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CULTURE, MEDIA & FILM | CRITICAL ESSAY

Subjectivity, desire and theory: Reading Lacan

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Abstract: Subjectivity in cultural studies is believed to be culturally constructed. Unlike humanists cultural theory marks subject as cultural construction rather than fixed and timeless entity. Formation of subjectivity reflects the social process that constitutes us as subjects. A Subject is not born but is transformed into one from a concrete being by his immersion into culture. Subjectivity is precisely the condition of our being which enables us to recognize ourselves as subjects or persons. Subjectivity is something in us by which we understand the world around us. The present paper is a reading of Lacan with some help from some other thinkers to understand how a subject is formed. It further outlines role of desire in formation subject and finally there is an attempt to relate the nature and dimensions of the subjectivity with what theory has to aim and subsequently aims to achieve.

Subjects: Literature & Culture; Literature & Philosophy; Critical Concepts

Keywords: subjectivity; Lacan; cultural studies; theory; desire

1. Formation of subjectivity

Significance of culture for the development of human mind is now being widely recognized in intellectual circles. Culture is the medium through which we understand the world. Determinacy of culture for our brain is such, as noted by Merlin Donald (1991), that it cannot realize its design potential

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Criticism, cultural as well as literary, has always been a domain of scholarly debates without any direct social impact. Before cultural theory, critical appreciation was perceived as an activity to describe something as artistically valuable or otherwise. There was very little impact of such lengthy commentaries on the lives of people. After the emergence of theory, same objects of art have been studied in new ways to understand what is their impact on our mind. Studies like this are more concerned about the way a work of art or any cultural production changes our way of perceiving the world both positively and negatively. The present study in particular analyses those aspects of author's mind which are determined by the conditions of history, society and culture. It is a different approach to understand any cultural production including literature. By analysing author's ideological closure, we may be able to explore those domains of text which are beyond the author's intention. In a nutshell, we may say that this paper opens up new ways of interpretation for readers.

unless it is immersed in culture. Human brain, he writes in *Origin of the Modern Mind*, is specifically adapted for functioning in complex symbolic culture. Man, as Lacan notes in Seminar VII, is the most disadapted of all animals as he is born prematurely. He is completely dependent over his species for his basic needs. Culture in the form of “the Symbolic” is his later adaptation which enables him to dominate to all the better adapted animals.

Culture makes the subjects out of concrete human beings. Subject with subjectivity is not born as such but is made so by his immersion into culture. “One is not born, but rather becomes a woman” writes Simon de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* (1949). Perhaps the same is appropriate for a subject too. One is not born, but rather becomes a subject. Subjectivity is precisely the condition of our being which enables us to recognize ourselves as subjects or persons. It reflects the social process that constitutes us as subjects. Subjectivity and identity are believed, particularly in cultural studies, as culturally constructed notions. Cultural studies marks subjectivity as cultural construction rather than fixed and timeless entity. Subjectivities are not universal, claims Foucault, but cultural. Before going into the description of subjectivity, it is probably important to differentiate the self from the subject. Instead of several commonalities, the self and the subject are two different notions. The subject is by and large a subject of a culture while the self is more an individual. When we refer someone as a subject, we precisely means that the person is not an isolated entity but a part of some larger system such as culture but the self unlike the subject is relatively an individualistic notion. Subjectivity in another sense may refer to the subjects’ inner world but the question is from where that inner world comes. To know that we may proceed to answer the basic question; how is subjectivity formed?

First significant contribution of Lacan’s revision of Freud is that he separated psychoanalysis from biological/anatomical essentialism. This aspect of his theory has spelled out the role of culture or what he calls the symbolic in collective aspect of human subjectivity. Lacan’s first significant contribution to psychoanalysis is his formulation of “mirror stage” in development of a child. Mirror stage is to be understood as the pre-linguistic identification of the subject with the image although the image is itself a fiction. A primordial form of “I” is formed, as Lacan notes, “before it is objectified by dialectic of identification with the other”. This form of I, referred by Lacan as Ideal-I, positions the ego fictionally before it is determined by what he calls “the symbolic order”. The mirror-image or the anticipated total form of the body is available to the subject as *Gestalt* in which the form is a constituent rather than constituted. This form emanating from mirror-image in contrast to his actual fragile body that lacks cohesion forms the ego at this stage of development and this, at the same time, anticipates its future alienation. The important thing to understand here is that the emerging ego that is yet to differentiate itself from other objects is in truth an outcome of misrecognitions or what Lacan calls *meconnaissances*. The mirror-image which by and large forms whatever form of ego is present at this stage, is itself a lie. The rudimentary I is essentially narcissistic because of the jubilant recognition of himself in the image. The child develops an ambivalent relation to the image. He develops a hateful relation with the same image with which he joyfully identifies. He feels alienated by being and not being the image at the same time. He does not experience the cohesion and integrity in his body that he anticipates in the image. The Imaginary, one among the three orders of being in our psyche described by Lacan, the other two being the Symbolic and the Real, develops in the mirror stage and at this stage, the relation between the organism and its reality or between the inner world and outer world is established.

One of the main preoccupations of Lacan’s theory is to differentiate between the ego from the subject of unconscious. We must not confuse the ego as an imaginary function, as Lacan cautions, with the subject of unconscious. The subject is much more than what ego is. Perhaps the most significant idea for us in Lacan’s “return to Freud” call is to foreground central function of unconscious in psychic activity which Freud has done before him. Both classical psychology and Cartesian philosophy share the belief that the ego is the central to human psyche which has been refuted and reversed first by Freud and later on by Lacan who displaced the ego from the centre of psychic function by saying that subject is predominantly of unconscious nature. The ego has to be subordinate to

unconscious subject. Lacan emphasizes narcissistic and alienating nature of the ego in the first place and impossibility of limiting the subject within its boundaries. Being based on the fictional identification with the other, the ego cannot form the actual subject. In fact the alienation of the ego or the imaginary identity and impasse of the imaginary order in our psyche are overcome by our entrance into the symbolic order which is responsible for formation of the unconscious. Lacan hints at some primordial sense of unconscious even before the subjects entrance into symbolic order but he never develops that notion fully in his theory. The self-consciousness opposed to pre-symbolic sense of unconscious is equated to that aspect of the ego which is developed through alienating identification with the other.

Resolution of complexes particularly the Oedipus complex paves the way for subject's entrance into the symbolic order. In the beginning an infant, as Freud has noted, is completely dependent on mother for his physical as well as psychological needs. Lacan hypothesises a mythical stage in the life of a child when the child is satisfied with what he gets as he does not perceive the breast as real object. It is only after he recognizes it as real objects that he perceives its absence. It is only after this he asks for the breast when it is absent. He is able to differentiate the breast as the real object distinct from the mother who is still not perceived as real but only as symbolic. It is the time when the child perceives the difference between what he demands and what he gets. The absence of the mother or precisely the breast of the mother initiates the sense of lack for the first time in him. This lack creates frustration in the child and for Lacan this is the first stage of child's entry into Oedipus complex. Relation between the mother and the child, according to Lacan, is dialectic in the sense that the child wants something from the mother and so does the mother. The point here is that we need to distinguish between what happens from the child's perspective and the mother's perspective. For Lacan the dialect that unites them is itself asymmetrical. The child demands unconditional love from the mother. But the mother, already being a part of symbolic order, is a desiring being. Her privileged object of desire, according to Freud as well as Lacan, is the phallus. We must note here that phallus is not the penis in the first place as it was conceived so by Freud but, the child, notes Lacan, may represent the missing phallus for the time being. The asymmetry of this dialectic precisely lies in the perspectives with which both the child and the mother perceive their motivation for being attached to each other. The child believes to be loved for what he is while as the mother only calms her desire for phallus by loving him. The child at some point of time realizes that the mother loves the image of phallus in the child not him almost at the same time when he, in a rudimentary sense, perceives difference between sexes. Initially the child is unable to understand behaviour of the mother. He is preoccupied with questions like why does she does what she does? Where does she go in between? What does she want? After all these enquiries the child finally understands that there is something else, the phallus, which the mother desires. The phallus here in Lacanian sense is the imaginary object of mother's desire. The dyadic relation of mother and child has now to be rethought as there is something else, the phallus, which has a role in this relation. By realizing the mother's lack the child enters into second stage of Oedipus complex. A new sense of lack or frustration occupies him. He is not, in any way, what the mother desires. The initial response to overcome this frustration is to possess the mother completely and to be the phallus or her object of desire. With the result the child enters into a narcissistic-aggressive relationship with imaginary father to possess or control the mother. This stage defines the idea of Oedipus complex. Unlike Freud who maintains that the child is in love with the parent of opposite sex, Lacan observes that the child irrespective of sex is in love with the mother. The third and final stage of Oedipus complex is initiated by entrance of the actual father as the Other who declares that he possess the phallus which the mother desires. We must not understand the entrance of real father necessarily literal. Father as the Other enters through discourse. It may be through the discourse of the mother. The father also makes the mother to realize that he not the child has the phallus and deprives her to imagine the child as phallus. To avoid misunderstanding, one thing needs clarification here that the child as a whole is the imaginary phallus or phallic *Gestalt* for the mother. The child soon realizes that he cannot compete with the father to possess the mother and usurp the father's place in the family. The castration may be understood as the realization of the child that he does not possess the symbolic phallus, a different symbolic lack, therefore he should give up on the mother. One more dimension

to this is that the lack or desire of the mother or the symbolic phallus is now available to the child as a signifier which can signify so many things. This is one more reason for him to give up on the mother and accept the father's authority. Though the child at this stage has already acquired language but he enters the symbolic Other first through the mother as the Other or as discourse. The father as the symbolic Other represents the law of society or culture.

Sexuation of the child is essentially symbolic because it is only after the subject's entrance into symbolic that the sexuation takes place. It is like taking of sexuated subject position by the subject already available in the symbolic and performing them accordingly. We, however, need to clear some preliminaries while we describe the process of sexuation in the subject. Sexuation, as Lacan notes, is asymmetrical in nature in the sense that man needs only to be castrated but woman has to undergo the processes of castration as well as privation. Another important preliminary is that the phallus both as imaginary as well as symbolic object is central to the formation of sexuated subject. During first two stages of the Oedipus complex, as we have already mentioned above, the imaginary aspect of phallus is prominent but in the third or last stage its symbolic aspect gains importance. Castration, both for boy and girl, is the necessary stage before the child's symbolic identification with the father as the bearer of the phallus. The earlier identification with the imaginary father at the second stage of Oedipus complex was competitive in the sense that the child irrespective of sex competed with the father to be the phallus which the mother does not have. The identification with the symbolic father in the third stage of Oedipus complex is positive identification after the child's castration or renouncing to be the imaginary phallus of the mother. Sexual position in the symbolic is assumed at this stage after castration. The girl after identifying herself with the father assumes feminine sexual position once she realizes that she does not have the symbolic phallus. She takes up the symbolic feminine sexual position by identifying negatively with the phallus which, in other words means, in terms of not having the phallus. The boy after castration derives his sexual identity by assuming that he has the symbolic phallus which he may not be able to use immediately as the father does but its presence ensures a promise to him that he, Lacan notes, will one day be able to take up role of the father partially embodying the Law. It is clear that the girl child acquires her sexual position from absence or minus of the phallus of rather than its presence or plus while identifying with the father. The process of sexuation is asymmetrical in the sense that the girl child does not identify with her mother for acquiring sexual position because her "minus" cannot be acquired from another "minus". Both available sexual positions emanate from the phallus of the father, woman with respect to its "minus" and man with respect to its plus.

Centrality of the Other in formation of the subject in Lacan's theory, as Jacques-Alain Miller notes, makes the subject essentially social in its foundations. Lacan's theory of subject of the big "Other" started to take centre stage since Seminar II (1954–1955). The Other with the capital "O" is the "I" in Lacanian theory which, as we see, is socio-cultural in its making. From seminar II, we note in Lacan the change of emphasis from "the ego as the other" to "I as the Other". The Other as opposed to the other is the unconscious subject. The Other for Lacan, for analytical purpose, may be understood by exploring the Other as language, the Other as the Symbolic and finally the Other as the unconscious. The Other or the unconscious for Lacan is both the unconscious subject, a psychic agency, opposed to the agency of consciousness, and the subject subjected to the unconscious by repression. The psychic agency that is opposed to self-consciousness includes both individual as well as transindividual dimensions of the unconscious while as the subject subjected to unconscious is the individual that is repressed from consciousness and finds its way in the unconscious.

The structure of language and the Symbolic dimensions the unconscious are transindividual and the individual subject subjected to unconscious forms the individual unconscious or more precisely the repressed self. The Other as Saussure's Language or langue does not belong to an individual but to the community. It is there before the individual. Language is a structure, he says, in the virtual space which is unfolded by individual as speech in time. Lacan seems to hold to that notion of language structure as transindividual unconscious which follows its own rules that are not controlled by the individual. Language as a system of signs operates on conscious as well as on unconscious.

The imaginary itself which is equated more or less to the ego or consciousness is itself available to us through the Symbolic or through system of signs. System of signs or more precisely of signifiers defines the mechanism of operation of our psyche, our conscious as well as unconscious. Structure of language is the grammar, the rules of which determine the mutual relation and arrangement of signifiers. Grammar, as such, is partly universal which transcends the linguistic boundaries and part of it is specific to the language. This in other words means that whatever individual speaks is irremediably subjected to the universal field of language, and to its laws.

Another important transindividual dimension of the Other or the unconscious is the Symbolic which of course is again available to us through speech heard from others as well as from ourselves. It is, strictly speaking, the cultural law or norm which governs signification. The Other as the Symbolic precisely defines what is sayable and what is not. The Symbolic determines what can a signifier signify in the consciousness and what must be repressed. The signifying unconscious which is the Other as the Symbolic produces conscious signification. The Symbolic is culture centred which enables us, as the members of that culture, make sense of the world of things. It is through “the Symbolic” that we take up Foucault’s Subject positions of roles like the sexual one. To take of a subject position or a role is precisely to embrace “a set of meanings” to restraint Derrida’s endless process of differing and deferring and make sense of the world through our culture. Entrance into the Symbolic enables us to restrict the endless differing and deferring process of general language. It is only after our entrance into the Symbolic that we understand the thing in some sense which is strictly cultural in nature.

The third dimension of the Other as the unconscious is the individual unconscious in more or less Freudian sense. In psychoanalysis unconscious for the first time was thought in this sense as a storehouse of those repressed wishes which do not find expression in the consciousness. Psychoanalysis took the trouble to think of unconscious only to separate unconscious topos from consciousness. What separates Lacan’s notion of individual unconscious subject from Freud and others is that he shows that it is not “irrational” but follows certain regular structure similar to that of language. It does follow laws of structure of language but in different manner than the consciousness does. Lacan explains two phenomena of language, metaphor and metonymy, to explain the mechanism of how the individual unconscious expresses itself through conscious speech. Lacan employs Jacobson’s notions of metaphor and metonym to explain the way by which the individual unconscious finds expression. Metaphor and Metonym operate in a slightly different way than they do in conscious speech. Metaphor in Jacobson’s scheme defines the relation of signifiers in vertical axis. Metonym unlike metaphor determines the horizontal relation of the signifiers. In unconscious the function of metaphor is similar to Freud’s condensation which means that the metaphor associates signifiers with one another in some relation. The metonym, on the other hand, performs a function similar to Freud’s displacement where it brings about the displacement and combination of signifiers directed by metaphor. Metonymy in the unconscious, for Lacan, consists of a combinatory association by contiguity which is the linked at specific points by a metaphoric substitution in the horizontal conscious speech. Metonym in unconscious, therefore, has a different function than formation of diachronic chain as it does in consciousness. It instead forms several overlapping unconscious signifying chains with the conscious speech by which the unconscious find expression through it. Repression in consciousness brings about metaphoric substitution and unconscious signification. Repressed signifiers get associated with other signifiers in metaphoric relation. Return of the repressed as metaphor is unavoidable and unconscious signification is strictly metaphoric. As we understood the operation of metaphor and metonym in our consciousness and in our unconscious, we need to understand that signifiers are simultaneously inscribed in both consciousness and the unconscious. Double inscription is the consequence of primal repression. Whenever a signifier is repressed into unconscious, a chain of signifiers who are not themselves repressed get associated with the repressed signifier which forms the nucleus of repression. Any inscription in the consciousness has with it a metonymic combination in the unconscious which in other words mean that every addition of signifier in a signifying chain in consciousness has with it a metonymic combination.

Culture is central to the formation of our conscious as well as unconscious. Unconscious is itself brought into being by the subject's entrance into culture. It is, however, important to mention that culture specifically operates in our psyche from the unconscious. Lacan writes in Seminar III that the unconscious "covers all human lived experience like a web" always there more or less latent. Our unconscious, Lacan further says, "is the discourse of the Other" in us which in other words means that our unconscious is the Other. The subject's unconscious is formed by the speech that is addressed to him by he himself as well as by others. The unconscious subject understood as the psychic agency that is not conscious has, as already been elaborated as; (a) structure of language; (b) the symbolic; (c) the unconscious. The structure of language as well as the Symbolic is altogether intersubjective and they strictly operate on both conscious and unconscious inscription of signifiers. The Imaginary is the network of images available to us in the form of signifiers only after we enter into the Symbolic. If language as a system of signs (signifiers) provides the method of operation to the Imaginary, the Symbolic gives us the cultural laws and rules to determine which signifier should signify what. This, in other words, means that even if we are trying to convey what we intend to say, we still have to follow the laws of language (grammar) and dictates of culture for signification of signifiers. We can neither change the grammar nor the way what a signifier may signify in a culture at particular time. In the similar way language rules, in a different manner than consciousness, are acted upon by our individual unconscious and it too obeys the process of signification though differently than consciousness. It too utilizes system of signifiers to express its content. It is clear now that none of our psychic agency whether our consciousness and individual unconscious is independent of the intersubjective aspect of the our unconscious or precisely the cultural system internalized which makes us understand how does culture interpellates its subjects and summons them to assume given subjective positions.

Now that we have discussed in considerable detail the way how culture operates in us as psychic agency and how does it makes us its subjects or the cultural beings, we may analyse ourselves as part of a socio-cultural system. From collectivity point it is prerequisite for us to be socialized or acculturated to become members of a society or a culture. This process was considered positive till the emergence of the concept of ideology. Marx's notion of ideology as "false consciousness" has put the concept of socialization or acculturation into question because it is by these processes that we as members of a society or culture are indoctrinated by dominant ideas of ruling class, according to Marx, which we mistakenly take as truth. Althusser's (1971) idea of ideology was significant after Marx. He like Marx maintained that ideology is misrecognition but what was new in his idea of ideology is that it constitutes our world-views by which we live and experience the world. Althusser seems to say that ideology even though misrecognition is necessary for us to make sense of the world. Without ideology of one kind or the other we would not be able to understand the world the way we do. Ideology has a general function to constitute us as subjects or transform us from concrete individuals to concrete subjects of a culture or society. It also involves the reproduction of social formation and their relations of power. Ideology as he defines it "is the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence". What we perceive from Althusser is that ideology is necessary for every individual for his entrance into a set of meaning for understanding the world. It does suggest that there is not any non-ideological view available as an alternative to misrecognition or misrepresentation. What we have are only ideologies of one kind or another. Foucault (1972) realizes the fact that there is of course no non-ideological views available. For him we are all subjects of discourse. We take up position already available in a discourse when we actually enter into it. A subject is not a stable universal entity but one constructed by a discourse. A subject position is precisely a set of regulated meanings in a discourse which is available for a prior to an individual entrance into the discourse.

Discourse, for Foucault, is regulated way of speaking that produces objects of knowledge. It determines the rules for cultural practices and meaning creation. Objects of knowledge are constructed and understood through regulated way the rules for which are dictated by discourse. For Foucault, truth, both as transcendence and in the sense of how faithfully the outside world objects are represented in us as subjects, does not exist. But certain objects of knowledge or ways of meaning are

temporarily stabilized by a given discourse which constitute what counts as truth in a particular temporal and spatial condition. He names them as “regimes of truth”. These “regimes of truth” are realized when they put limits on what something may mean or what a signifiers may signify. Derrida has noted that meaning in any semiotic system like language is an endless deferral process. For him meaning is never complete. It is a differential process perceived in terms of what something is not in a system of signifiers. It implies that meaning is never completely present to a perceiver or mind and a signifier can signify countless things. Foucault has something different to say in this regard. What he concludes is that meaning is not an endless deferral process at all. Discourse marks a boundary to this endless process of *Differance* and regulates the way by which signifiers mean in a given culture. Discourse limits the ways for signification of a signifier. The ‘regime of truth, however, dictates what something must mean or what a signifier should signify in a given culture. A subject internalizes these regulation or ‘regimes of truth while he enters in a discourse or takes up a subject position or in other words the subject is interpellated by discourses.

2. Desire in subjectivity formation

It however needs elaboration that how are the subjects actually interpellated. It would be interesting to see if we can integrate Lacan’s notion of subject formation at this point to understand the process of interpellation in subjects. Lacan’s notion of the Other as language is precisely the system of signs that follow Derrida’s endless *Differance*. If we consider only the language aspect of the Other it would not be bound by any cultural rule or law but once we introduce the Other as the Symbolic, it marks the subjects entrance into the regulation of culture. The regulation of discourse, as Lacan notes, is introduced with the subject’s entrance into the Symbolic. The Symbolic in this sense regulates the endless deferral process of the language and delimits the meaning of signifiers in a given cultural system. Insofar as cultural phenomenon is able to interpellate the subjects, it does so by evoking some desire or satisfying an existing one. The Other creates desire which facilitates the interpolative forces to operate on the subject. The desire is necessarily, as Lacan puts it, the desire of the Other. To understand whole mechanism of operation of interpellative forces on subjects we must understand different forms of desire in the subjective economy and operation of culture through them. Desire in our subjective economy can either take the form of desire to be or desire to have which have been described by Freud as narcissistic and anaclitic libidio respectively. Narcissistic desire is the desire to be manifested in the form of identification and anaclitic desire is to possess the object of desire as means for jouissance. Freud differentiated between Passive and active aims of libidio where former means the desire to be object of the Other’s love or the Other’s jouissance and the later means to become the Other or to Possess the Other as an object of jouissance. Subjects are, however, interpellated through all the three registers of human subjectivity which in other words mean that the Other can be image, signifier or what Lacan calls the object *a*. Mark Bracher in his book *Lacan, Discourse, and Social change (1913)* give detailed description of the involvement of desire in interpellation. He identifies twelve forms of desire, following four types operating in each of the three orders the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real.

- (1) Passive narcissistic desire. One can desire to be the object of the Other’s love (or the Other’s admiration, idealization, or recognition).
- (2) Active narcissistic desire. One can desire to become the Other—a desire of which identification is one form and love or devotion is another.
- (3) Active anaclitic desire. One can desire to possess the Other as a means of jouissance.
- (4) Passive anaclitic desire. One can desire to be desired or possessed by the Other as the object of the Other’s jouissance. (Bracher, 1993, pp. 20–21)

Passive narcissistic desire of the Symbolic order is expressed as the wish of the subject that the symbolic Other. The ultimate authority in any society is with the symbolic Other such as God, Society, nature, nation and others like them. The symbolic Other love those subjects who embody them or what they admire, for example, God love the pious and to become pious becomes the desire of the subjects. Nation in the similar sense admires patriotism and society adores the winners etc. Lacan

referred the signifiers that represent the symbolic Other in culture as “master signifiers”. Master signifiers dominate and determine meaning of other signifiers in a cultural system. Master signifiers bear identity among people who embody them and the same is recognized and adored by the Other. Master signifiers are established as ego ideals for a child who then tries to become that which is to be desired and loved by others. When a subject accepts his identity in or against a master signifier, he is subscribing to a discursive position and discourse makes its way into the subject. Master signifiers by this way exercise power on a subject to bear an identity and thereby structure them into ways specific to the discourse. Much of the interpellative forces of culture are thus operative through these master signifiers which largely determine the identity and makeup of the subjects at large. What passive narcissistic desire creates are identities because the desire is basically to become that which the symbolic other loves and what the symbolic other loves are signifiers such as “winner”, pious, patriot and the like. When such signifiers are embodied by concrete people they become identities and those identities create active narcissistic desire in people. Active narcissistic desire is the desire to identify with those people who embody the signifiers love by the symbolic Other. In a statement we may say that passive narcissistic desire pushes a subject to embody those signifiers which are valued or admired by the symbolic Other or a master signifier and desire to be like the one who embodies such signifiers defines active narcissistic desire. It is not the desire to embody only those signifiers that are overtly loved and admired by the symbolic other but those too who are in metaphoric relation with them, for example with “pious” we may relate signifiers like “sober”, “religious”, “devout” and the like. Active and passive narcissistic desire is in action in our ordinary activities like reading a novel. A character in a novel or a play may embody some signifiers which are loved or hated by the symbolic other and with which the reader can easily and ordinarily identify with or against.

Active anaclitic desire unlike active narcissistic desire desires to possess a person who embodies a signifier that is loved and admired by the symbolic Other, as a means for jouissance. Desire is not for the person itself but for the signifiers which he or she embodies which in other words means that this form of desire does not respond to the thing in itself but to that for which it is loved and admired by the symbolic Other. The specific instance for this is that if a man is desired by a woman or vice versa as a means for her or his jouissance just because he or she is a patriot, pious, winner and so on. Passive anaclitic desire in the Symbolic order is specifically that occasion when a person desires to be desired by others as a means of jouissance, for he embodies certain signifiers that are valued and loved by the symbolic Other. For instance if a person desires to be desired by other people as a means of their jouissance for embodying one or more signifiers that are love and admired by the symbolic Other.

When it comes to interpellation through images which means involvement of the imaginary register of our being we follow the same process as we do in case of the Symbolic. Active narcissistic desire here involves love and admiration for an image of other person who embodies that which is admired in general. The first such identification, as Lacan notes, is at “mirror stage” when the child identifies with his mirror image or wholeness of his body. Fashion is one of the important determiners of what image do we desire and what specific features make that image. It is a usual activity to identify with some celebrity by our wish to look like him or her which defines our active narcissistic desire. Besides this there are always some characteristic features which explicitly define what we mean by good looks and those particular features are admired and love by general public. Such features are what we want to embody in order to be an object of desire for the other and they precisely define the passive narcissistic desire of our imaginary order. As the imaginary order too is available to us through the symbolic therefore verbal imagery in literature can evoke similar desire. We can at times identify with an image projected verbally in any work of literature such as the image of Adam or Satan in *Paradise Lost*. We may also desire to embody an image the features of which are admired and loved in a work of literature, for example the description of Lucy by Wordsworth.

Anaclitic desire, both active and passive, in imaginary order is more evident because image is more likely to be desired for jouissance than discourse. It is image of human body that arouses sexual desire in the people of opposite sex. Libidinal deives, Lacan writes, “is centered on the action

of image". Active anaclitic desire in the Imaginary order is the desire to possess the image as a means of one's jouissance. Instances of particular image of female body presented in different media arouse desire among men. Sexual desire is aroused by a human body gestalt. Passive anaclitic desire in the Imaginary order is the desire to be that image of the body which is desired by other people as a means for jouissance. Fashion and glamour determines those features in a particular time and place which determine what sort of image is being desired. Looks matter a lot in arousing other people's desire and developing attractive looks has grown into a huge industry where people spent a good part of their income for looking good.

Desire in the Real is a little more complicated to understand than the other two. We need to distinguish the real body where the drives are grounded from the Real as the psychological order. The Real in one sense, as Slavoj Žižek puts it, precedes the Symbolic and is later on shaped by it. The Real as a Psychological order is what is left over by the Symbolic. Desire in the Real is the desire to accomplish the missing part. The Real as the body which precedes the Symbolic is complete or without lack. It is only by the introduction of the Symbolic that the lack is created. Identification with or embodiment of a master signifier in the Symbolic leaves out part of the Real that is not the master signifier which returns as the desire in the Real or what Lacan refers to as the *Object a*. The *Object a* is precisely the return of the jouissance or part of being which is left from the subject when it is shaped by discourse. Any discursively formed subject that represents man or woman in the Symbolic other leaves out that part of being which is not embodied by the master signifier it embodies. Embodiment of the signifier chain that identifies us with any signifier effectively dissects us and renders some parts of our bodies dead to our enjoyment. For instance when a person identifies and presents himself as "man", he is prohibited, by both internal and external forces, from enjoying or using in specific ways some parts of one's body as well as other's body. All sacrificed jouissances return and manifest itself through various ways such as the partial drives. Such drives are subordinated to the genital drive as aspects of sexual foreplay or they operate only in disguised or sublimated form. The *Object a* generates partial drives and fantasy is formed upon them. The *Object a* represents metonymically the total being that was lost when the concrete being faded behind signifiers.

Desire in any form is caused by concealment or suppression of something. The *Object a*, as we already mentioned, is the suppressed part of our being that has faded behind the signifiers and its return is inevitable. The *Object a* returns in the form of lack that creates desire. Such desire is precisely the desire in the Real order of our subjectivity. Fantasy stages the desire for the *Object a* or a surplus of jouissance inscribed in a subject over and above that which is attainable in current circumstances. Fantasy somehow promises ultimate jouissance to the subject as well as saves him or her from a sense of meaningless living. Fantasy like desire in other two orders of our being may take any or all of the four forms described earlier. In active anaclitic desire, the subject desires to possess *Object a* embodied in some person, thing, or activity. Role of *Object a* in fantasy can be filled by anything that embodies anything which promises fulfilling of the lost forms of jouissance. Passive anaclitic desire on the other hand is the desire to embody the *Object a* for other people for which other people desire to possess the subject. The subject fantasizes to embody *the Object a* so that he or she may be desired by others. Passive narcissistic fantasy is the desire to embody *Object a* to be loved and admired by others. It is different from passive anaclitic desire in that others do not desire to possess the *Object a* embodied subject as a means of jouissance but have love and admiration. Active narcissistic desire is to identify with another person who embodies the *Object a*.

3. The subject and theory

The theory before theory had its basis in humanist hegemony established by figures from Shakespeare, Cervantes, Bacon and Descartes down to Kant, Hegel and Sartre. The preconception was that human mind or consciousness is autonomous and authentic faculty with which one can interpret the world as it is. Philosophy till Hegel was sceptic only about method by knowing things. To know things correctly or to develop objective method of knowing was the most important activity of intellectuals. Another kind of scepticism was introduced by thinkers Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche. They questioned the legitimacy of human consciousness as an independent faculty to perceive and

decipher the truth. Where does consciousness itself come from? What are its underpinnings? By such questions whole philosophy of humanism which presupposes an autonomous and legitimate consciousness demanded rigorous revision. Modern theory which developed after humanism was the direct result of such revision.

Western philosophy from Plato onwards, observes Nietzsche, has been committed to discover fixed and solid truths that exist independent of human mind. This conception presupposes the power of human mind to be able to perceive such truths objectively. He rejects the possibility of knowing anything except through lens of human consciousness which has its basis in language. Consciousness of a subject is only a representation of the real object. What we know is not the truth but only how it is represented to us by language. The real world outside us, says Nietzsche, is translated into human perception by naming it which creates an unbridgeable gap. Humans, says Nietzsche, know only metaphors of thing rather than things themselves about which they talk. This leads Nietzsche to conclude that “subject and object” are “absolutely different spheres”. He, by the way of this, questions truth and authority itself. For him, truth is “the mobile army of metaphors, metonymies and anthropomorphisms”. Saussure’s views about language in *Course in General Linguistics* (1916), for the first time, discarded any proposition that considered language as a mere carrier of thought. Language, as a system of linguistic signs, is something owned by a community already there when an individual is born. It instead of accepting any instructions, dictates to a new individual while it is being internalized. Meaning or reality for him does not lie outside language but within it. Language, therefore, is self contained system in itself capable of generating structure on its own without any interference by individual faculty or mind. Having understood that language operates outside and independent of and has some deterministic power over human consciousness, the first aim of any theory is to understand and account for such determinism of language which may, therefore, be referred to as linguistic unconscious.

Marx was first among all who was of the opinion that consciousness of man is determined by the material conditions of his life. He writes in *The German Ideology* (1845–1846/1970) that “the phantoms formed in the human brain are also necessarily sublimates of their material life-processes, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises. Morality, religion, metaphysics, and all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence”. Life, for Marx, determines consciousness. Marx with Engels sort to prove, in several of their joint works, that economic and social forces shape human consciousness. Marxian views are largely based on his idea of ideology. For him consciousness comes from ideology or what he called false consciousness of individual and his relation to the process of production in the society. “It is not the consciousness of men”, writes Marx in *Preface to A contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1858–1859) “that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness”. What Marx precisely suggests us to do is to scrutinize an artefact for ideology or what we may call as political unconscious behind the conscious intention.

Freud’s theory of Psychoanalysis has similar questions over consciousness but he changed his ground of attack. Consciousness for Freud is not autonomous but driven by Unconscious or the Id. Unconscious is the store house of forbidden and repressed wishes which sought their expression through consciousness in the form of dreams, mistakes, jokes, myths and other disguised forms. The final goal of theory is to look for the unconscious dimension of author or producer in any cultural artefact which may be regarded as psychoanalytical unconscious.

Theory, therefore, seeks to understand not only what is being consciously said but to look for what is not being said. Final aspiration for cultural theory is to disclose the linguistic, the political and the psychoanalytical unconscious of any cultural, literary or otherwise, production. Forms of unconscious supposed to be explored by theory—linguistic, political and psychoanalytical—correspond to three dimensions of Lacan’s description of our unconscious psyche or the Other, as language, as the Symbolic and as individual unconscious.

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