



SUBJECTIVIZATION, IDENTIFICATION, AND ACT: BIRTH, SUBMISSION, AND RE-BIRTH OF SUBJECTS IN A SYMBOLIC ORDER

Abdol Hossein Joodaki

*Assistant Professor, Faculty of Letters and Humanities, Department of English Language and Literature,
University of Lorestan, Khorramabad, Iran*

ABSTRACT

This study has taken into consideration Žižek's views on the notion of fantasy and its function in controlling thoughts and influencing the public. All of the contemplations on subject and its position in society are significant, but Žižek's is a different one. To elaborate this notion more closely this study focuses on the birth and death of subjects in Žižekian perspective. Fantasy plays an important role in symbolic submission and identification. It provides the context for internalization of cultural norms through language and identification with figures of symbolic authority like Ego Ideal. The only way out of such subjugation is a radical traversing of the existing ideological regime, or act. This research shows that there is indeed for Žižek an intimate connection between symbolic identity and the founding imposition of language. Language is a powerful tool to form human behaviors, beliefs, and finally their identity within a symbolic order. The process of subject's enslavement into language is called subjectivization by Žižek. The symbolic order continues its livelihood by identifying subjects with Ego Ideals in the field of fantasy. As Žižek announces the fantasy of a subject manages or domesticates the traumatic loss of enjoyment, which cannot be symbolized. In spite of subjectivization and identification, some subjects traverse their ideological fantasy and accept the nonexistence of the big Other. They explicitly challenge the founding assumptions of the existing ideological order, with its undergirding political fantasies.

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Keywords: Žižek, Fantasy, Subjectivization, Identification, Act, Symbolic order.

Contribution/ Originality

This study contributes in the existing literature by providing a detailed account of how Žižek's critical notions are inter-related to form a logical body of his thoughts.

1. INTRODUCTION

While studying Žižek, "one is simultaneously informed, edified, and entertained" (Sciullo, 2011); his courage and willingness to criticize leftist conventions and common sense is attractive

even when he is wrong, even when “his political judgment is questionable,” and even when “his taste is bad” (Hart, 2002). “With the publication of *The Sublime Object of Ideology* in 1989, Slavoj Žižek introduced a new understanding of Lacan, focused on the importance of the real to the English-speaking world” (McGowan, 2007).

Hegel introduced a self-conscious subject in the external world; the core of his philosophy of phenomenology is the idea of intersubjectivity (Beiser, 1999). He refers to a self-transforming process, as a “reflection into self,” the “moment of the ‘I,’” or as “pure negativity” (1977). Post-structuralists reject the idea of cogito as a “completely self-contained being that develops in the world as an expression of its own unique essence” (Mansfield, 2000). Subjects are “constructed, made within the world, not born into it already formed” (ibid, p. 11), and consequently are “decentred subjects” (Myers, 2003). In other words, as Sim (2001) claims, postmodern subject is “a fragmented being who has no essential core of identity,” this subject is considered “as a process in a continual state of dissolution rather than a fixed identity or self that endures unchanged over time” (pp. 366-7). Lacan (2001) believes that this fragmentation manifests itself in the form of “images of castration, mutilation, dismemberment, dislocation, evisceration, devouring, bursting open of the body,” (p. 9)

Žižek’s works draw on three main areas of influence, philosophy, politics, and psychoanalysis. In each of these areas, Žižek is influenced by the writings of a single individual, “Georg Hegel in philosophy, Karl Marx in politics, and Jacques Lacan in psychoanalysis” (Myers 14). Because of this view, he is “the pioneer in the dissemination of this ‘real’ Lacan – a grasp of Lacan that captures the latter’s radicality as a (political) thinker in ways that no one prior to Žižek ever imagined” (McGowan, 2007). All of contemplations on subject and its position in society are significant, but Žižek’s is a different one. To elaborate this notion more closely this study focuses on the birth and death of subjects in Žižekian perspective. The discussion is multidimensional and offers a lot of material for socio-political interpretation. The wide area of Žižek’s theories directs the researcher to choose one or a few specific key concepts such as fantasy to explore in-depth. Therefore, It has taken into consideration Žižek views on the notion of fantasy and its function in controlling the mind of subjects from 1985 to the present day. Fantasy plays an important role in symbolic submission and identification. It provides the context for internalization of cultural norms through language and identification with figures of symbolic authority like Ego Ideal. The only way out of such subjugation is a radical traversing of the existing ideological regime, or act.

2. THEORISING FANTASY: A POST-LACANIAN THEORY OF DESIRE

According to Sharpe and Boucher (2010), one of the creators of German Idealism, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel is the first one who influences Žižek. Hegel’s account of reality, as a whole revolutionized European philosophy, establishes him an important precursor to Continental philosophy and Marxism. For Hegel, only the whole is true; every phase or moment is partial, therefore, partially untrue. Myers (2003) believes that the influence of Marx can be detected in Žižek’s works as the motivation for a particular method of thinking, praxis. Defining ideology as the way in which individuals understand their relationship with society, Žižek makes his most telling contribution to the Marxist tradition. While Marxists’ focus on governing processes of