



The Possible Subject: Social Construction and Linguistic Articulation

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Abstract

Structuralism is used as the methodological basis of the work. Due to linguistic articulation, the subject recognizes and acknowledges himself as a subject. However, even before the linguistic articulation occurred, there is internal space for its implementation in the structure of the “I”. To indicate the process of the discursive production of the subject, the concept of interpellation is used, the essence of which is determined by two reasons - communicative and cognitive. It is established that for realization, the subject must become an obstacle to himself, be exposed to the threat of decomposition and splitting. It is noted that the subject is always in a situation of opportunity, but its implementation is not guaranteed. Thus, it is concluded that the subject is not a stable personality structure, but is, firstly, universal practice of the individual's activity in society, and, secondly, the result of the influence of discourses, through which the reproduction of social relations takes place.

Keywords: Subject; Subjection; Interpellation; Social Construction; Linguistic Articulation.

1. Introduction

The linguistic turn of the 20th century marked the emergence of the semiotic principle in the theory of knowledge. It was at this time that structural criticism of classical rationality was carried out and the search for new non-classical ways of interpreting a variety of social phenomena begins (Hedrick, 2016; Kahler, 1998; Nida-Rümelin, 2019; Satz & Ferejohn, 1994). Because of this turn, the problem of the sign and sign structures has come to the fore. First of all, language, as the main symbolic system, has become the subject of philosophical analysis. Subsequently, the method was expanded to the entire social theory. Any objects and artifacts began to be interpreted as systems of social codes, allowing to see the system of meanings that defines human existence. Thus, semiotics became a special socio-humanitarian discipline, opening up completely new perspectives for the study of social relations.

The subject's problem has also become actualized in a new context as part of a linguistic turn. The subject has acquired the status of a social code system. This approach, firstly, gave a special property to the subject - to be a socially significant signal for us, a special reference that allows us to identify another and ourselves, and, secondly, set the task of considering the subjection as a process of formation of subjectivity, not only from methods of psychology but also on the part of methods of social philosophy by analyzing the subject's production process by social structures, discourses and practices, including verbal and non-verbal. Thus, in our opinion, a favourable situation for the analysis of the subject from the point of view of philosophical construction and linguistic articulation has developed.

1.1. Research Objective

The paper considers the issue of the subject's ideological and linguistic development.

2. Material and Methods

Structuralism is used as the methodological basis of the work, both in classical interpretations (Marxist structuralism of L. Althusser, psychoanalytic structuralism of J. Lacan) (Euron, 2019; Foucault, 2019; Lau, 2020; Mercier, 2019) and non-classical versions (post-structuralism of J. Butler, psychoanalytic poststructuralism of Y. Kristeva)



(Anshori, 2020; Barry, 2020; Easthope, 2019; Henry, 2019; Sotiropoulos, 2020). The application of the principles of structuralism to the problem of the subject allows, firstly, to distinguish subjectivity as an invariant structure of human being, secondly, to determine the genealogy of the emergence of the subject and, thirdly, to model the principles of realization of subjectivity in the field of thinking (consciousness and unconscious) of the individual. The historical development of structuralism into poststructuralism allows complementing the conceptual framework of structural analysis with the subjective approach itself, the avoidance of which is impossible by definition of the designated subject of study.

3. Results and Discussion

The analysis of the subject, as a sign system, from the perspective of semiotics includes consideration of two main questions, what does it mean and how does it code its meaning? In general terms, the subject is a source of practical agency, knowledge, activity, aimed at the object. A subject can be an individual or a certain social group, institution. As L. Althusser writes: «In the ordinary use of the term, subject, in fact, means: a free subjectivity, a centre of initiatives, author of and responsible for its actions» (Althusser, 2006). In everyday language, the concept of "subject" is often used as a synonym for personality, individual, person. However, there is an urgent need to distinguish between the concepts of the individual, as a separate representative of a person, and the subject. As J. Butler writes: «The genealogy of the subject as a critical category, however, suggests that the subject, rather than be identified strictly with the individual, ought to be designated as a linguistic category, a placeholder, structure information. Individuals come to occupy the site of the subject (the subject simultaneously emerges as a "site"), and they enjoy intelligibility only to the extent that they are, as it were, first established in the language. The subject is the linguistic occasion for the individual to achieve and reproduce intelligibility, the linguistic condition of its existence and agency» (J. Butler, 1997). This definition of the subject allows focusing on the subject through the prism of language.

How is the subject realized? The answer to this question will solve the semiotic problem of coding the value. Teun A. van Dijk argues that a language is primarily a tool for the functioning of ideology in any form. In our opinion, the language itself does not yet have the ability to construct the subject. However, only language, being the imperious tool for the functioning of ideology, with the help of which any holder of power, be it the state, the media, an individual, can articulate his will and make it clear that it should be the object of dominion, the language forms a request, the answer to which becomes a subject. Discourse analysis suggests understanding how and at what level ideological structures function. The purpose of this analysis is «not merely to discover underlying ideologies, but to systematically link structures of discourse with structures of ideologies» (Van Dijk, 1995). The ideological mechanism of the production of the subject includes, firstly, a linguistic appeal to the individual as a subject, secondly, recognition of himself as a subject, thirdly, the submission of this self-recognized subject to the carrier of power that addressed him, fourthly, recognition of oneself as a subject (as the one whom one has addressed).

Language as a means of ideology that is a tool of subjection. Expressed in speech or in writing, the language stores a grammatically deduced need for an addressee. There is no subject before linguistic treatment, but a certain language-mediated need for its presence, due to the act of conversion, exists. Ideology recruits' subjects, turning individuals into them. As soon as the linguistic appeal has occurred, the subject is already here, as if it had never arisen, but always existed. Responding to this appeal, the subject submits to the grammatical act, the system of power that produces this system of meaning. In the concept of L. Althusser, the policeman addresses a passerby on the street, calls out to him, and the passerby answers this appeal, turns around, recognizes himself as the subject to whom they addressed. This is interpellation - i.e. discursive production of a social subject.

The need for interpellation is determined by at least two reasons. The first reason is communicative, and the subject is away and form of social interaction with the outside world. According to J. Lacan, in this interaction, the subject is a signifier, «functioning, on occasion, as a representative of the subject in front of another signifier» (Lacan, 2007). In this context, the subject is not a stable personality structure, but just a universal practice, a procedure for the interaction of one individual with another. The subject manifests itself as a universal language construct of the expression of individual activity.

The second reason is cognitive, which is associated with internal, mental processes. Despite the fact that the subject is not a personality structure, he is still a personal category. The subject, presenting as a signifier for the Other,

becomes a signifier for himself: a chain of signifiers organizes the content of mental life – «this is, if you will, a kind of “text” – in a metaphorical, broad sense of the word, including things like my daily routine, my typical emotional reactions, my “ideology (Jameson, 1988). The linguistic emergence of the subject as a chain of signifiers determines the emerging personality. Moreover, if in classical philosophy this is considered as a positive moment in human nature, then in postmodern theory it is discussed as the basis for a greater alienation of person: «Descartes’s method does not work now, and the subject, instead of being the ultimate cause setting limits to the signifier, appears as just one of the moments, as one of the abode of the signifier, unlimited in other respects» (Kristeva, 1984). The linguistic construction of the subject causes its splitting, which drives the "real subject" underground, leaving in its place its representative - the "ego". Thus, the subject as a product of subjection forms the repressive internal self-organization of the individual and so-called «the narrative authority of the “I”» (J. P. Butler, 2009). The essence of the subject lies in the assimilation of this social self-organization and its intersubjective implementation in the process of communication, in the ability to reproduce social norms, in the development of certain experiences and attitudes.

Not surprisingly, the emergence of postmodern ideas about deconstruction, aimed at searching for a "real subject". The meaning of decentration practice proposed by J. Derrida is to shift the focus of research from the subject as the ego, the subject as the centre of the ontology of the “I”, to the subject as a gap in the structure of the personality: «the subject arises from the very beginning of brushing, i.e. since the advent of one’s own (proper) language in the early dawn» (Derrida, 2000). This gap, on the one hand, once again confirms the splitting of the personality itself, but, on the other hand, it allows a person to have many representations of subjectivity, which can be realized only in the context of endless discursive production. As S. Žižek writes, «language simplifies the designated things, reducing it to a single feature. It dismembers the thing, destroying its organic unity, treating its parts and properties as autonomous» (Žižek, 2008). This is generally valid for the subject: language, as an internal condition for the realization of the subject, simplifies the potential power and unity of subjectivity and provides grounds for decomposition and decentration.

This endless process of production and annihilation of subjectivity calls into question the activity of the subject. As J. Lyotard says, «The social subject itself seems to dissolve in this dissemination of language games» (Lyotard, 1984). Linguistic construction, on the one hand, generating the subject, on the other hand, is aimed at its decomposition. The subject acts as a barrier to himself: «at first it is split because it is constituted by the Other, and then because it becomes the Other in relation to itself, thereby gaining multiplicity, elusiveness, polyphony (Kristeva, 1984).

Subjection, therefore, determines the position of the subject in the structure of personality. For realization, the subject must become an obstacle to himself, be exposed to the threat of decomposition and splitting. This ontological installation confirms the idea that the subject is always in a situation of opportunity, but its implementation is not guaranteed.

4. Summary

Summing up the discussion, we should answer the question about the method of subjection posed at the beginning. Repressive production of the subject is carried out by linguistic means and includes the following features:

1) Repression in relation to the subject. Despite the fact that the individual is a native speaker of the language, and, as it seems at first glance, the controls this linguistic process of signification, in fact, the language controls it, or rather, various social structures control the individual through language.

2) Ambivalence of construction. Recognition of oneself as a subject determines the possibility of awareness and self-realization. However, this recognition means submission to the system of social relations that exist in society at the moment. The production of the subject is associated with the adoption of language impact and its reproduction.

3) Decentration and fission of the subject. Linguistic construction, which, it would seem, at first glance, should structure the subject, in fact, leads to the splitting and dissolution of the subject in numerous speech practices. When dissolved, real subjectivity is changed or replaced by quasi-entities in the form of various identifications and manifestations of the “I”.

Thus, the subject and subjectivity, which, in one way or another, are realized by each person, at the same moment do not exist before the act of their realization, do not exist as something a priori and stable in the complex of innate mental

characteristics. The subject exists in the situation “possible”, i.e. it is fixed and determined only when it is realized and retained in the language.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, it should be noted that subjection, being a form of power, sets the coordinates of subjectivity. The construction of the subject is a volatile, unwarranted, ideologically determined act. As a result of subjection, for the first time, the boundary between the internal and the external arises. The occurrence of this difference is the result of recursion, self-conversion. In postmodern theory, the activity of unconscious practices, rather than the mind, becomes a form of recursion or self-appeal. This subject becomes very far from that pure and innocent Cartesian subject. Various public institutions, their rituals and practices become carriers of discourse. The situation of constructing a subject whose attribute is freedom is not free, repressive in itself, i.e. accepted and assimilated immediately and unconditionally. The process of interpellation, the process of formation of subjectivity is a process of personal re-arrangement and constant self-identification. The situation in which we find ourselves in a situation of endless everyday life and social practice, which, one way or another, draw us into communication, activities and the realization of ourselves as a subject.

5.1. Contribution

The subject expresses itself as a common social construct of communicating individual behaviour and is often 'possible' in a situation, i.e. only when it is understood and maintained in the language is fixed and decided.

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