



# The Self as Enterprise: Foucault and the Spirit of 21st Century Capitalism

*Peter Kelly*

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Twenty first century, flexible capitalism creates new demands for those who work to acknowledge that all aspects of their lives have come to be seen as performance related, and consequently of interest to those who employ them (or fire them). At the start of the 21st century we can identify, borrowing from Max Weber, new work ethics that provide novel ethically slanted maxims for the conduct of a life, and which suggest that the cultivation of the self as an enterprise is the life-long activity that should give meaning, purpose and direction to a life. The book provides an innovative theoretical and methodological approach that draws on the problematising critique of Michel Foucault, the sociological imagination of Zygmunt Bauman and the work influenced by these authors in social theory and social research in the last three decades. The author takes seriously the ambivalence and irony that marks many people's experience of their working lives, and the demands of work at the start of the 21st century. The book makes an important contribution to the continuing debate about the nature of work related identities and the consequences of the intensification of the work regimes in which these identities are performed and regulated. In a post global financial crisis (GFC) world of sovereign debt, austerity and recession the author's analysis focuses academic and professional interest on neo-liberal injunctions to imagine ourselves as an enterprise, and to reap the rewards and carry the costs of the conduct of this enterprise.

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