connections. For now, we will stay on the character traits *sadomasochism* and *destructiveness*, their proliferation in late capitalism, and their manner of appearance in the society of the selfie.

For Fromm (1941, 1973), contrary to Freudian and common parlance, sadomasochism is primarily about power in interpersonal relations, rather than about sexuality. He says people are driven towards 'symbiosis', where they can have a kind of cognitive fusion of self and other through complementary roles of domination and subordination, the other being another person, or possibly

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a social, political or religious cause with which to subordinate oneself. Whether taking the dominant role and incorporating the other into oneself, or the submissive role and losing oneself in the other, the goal is this sort of merging, where the self loses its autonomous integrity. The desire to lose oneself in symbiotic fusion with the other can be a very compelling drive, and even feel intensely romantic. There may be a sense of desperate need for the other, in order to feel complete, or in order to be saved by them – as a mythologized 'magic helper' (Fromm 1956). There may be an intense drive to control the other, first as a means of connection, second as a defence against the threat of abandonment. Destructiveness is often found in conjunction with sadomasochism, but it can be analytically distinguished, in that its purpose is less to join with the other than to vanquish the other. There is a twisted intimacy in this – to be someone or something's destroyer is to matter intensely for them, even if negatively. It also removes the possibility of their autonomous existence, which is perhaps threatening by virtue of them being alien from you. If they no longer exist, they are no longer alien.

Durkheim's theory relevant to the issue of alienation revolves around his concept of 'anomie'. In *The Division of Labor in Society*, he introduces it to refer to a pathological state of society where traditional norms have eroded but new norms have not set in to replace them (Durkheim 1991). In *Suicide*, he attributed anomie as one of four social conditions that can facilitate if not inspire suicide. Durkheim indicates that society is most vulnerable to anomie in times of rapid transition, where the social structure has changed too rapidly for people to be socialized into it in a harmonious way, or to develop and integrate new norms that they could be socialized into. It is not only as a result of crises or negative transitions that anomie is generated, although crises are one of genre of its sources; it can also come through otherwise positive transitions, such as a rapid increase of wealth throughout society that is enough to destabilize customary social positions and expectations. His description of this scenario is particularly pertinent to the present discussion:

> With increased [*accrue*] prosperity desires increase [*exaltés*]. At the very moment when traditional rules have lost their authority, the richer prize offered these appetites stimulates them and makes them more exigent and impatient of control [*règle*] […] But their very demands make fulfilment impossible. Overweening [*surexcitées*] ambition always exceeds the results obtained, great as they may be, since there is no warning to pause here. Nothing gives satisfaction and all this agitation is uninterruptedly maintained without appeasement. (Durkheim 1990, 281)

Robert Merton (1938) took from Durkheim's theory of anomie to develop his own theory of structural 'strain' as an explanation of criminal behaviour. In Merton's theory, when people's expectations about what they are supposed to

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be able to attain or achieve are mismatched with the reality of their constraints on being successful (especially in terms of wealth and status, which have become centrally valued personal attributes under capitalism), they experience strain. Under such strain, and more intensively as the strain is more intense, people will be moved to adopt one of five strategies to cope, differentiated by the extent to which they maintain society's high expectations on the one hand, and pursue ascribed (normal) pathways for reaching expectations. The five types are conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism and rebellion. 'Innovation', is a prime breeding ground for criminal behaviour; the innovator may be inspired to pursue illicit pathways for achieving the imagined successes that haunt them, and that they feel like they should be able to have. Strain theory is enormously influential in criminology and is broadly substantiated by decades of empirical support.

Fromm's theory of alienation and the Durkheimian theory of anomie share three points in common. First, both identify rapid material change as a destabilizing force that can lead to problematic social behaviour. Second, both identify the loss of traditional role guidance in modern capitalism as a source of potential social disfunction. And third, both identify the systemic frustration of social desires as generative of socially problematic behaviour. Regarding this last point, a major difference between the Fromm and anomie/strain theories is that Fromm's theory focuses on desires for social relatedness, while Durkheim and Merton tend to focus on the desire for individual success in wealth and status. A second important distinction is that in anomie and strain theories, a person's high expectations for themselves play just as much a role in the strain as do the systemic constraints on their realization of those expectations. In this respect, the hyper-focus in modern capitalism on individual wealth and status combine with the widespread difficulty if not impossibility of their satiation for much of the population, creating the strain that leads innovators to 'deviant' solutions that can include violent transgressions.

We suggest that in the society of the selfie the first two points above are clearly operant. Information technologies and Web 2.0 have rapidly transformed social life and as such accelerate the social destabilization, role confusion and drift towards 'normlessness' endemic to capitalist society. Regarding the third point, we suggest that the differences between Fromm and Durkheim/Merton can be integrated: authentic human relatedness joins wealth and status as simultaneously heightened and frustrated social expectations in the society of the selfie. And when this authenticity strain is great enough, some people – Merton's innovators – will be moved to attempt satiation through surrogate sadomasochistic pathways. For some people this stoked sadomasochism may manifest in criminal behaviour directed towards piercing through 'normal' alienation, violently collapsing the distance between self and other. For the rest of the population, even if not yet moved to violence or personal transgressions, authenticity strain remains a lingering, festering presence.

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5.3 Fear

In Fromm's theory, anxiety accompanies alienation, and the flight into sado-masochism, conformity and destructiveness is driven not just by the desire for lost authentic relatedness, but also for a sense of security, as the alienated individual is also the frightened individual. For Giddens (2002) – and relatedly for Beck (1992) – the contemporary period is marked by heightened concern with risk and the avoidance of risk. In contemporary 'risk society', people are dependent on 'abstract systems' that are beyond their control, and the powers of human ingenuity in science and technology have proven to be at least as dangerous as they are helpful. With the invention of the A-bomb and the H-bomb, and especially following the United States' dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in World War II, the threat of apocalyptic war became a realistic concern. In addition to the power of nuclear weapons, environmental destruction has become a constant source of anxiety concerning death and destruction on a global scale, and over the past several decades, the fear of an apocalyptic pandemic virus has grown, no doubt exponentially during the era of COVID-19. The reality of the ever-present threat of massive destruction, and the seeming powerless of the individual to do anything to prevent it or protect themselves, contributes to a pervasive 'ontological insecurity', and orientation around risk aversion.

Zygmunt Bauman (2000) describes the contemporary period as 'liquid modernity' – social reality melts into transience and inconclusiveness. Precarious work, unstable social relationships and fluid identity mark much of the human experience, and people suffer from great insecurity as a result. This insecurity is often manifest in 'derivative fear', which he defines as 'a steady frame of mind' characterized by 'the sentiment of being susceptible to danger; a feeling of insecurity (the world is full of dangers that may strike at any time with little or no warning) and vulnerability (in the event of the danger striking, there will be little if any chance of escape or successful defense; the assumption of vulnerability to dangers depends more on a lack of trust in the defenses available than on the volume or nature of actual threats)'. Bauman further characterizes derivative fear as prone to a 'self-propelling capacity', meaning people organize their lives in defensive ways to avoid imagined threats, and in doing so, they do in fact avoid situations that could hypothetically include real threats. Yet the defensive or retreating tendencies will also shield them from coming to any realization about the accuracy or lack thereof concerning their anxieties about the 'world full of dangers' (Bauman 2006, 3). He notes that while one may consciously fear specific dangers, such as associated with one's body, livelihood or social standing, the origins of the fear might be entirely different from the threats now consciously imagined. In psychoanalytic terms, Bauman is alluding to the defence mechanism of 'displacement' (Freud 2018).

Sociologists Barry Glassner (2010) and Frank Furedi (2007, 2018) both argue that American culture has come to be saturated with fear. Glassner emphasizes

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that the severity of contemporary fears typically overshoots the real degree of danger, and this overshooting is egged on – if not caused – by the sensationalism of popular news media. In this sense Glassner describes what amounts to a variety of persistent and often simultaneous 'moral panics' (Cohen 2002) over issues like race, parenting, drugs, illness, etc. Like in Bauman's notion of derivative fear, Furedi (2006, 4) describes contemporary fear as having a 'free-floating dynamic', operating in a kind of fluid, easily transferrable fashion. We might liken his description to a cathexis jumping haphazardly between objects. Yet he says that a common denominator in many objects of fear is that they indicate a misanthropic status quo, where people are chronically wary of others. People no longer know what to expect of one another, and so they are habitually cautious, and 'expect the unexpected' (Furedi 2006, 115). The fear that any strangers could be dangerous, serial killers or 'extraordinarily perverted and sick individuals' has set deeply into what for many people is taken-for-granted common sense.

5.4 Dialectic of Abnormality

Typically, the 'social character' of a given society will tend to harmonize with the demands of the social structure (Fromm 1941, 1962). This is how Fromm explains the shift from the dominant character types of nineteenth to twentieth century capitalism. This plays a part in how 'nonproductive' orientations (Fromm 1947) can become normalized and even venerated. In Fromm's terms, common and normalized nonproductive, sadomasochistic or destructive tendencies are 'socially patterned defects' (Fromm 1955). In terms of the well-being of the individual in the fullest sense, including having genuine autonomy and relatedness with others, the status quo may very well be far below the ideal. A certain quantity of sadism, for instance, might be an asset in a very competitive marketplace, where it can be channelled into the will to succeed at the expense of others. People who are able to satisfy sadistic desires through legal, normalized economic behaviour and even become rewarded with money, status and power through doing so, will not appear to be 'unhealthy' within the context of the prevailing order. By the same token, we might note that in a highly mediated, alienated society, estrangement from self and others will not be an abnormal condition. Hence for an individual to have very little in the way of ongoing positive face-to-face social experiences, perhaps very little in the way of a robust support network, could reasonably be interpreted as being deprived of an important area of human needs, and yet might fit into the status quo very smoothly. In an alienated society, estrangement may be a 'socially patterned defect', but it is not abnormal, and it is not pathologized, per se. In the society of the selfie, this is the case with authenticity strain.

In the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, integral to many diagnoses is the criteria that the condition under question interferes with 'social,

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occupational, or other important areas of current functioning' (American Psychiatric Association 2013). In other words, a cluster of traits goes beyond the level of 'socially patterned defect' to constitute a 'disorder' – or 'neurosis', as Fromm called it in 1955 – when it is heightened beyond 'normal' limits, to the point where the symptom bearer is dissonant with society. At this point the 'condition' becomes a stigma (Goffman 1963b), and the stigma-bearer might go to great lengths to 'pass' as normal in everyday life. But 'passing', however successful, always contains the reality beneath, that the passer has a secret identity, and might be socially discredited were they to be found out.

This dividing line between 'normal' and 'abnormal' is, according to Foucault (2003), a very prominent element in various fields of social control in contemporary society, from the prison to the asylum (Foucault 2008, 2012). According to him, the tendency to categorize as Other a subpopulation, and separate them from the rest of society for the protection of normal/healthy society, can be traced back to the exclusion of people of leprosy in the middle ages (Foucault 2009). They were literally driven out of society, sometimes *tout court*, sometimes into houses of confinement specifically for lepers. Foucault says the notion of the 'abnormal' person, which modern psychiatry was created in relation to, came into being in the nineteenth century, out of three other categories of person that had been separate in the eighteenth century: the monster, the incorrigible and the masturbator.

In common parlance, the term 'abnormal' describes a wide spectrum of deviance, and Foucault's description, while of historical interest, does not map easily onto, for example, the DSM-V as a monolith. Yet the nineteenth century 'abnormal' person that Foucault describes – part monster, part incorrigible, part masturbator – does in fact characterize very well the stuff of contemporary nightmares concerning 'crazy' people who might do something bad to you or your children, for instance serial killers and sexual predators. Part of what makes these people so threatening is that they are supposed to be generally invisible until and unless they are in the process of attacking. They are always 'passing', either knowingly, or perhaps worse, because they do not even know they are 'abnormal'.

The unknowingly passing abnormal individual is the case, for instance, in the television series *Bates Motel*, a recent five-season prequel to Alfred Hitchcock's classic film *Psycho*. In this series, Norman Bates is very well-mannered, respectful and calm, most of the time. This is all anyone knows in the beginning, other than his mother. Norman's excessively controlled demeanour hides a serial killer though, a side of himself Norman is entirely unaware of because he always blacks out when he kills, and when he is conscious again, he is entirely oblivious. For most of the series, his victims are women, and what triggers him, while varying, consistently has to do with his intense volatility in moments where he encounters female sexuality. According to what he says to his victims before he kills them, he believes they are sexually transgressive, and this infuriates him to the point of murder – yet in his excessively polite, proper demeanour and in

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his tendency to be triggered when women direct sexual energy towards him, it is not unlikely that a great deal of his rage comes from his virulent denial of his own sexuality. He claims he is killing others for their sexual deviance, but really, *he* is the dangerous sexual deviant, albeit in an inverted form.

The series *You* is another instance. We first encounter the protagonist Joe as a kind, intelligent, articulate and responsive worker at a used bookstore, admiring a young woman who has entered the premises. His admiration is very in-depth, almost like a Sherlock Holmes style interpretation, and it is clear that he is watching and analysing her without her knowledge. After a brief, flirtatious exchange with the woman nicknamed 'Beck', he proceeds to stalk her and obsess about her. Eventually they do become mutually romantically and sexually involved. On the surface he is very good to her, very attuned to her, in general. The problem is, he is secretly a stalker and a murderer. He sees himself as mostly just doing what is necessary to protect and support her, which apparently has some degree of legitimacy, but more importantly he uses this story about his aims as a rationalization for his own compartmentalized blood lust, obsessiveness, manipulative control and boundary violations. Eventually, she discovers the truth about him, and he locks her up, hoping to sort things out. It is of course impossible to resolve the issue. Eventually he kills her.

In both of these examples, outwardly friendly men turn out to be secretly abnormal, and while their victims are not exclusively women, their murderousness revolves around intimacy with women. Getting close to them is dangerous. Yet in other examples, the gender dynamics of the threat vary. In *Emelie*, a deranged woman kills a babysitter to steal her identity for the purpose of taking her babysitting job and preying upon the children of the family. At first, she seems very friendly, but things get progressively stranger. Mostly the threat is that she will torment, kidnap or kill them, although in the process, her sexual deviance comes out. After some flirtatious attempts at alignment with the older boy of the family, she coaxes him into the bathroom with her and gets him to give her a tampon, which she inserts in front of him, flashing him in the process.

In *Creep* (2014), a videographer for hire named Aaron goes out to a remote vacation home in the mountains for a job. The owner of the house, Josef, very quickly raises the intimacy level past normal. After telling Aaron that he has a brain tumour and will die in a couple of months, he pays Aaron, and informs him that the event is no longer a business transaction, instead it is a 'journey of the heart'. Then, to officially begin the filming, he invites Aaron to film him taking a bath. His intimate disclosures to Aaron are paired with erratic, alarming behaviour with murderous innuendos thrown in, make it clear that he is constructing a notion about their closeness that is oddly insistent and inappropriate, and also that he is unhinged and unpredictable. At one point, Josef confesses to Aaron about a time several years ago when Josef discovered his wife had been looking at a large amount of animal pornography on the internet, he broke into the (his own) house while his wife was sleeping, tied her up and raped her while wearing a wolf mask. Aaron gets away from Josef, but

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Josef becomes Aaron's stalker, which includes sending him things in the mail, including videos of himself. In the professed last DVD from Josef, he confesses to Aaron that he wants a chance to let Aaron know who he really is, he indicates a frustration with trying to be an actor when younger because it wasn't 'real', and confesses to Aaron that he is a lonely person, with nobody in his life to talk to. Interestingly, the film is 'found footage' style, so the sense of realness is thematically present, implicitly, the whole time.

One thing that Norman, Joe, Emilie and Josef share is that they are specifically alienated people, albeit in different ways. Norman's attachment to his mother is extreme, and their relationship borders on incestuous. Through this attachment – or perhaps rationalized through this attachment – Norman does not have many friends. Mostly he stays at home, working at the family's motel which is on the same piece of propertied land. Joe is an introvert, and a pseudo-intellectual. On the surface he seems too bookish to be going out and maintaining friendships, 'he is too smart for most people he meets' would be an easy – yet misleading – interpretation. There is some truth to it, and yet he also keeps to himself because his life tends to revolve around obsession and murder, and when he is not overtaken by his feelings for a woman, he is likely hiding something he is up to, or someone in the cage that he keeps in the basement of the bookstore. Anyway, people who get close to him often wind up murdered, if not by him, then by somebody who is involved in his larger secret bloody and demented drama. Emelie is driven by the obsessive desire to have a child, which she cannot do biologically. She had a baby of her own once, but accidentally killed it. Outside of the man she is involved with, she appears to be a primarily unknown person, a transient in some sense, who plans to leave the country with her man and an abducted young child. Josef is unknown, and who he 'really' is gets explicitly problematized. All we know is he has a sister, he assumes others' identities, he is abnormal, and he is evidently socially isolated, with the exception of his brief relationships with his victims.

Information technology sometimes has a lead role in horror stories about the alienated abnormal individual. *Friend Request* (2016) is a film about a normal popular girl in college named Laura who gets a Facebook friend request unexpectedly from Marina, another student at the school, out of the blue. Marina has no friends on her Facebook account, and is clearly very isolated, at least at school. Laura befriends her to be nice, but Marina's obsessive behaviours and trichotillomania concern Laura, who unfriends her. After the unfriending, Marina kills herself. Things get worse from there in a number of ways, most pressingly that Marina seeks revenge from beyond the grave, focused on ruining Laura's reputation via Facebook, and killing her friends. *Unfriended* (2014) is similar, although in this case, the girl who kills herself (Laura) does so because of an embarrassing film of her passed out at a party going viral. She proceeds to seek revenge from beyond the grave and kill her former friends.

Cam (2018) takes a different approach, yet the themes are related. This time, Alice works as a camgirl, and it appears to be her entire life. She lives alone,

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performs in front of a giant screen in her living room, and is very interested in rising in the rankings on 'FreeGirlsLive', the website that she works under. She has private conversations with various male fans, where she feigns intimacy, outside of just her performances. One of these men appears very attached to both her camming and their conversations, and for him at least, there is the experience of close attachment. Her career is threatened by a doppelganger of her, who is seemingly a precise replica, along with an exact copy of her living room. The doppelganger also sexually performs over FreeGirlsLive, stealing Alice's attention. While trying to track down the truth about what is happening, she decides to meet up with the man who is very attached to her for a 'date', hoping he can help her get more information. Eventually he is triggered to rage and attacks her. In the end, Alice discovers that her doppelganger was not a human at all, but rather an AI (or perhaps some sort of supernatural-digital force).

In all three of the above films, there are threats from two sides. On one side, there is the 'normal' world, saturated with social media and its customary forms of disconnected togetherness. On the other side, there is the threat of the abnormal breaking through into the normal world and tearing it apart. And a primary channel for this chaotic, destructive, evil abnormal force, is somebody who gets too close – gets obsessed, unhinged and invades your life, destroying the comfortable because familiar and seemingly predictable or controllable, albeit a somewhat shallow and alienated media-saturated bubble that the victim has become so accustomed to. The lack of humanity in the alienated, normal, digital world on one side, the lack of humanity in the perverse, insane, abnormal and obsessive person who refuses to accept the distance of the normal world on the other side.

To the extent that these films about alienation and the abnormal reflect the social character of the society of the selfie, this character needs to be understood in a 'multiperspectival' way (Morelock 2021a, 2021b; Kellner 2003a). In other words, the 'collective soul', as Kracauer (2019 [1947]) put it, should be understood as a collective multiplicity, more like a pointillist image than like a canvas displaying only one colour. And yet these multiple perspectives are in dynamic relation. Here in particular, there is a dialectic between alienation and abnormality – not because the abnormal individual is isolated, but because the abnormal individual is the one who is driven 'mad' by alienation, or at least acts 'mad' when they try to transcend the alienated status quo. The 'socially patterned defect' of alienation breeds abnormality in reaction to itself. The desire to transcend the alienated reality is familiar to everyone. Yet the individual who actually steps outside of it, tends to be one who is driven to do so 'neurotically'. This is why aggressive grabbing at the 'real' or at 'intimacy', such as depicted in *Creep*, tend to come out in perverse and abusive forms. Reciprocally, these perverse and abusive forms, these monstrous, incorrigible, masturbatory abnormal eruptions out of everyday rhythms, can only further convince the 'normal' fearful person that it is crucial to be very careful who they let into their life,

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to be very wary of the potential 'sociopath next door' (Stout 2006). Thus, the socially patterned alienation is further solidified by the perverse piercings of the uncomfortable but stable and familiar status quo.

Alienation and abnormality are mutually reinforcing, and to some extent each generates the other – but not just because the abnormal are alienated from the normal, because they do not fit in. It is also because (a) abnormality frightens the normal into extending and fortifying their own alienation, through increasing the ratio of mediated communication to embodied co-presence or through generally limiting social engagement, (b) the articulation of normality articulates abnormality by contrast, and (c) the alienation of normality (mediated sociality and estrangement from self and others) forges abnormality in reaction. One tragic irony of this for the normal person is that in their effort to shield themselves from abnormality, they may encourage abnormality within and around themselves, by effect of their own alienation, partly self-induced in defence.

The psychodynamic defence mechanisms of 'reaction formation' and 'projection' – which can operate together – make it even more difficult to differentiate clearly between alienation and abnormality. Reaction formation is when somebody substitutes a strong emotional attitude that they can handle easier for a strong emotional attitude they have trouble acknowledging to themselves, in relation to some object (e.g., some particular quality of another person). In the case of abnormality, this may simply be that a person harbours unwanted 'abnormal' (predatory, voyeuristic, etc.) longings; and instead of experiencing them as longings, which would be too threatening to the 'normal' identity, experiences them with the same intensity but with something of the opposite emotion: a specifically marked aversion to them, a 'neurotic' repulsion. Projection is when one avoids acknowledging something about oneself, and instead imagines it in another person, often to decry that quality. A lesser form of projection may be not so much to *imagine* a quality (falsely) in another person, but rather to readily identify it in another person, and adamantly reject it in them, perhaps exaggerate its presence in one's view of them, as a way of attempting to disown or eliminate the quality in oneself (Freud 2018). A crusader against sexual violence could very well be using said crusade as a way to distract themselves (and perhaps others) from their own predatory impulses. Foucault (1990) suggested that the rising concern over controlling sexual deviance was inseparable from the rise of sexual deviance in society – not because control is a reaction to deviance, but because control constructs – or articulates – deviance and hyper-focuses on it. To be preoccupied with controlling sexual predation also means amplifying discourse about sexual predation, which means raising focus on sexual predation, amplifying it in the public mind.[2]

Our issue here is not sexual deviance per se, nor even empirical instances of sexual violence or otherwise transgressive aggressions, so much as this broader notion of contemporary abnormality, and the feared characters who embody it. This dialectic of abnormality plays out not in the domain of face-to-face

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encounters so much as in the schemas, connotations and cathexes of the taken-for-granted backdrop of social life. Research shows, for instance, that actually sexually violent offenders and serial killers are not nearly as much inspired to transgress by alienation as by an interaction between genetic and environmental factors, such as their own experiences of victimization, trauma and normalized aggression (Glasser et al. 2001; Viding et al. 2005; Viding and McCrory 2012; Mohammadkhani et al. 2009; Simons et al. 2008).

The forms of alienation that proliferate in the society of the selfie generate a range of reactions, yet most if not all of the reactions can be understood as within this contorted dialectic of alienation and abnormality, with the ambivalences of authenticity strain playing a pivotal role. The spectacular other is unreachable except through digital mediation, via viewing their posts and through brief, unobtrusive 'comments' on their posts. The desire to consume them as one would consume any commodity, but to consume 'the real thing' not just the surface, is hypnotic, and so the heated desire for their authenticity, and the frustration when they fail to deliver, become marked. Yet the status quo is quite alienated and fragmented, and authenticity is not supposed to come with investment or attachment, and so like a cat frustrated by a ball it can't quite reach, the alienated voyeur can turn to various forms of aggression or manipulation in hopes of forcing or seducing others into deeper, more intense, or more lasting contact. Yet grabs and fabrications from a place of alienation are not a good footing from which to connect with others healthily, and so the forms of relatedness that are manufactured are likely to be 'neurotic', and/or abusive; in other words, abnormal.

For Foucault (2003a, 26), the concerns about abnormality go hand in hand with the 'power of normalization' that constitutes standards and reasonable, predictable behaviours. This power is not properly repressive, but productive: it implies the formation of a *savoir* that is both an effect of normal behaviours and a condition of its exercise (51–52). The disciplinary systems of modernity tried to individualize power relations, attributing inhuman characteristics (monsters, hermaphrodites, masturbating child, Siamese twins, etc.) to abject humans (57). This classificatory discourse system can be seen in David Lynch's *The Elephant Man* (1980), which emphasizes the *attraction* of abnormality as a technique of classification of the incorrigible individual during the Victorian Era. If deviants were on the fringes of modern training techniques (Foucault 2003a, 326), their appearance was conditioned to special situations in which the power of normalization pointed to the exceptionality of degeneration and the need to defend a sane society.

But in the society of the selfie, the condition of the spectacular self is its exposure to a wide sphere of contents with no trajectory and no recipient. The transformation of intimacy, with online exhibition, promotes a democratization of personal relationships (Giddens 1992, 202) since people seem more open to the individualization of life-forms. However, it can also erode the sense of order and stability. Everyone is vulnerable to the potential deviant other. Abnormality

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is not an exception, but it can be embedded in every image that defies a sense of order and reason. Besides that, remote interaction and search engines enable a vast mapping of profiles and personal activities, rendering them vulnerable to any kind of voyeur and to unwanted intrusions via inbox messages, spams, etc. The fear of predatory, psychologically unhinged others such as cyberstalkers, violent obsessives, paedophiles with fake avatars, mass shooters, etc. has become a rampant new nightmare; a nightmare that fuels a common desire for greater protection from 'deviants' and outsiders. People recurrently face threats themselves, or hear about them, from abnormal others, and protection can only come in the form of further retreat into the alienated status quo. There are two actors who can feed this retreat: the self, and the powers that be. If one always stays several yards away from the porcupine, one will avoid its quills every time. If more porcupines are being locked up, that makes things less chaotic and more predictable.

On the one hand, abnormality and private dangers pose a new set of threats to individuals: they are no longer embodied in an organic human self but can be part of fake profiles and robots. On the other hand, the exhibition of cultural difference can reinforce radical nationalism and traditional values against the sense of destabilization of an ideal homogeneity of national society. In this case, the incorrigible and the unwanted are targets of political violence, since the difference may be seen as abnormal. Globalization, which found its expression in digital infrastructure and the superabundance of images of the society of the selfie, confronts individual and community identity with the difference and the strange. It confronts the places, which are rooted in common customs and communitarian ties, with the many non-places (the digital milieu) marked by the ephemeral (Augé 1994) and the inhuman circulation of data of social behaviours, individual lifestyles, etc. In the society of the selfie, the individual relationship with the pressures of the generalized other forces the coexistence of the self with the many worlds represented in the spectacle on social media.

The society of the selfie is a fertile terrain for those new dangers since the basic form of sociality is the generalized other and the invisible audience surrounding the profiles and digital activities. It comes as no surprise that our times are marked by diffuse *grandes peurs* that produce a mix of hoax and collective traumas about online exhibition, with memes and viral creepy stories that blur fact and fiction. Between 2015 and 2019, the 'Blue Whale Challenge', which was a supposed online suicide game linked to the deaths of some teenagers in some countries, spread via profiles and online forums (Adeane 2019) and became a mainstream internet phenomenon with media coverage in several countries. In a similar way, the 'Momo Challenge' and the 'Goofy Man Challenge' use the effect of images to create a sense of abnormality and terror that resonates as concerns with safety guidelines in social media (Waterson 2019; Postiglione 2020). Those situations, which mix the aesthetic and the script of horror movies with real life, illustrate the immanent risk of the spectacle in terms of real human costs.

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The problem of the spectacular self stretches to its limits with the recent events of mass shooters that mix the effects of video-game simulation and real massacre. The terrorist attack in Christchurch (New Zealand) in 2019, led by a white supremacist who killed 51 people, was broadcast on Facebook Live via a headcam he was wearing (Menon 2020). In the same year, a terrorist attack against a synagogue killed two people and was filmed in a first-person shooter perspective in Halle (Germany) – the incident was streamed online via Twitch (Hsu 2019). In these cases, we are not dealing with the kind of spectacle promoted by traditional media with image coverage of wars and urban violence in the 1990s and the 2000s anymore. The grammar of violence became part of impression management: the individual is a producer, and the spectacular self discloses its authenticity in the form of hatred (a direct action with no artificial mediations) and promises the authentic defence of the nation with its own hands.

The state is the only power that can really ensure law and order, by catching the abnormal and locking them away. If killers and predators are everywhere, they need to be hunted down and locked away. The state needs to get *tough*. Individual solutions only go so far, and while social media platforms can institute rules on their own, they are more likely to do so if there is state intervention requiring them to do so. The sense of chaos, of creeps around every corner, fuels a longing for order, for less general tolerance of abnormal transgressions and greater punishment for them. Of course, this cannot satisfy the longings for authenticity that 'normal' people still feel in the society of the selfie. Conveniently and tragically, authoritarianism poses itself as a solution here as well. It should perhaps not be surprising, in light of the above, that far-right movements attract so many highly alienated and sexually frustrated men (the 'red pill' community), as well as so many anti-sexual moralizers, such as found among many religious fundamentalists. In the society of the selfie, Incels have been attracting the attention of many researchers devoted to the relation between sexual repression, personal virtual exhibition, social media and political extremism (Jaki et al. 2019; Hoiland 2019; Hoffman et al. 2020; Maxwell et al. 2020). Moreover, concern with other people's sexual deviance was one of the criteria for authoritarianism in Adorno's F-scale (Adorno et al. 2019 [1950]). As Fromm indicated, the thwarted desire to connect meaningfully with others is easily turned into sadomasochistic, conformist and destructive urges, which can all be somewhat satiated by joining an authoritarian movement and submitting to an authoritarian leader.

5.5 Conclusion

Alienation is not only determined by commodity production and the spectacle, but also by estrangement from self and others. This chapter connected Debord's alienation as mediation to Fromm's alienation as estrangement. If

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the society of the selfie depends on the spectacular projection of images, this sociality also reinforces social distancing between the many producers and the generalized, anonymous others of digital networks. The search for authenticity and connection tries to reduce the sense of atomization with the spectacular exhibition of a supposed inner, true subjectivity that stands against the reified effects of mass communication. If it produces broad cultural effects, like the transformations of intimacy in the last decades, it also favours political demagogy and the use of popular resentment by the alleged authentic leader against the artificial, corrupted system. The geoculture grounded in the exposition of a rhapsody of data (texts, audio, images and profiles) tends to shock the sense of normality with abnormality, that is, the sense of an organized self is dialectically negated and sublated with the others. It is illustrated with the hoaxes, cyberstalkers and fake avatars that pervade the society of the selfie and may pose threats to individual security and self-exhibition on the internet, but it also feeds extremism with the authoritarian suppression of difference (scapegoating subpopulations, minorities, migrants, etc.). If political pluralism and multicultural society have been basic elements for the legitimation of liberal democracies since the 1980s, the confrontation between the normal and the abnormal in the society of the selfie points to a saturation of some democratic principles. However, extremism and authoritarianism are only part of a much broader context. The political use of communication technologies can also open up new forms of progressive activism. To understand the new forms of public and political engagement in the society of the selfie, we have to consider the relationship between authoritarianism and resistance.

Notes

[1] Marx's theory of alienation is important for our analysis, but it has already been integrated throughout, introduced in Chapter 1 in the discussion about Marx's theory of the fetishism of commodities, and Debord's theory of the spectacle. In this particular section we are concerned more with the psychosocial aspects of alienation, which are dealt with more directly by Durkheim, and especially Fromm.

[2] Foucault goes so far as to reject psychoanalysis and 'the repressive hypothesis', to say that society has simply become more preoccupied with sexuality, and controlling it is just one side of this rising preoccupation. Yet his description is in broad strokes much the same as what 'reaction formation' and 'projection' amount to, when considered on the level of dynamics within society at large, rather than any mind in particular.

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