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Abstract

Subjectification displays the specific processes forming individual existence in the multiple interrelations between persons and their surroundings. In this sense subjectification corresponds to the idea of an individual as the intersection of the production of meaning and the efficacy of power. In this paper we want to assert that subjectification is more than the mere positioning of the individual between tangents of meaning and practice; it also entails the necessity of creating sense through the subjective reorganization of the conduct of self and of others. The driving force of this movement emerges from the political and social affinities realized by the participating subjects. In our paper we also wish to argue for the historical specificity of such a conception. That is, the notion of an individual both dialogical and self-reflective, although represented by alternative psychologies as the key presupposition for a critical stance in psychology, seems to reflect primarily the dominant postindustrial realities of North-Atlantic countries. Finally we offer an insight into some of the central aspects of current socioeconomic reasoning in psychological theories.

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REINTEGRATING SENSE INTO SUBJECTIFICATION

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First of all we would like to outline our insights into subjectification in order to create a common basis for understanding. The process of subjectification comprises all the ways in which a person transforms him or herself into a subject (Hildebrand-Nilshon and Papadopoulos, 1998; Foucault, 1982). The concept of subjectification bifurcates into two ideas. First, it is a mode of power which could be described as a governing technique of the self-enterprising individual (Foucault, 1984). Secondly, it is the possibility of self-articulation. Its power is efficacious as a communicative, intersubjective practice based on existing societal constraints and conditions, and thus functioning according to present or future actions that aim to promote or to nullify possible relationships to others. Governing action is divided into both acting upon others and acting upon the self, and in this sense it could be understood as the various social rationalities and practices in which individuals employ strategies for their subjectification (as the "conduct of conduct"; cf. Rose, 1996). We will enlarge on the inevitability of this process, after showing the implicit efficacy of sense.

Prevailing critical theorization purports to help elucidate the opaque concepts of identity and subject with the intention of revealing the mechanisms which subjugate individuals within the insidious power of discourses. Meanwhile the number of deconstructions is exponentially increasing and very soon even the word 'subjectification' will be passé. To forestall this development we would like to closely examine some of the salient ideas produced in these discussions in order to point out their inadequacies. There is one aspect common to all of these critical theories: They all concern the question of speech and self-enunciation. Subjectification is depicted as primarily the creation of the self by the self, and thereby as its positioning within discourses. Obviously speech seems to display a basic mode of the subtle process of subjectification. For the time being we would like to refer to subjectification as the constitution of subjects by saying 'I'. We will enlarge this definition later, after we have made sense of its place in the concept of subjectification.

Reconsidering Sense

Sense is the sphere we enter every time we speak. It is implicit in speech. It is therefore impossible to enunciate the sense of what one is simultaneously saying. However, it is possible to talk about the sense of what one was saying before. But while doing so, a new sentence is produced, implying its own sense, which is – again – not simultaneously uttered. Thus the sense of this new sentence is again disguised, and exists implicitly (Deleuze, 1969). One could extend this series of quasi-explanations infinitely because, as we will show, sense inhabits a sphere beyond words, even though it motivates them in a special way.

At first glance this looks like semantics, but sense is more than a functional device of logic. We would like to visualize its efficacy as a whole and illuminate the consequences this has for the concept of subjectification. In short, we would like to cultivate the ability to not-understand.

By no means does sense have to be brought into existence as such, because it never vanished nor was it destroyed. It is merely concealed by the epiphany of the absolute power with which logic is endowed. Referring to subjectification as the constitution of the ones who say 'I', sense must be made completely intelligible again, because it portrays a basic, even an indispensable part of subjective existence.

Speech, and consequently the 'saying-of-I' presupposes the existence of sense. The words used to form a sentence should be taken as 'names' for things and facts. They are bound to the rules of logic which ensure the formal function of speech. As opposed to this, sense even exists in the absence of speech and independent from those 'names'. Sense is their presupposition and inscription, even though it appears to be produced and reproduced while individuals speak. Sense lingers between speech and things, being the definition of their difference, embodying their connectedness as their line of demarcation (Haraway, 1985). Sense is indifferent towards the effect of contrasts and contradictions, because these are characteristics of syntax and grammar which do not affect sense. Within sense, 'contradictions' coexist. Furthermore sense persists in contradictory meanings. 'True/False' equally contain sense, and consequently do not exclude each other. Sense has to be taken as a doubling that simultaneously spreads in two directions: The inert promotion of divergences as well as an annulling of exclusiveness.

With respect to sense, speech obviously loses all its correspondence to the signified, and relates exclusively to the expression, which comprises the 'self-articulation' of the subject. Sense inhabits the expression, insists on the expressed which is the inevitable part of speech, while it exists independently from it. Herein the subject constitutes itself, creates its sense. In this sphere affinities come into effect, and desires break loose which force the individual to enter the reciprocal interplay with the other. Simultaneously this is the place where thinking

affects itself (Deleuze, 1987, p. 167). The contradiction-free sphere of sense, beyond categorization, enables thinking to intrude into the impossible, to think its own unthought. This is the "drawing in of sense", the dynamic which necessitates that individuals repeatedly inscribe themselves into the creation of sense, and relations to others. This is the sublime and subtle background of 'saying-I', this is the enrichment with which we would like to complete the notion of subjectification.

To avoid misunderstanding at this point: We do not claim that subject and object coincide, or that things are exposed to the creative arbitrariness of the subject. Nor do we want to abolish logic, whose rules are indispensable for the formal functioning of speech. We just want to recapture the possibility of discussing the relation: subject, signifier, signified while referring to the ambiguous, non-categorical character of expression and therefore uncovering sense (Walkerdine, 1988, p. 12 ff.).

It is now possible to point out an inconsistency, which could potentially infect theoretical thinking. Traditionally sense is something thought of as subordinate to logic. It serves as a characteristic of utterances. In this concept, sense obviously covers just one direction and is partially excluded. 'Yes' renders 'No' invisible, the 'False' has to be excluded in favor of the 'True'. Seeking the definitiveness and unambiguity dictated by the omnivorous absoluteness of logic, the signifiers have to be set in an absolute relation to things. Devoid of sense, they have to prove themselves as the origin of speech and meaning. Sense is denied in favor of the possibility of decontextualization, in favor of the invention of universal, abstract signifiers. Signifiers are cemented into this one-sided relation to things. Consequently this formal logic of speech, set as absolute circumstance, thwarts a complete perception of the expressed, lets part of it decline into contradiction and impossibility and therefore become unsayable.

An illustration for this might be found within theories of cognitive development of children. Take for example research on children's ability to operate with quantity and size categories. When asked to reproduce common knowledge, children of a certain age present really absurd answers, entirely wrong, giving evidence of the expected developmental deficit, but revealing the abundance of personal sense. The traditional scientist records the deficit and ignores the confusing subtext. Pedagogy does its best to make those alienating "expressions of primitiveness" disappear. A rich and complex world could be discovered behind those non-categorical, absurd answers. Why not trace these paths of the creation of sense before children have been instructed how to signify things 'correctly', and to see through the techniques of rhetorical questioning (which tend to promote the affirmation of facts) and therefore to refuse a 'real' answer?

Subjectification and the commitment to speech

The 'overestimation' of logic, which culminates in employing its rules for the relation things-signifiers and produces universal meanings, also affects discursive practices in general. For the speaker within discourses, the following problem ensues: when exposed to the dynamic and drawing in of affinities and desires, each subject positions itself and relates to others. It settles within the sphere of sense. But this settling is mediated by speech, and occurs by means of using words and signifiers. Within discourse, the subject can only make use of the signifiers which are at its disposal. But those signifiers are essentially only capable as universal meanings, they are understood as if referring to things in a definite and unchangeable way, in order to conform to the rules of logic. These rules may vary according to the specificity of a certain language, but in the occidental tradition they generally trust in the basic possibility of logical exclusion. Therefore they offer just one possibility of expression, or better: they provoke one certain way of understanding. One is forced to occupy the same 'place' in the discourse over and over again, and meanwhile one unintentionally reproduces and confirms 'absolute' signifiers. Within this dynamic one inevitably proves the institutionalized power relations to be true and unchangeable.

Taking a complete view of sense does not mean an inevitable commitment to relativism, or a decline into indifference towards the apparently insoluble problem of 'expression'. This is the opportunity to focus on utterances which are usually ignored as 'abnormal', 'wrong', or 'impossible'. More explicitly: Taking the efficacy of sense seriously means postulating one's 'not-understanding', means to trace a kind of personal relevance which is neither definite nor obvious.

'Not-understanding' is not a synonym for egalitarianism, but is the chance to recognize differences. This is difficult to experience through the veil of intelligence, which comforts us with the security of being able to solve rational problems rationally. Because within the efficacy of intelligence, 'not understanding' means confessing a personal deficit: What you do not understand is (as it were) what you did not take in when you where taught. Intelligence has no words for the unexpected; like pedagogy it minimizes the risk of creativity and inventiveness. We will come back to this thought later on.

The problem we are discussing is not new. There are numerous attempts to approach it from different theoretical backgrounds, but most of them seem to miss the point or get entangled in its dynamic obscurity. The sublime ideology of categorization, the pretentiously complacent lie of analogy, the circumscribing efficacy of normalization and its tactics -- all this has been depicted, analyzed and deconstructed (Broughton, 1987b; Burman, 1994). The decisive question remaining is that of guilt. Who is to be blamed for suppression and normalization, who is responsible for making the subject speechless or obliterating it? A

legitimate question, as power is usually thought of as an intentional action with an agent. Furthermore one cannot simply make words responsible for implicit meanings or stigmas. Words are of infinite patience and equability. They may be deconstructed, altered or condemned by 'political correctness' without getting rid of their effects (for example the promotion and destruction of 'development'; cf. Morss, 1996). The reason for the ineffectiveness of those 'wordwars' is again closely connected to the partiality of the understanding of sense.

'Agents' are actually to be found among the 'expressing', the speaking people, they are the speaking people. Nevertheless, they cannot be blamed for reproducing and manifesting those powerful signifiers, because they are trapped in the absolute logic of speech and are not free to choose the positions they occupy within discourse. When reflecting on the question of guilt, one ends up suspecting words of having power. They obviously develop animistic features, plan to overwhelm their speakers, force them back into the preformed shapes of identity, and smother them within the endless cycle of the reproduction of meanings (Minh-Ha, 1996, p. 151). In fact this is possible, because the subject cannot just stop speaking. With respect to the dynamic explained above, it has to produce sense and therefore it has to speak. Devoid of a complete perception of sense within the self-fertilizing process of intelligent thinking, disputes rage about 'the correct name' for something, discussions slip past each other while seeking a defendant, surreal wrath increases and positions freeze in unreal oppositions. This is a scenario promoted by 'rational thinking' and logic, it is made possible by the artificial concealing of one spectrum of sense. Foolhardy, obscure, contradictory questions are not posed, the chance to grasp an idea of the impossible is denied (Deleuze, 1987, p. 25; 141). Logic carries on obliviously, reveals the possible, questions the known, concludes the expected, and proves its own truth (Deleuze, 1987, p. 129).

The intact subject of alternative psychologies

So far we have tried to present our understanding of the notion of sense. Now we would like to examine the consequences this idea might have for theoretical thinking, and to examine the concrete, actual relevance of this project. This is to present the political bias implicit in our application of the concept of sense and to show its historical and social specificity, in other words to move towards a socio-political exploration of the notion of sense. We begin this project with a consideration of the nature of the subject in alternative psychologies.

The political changes driven by the reintegration of sense into the processes of subjectification is grounded in our resentment of the ideological connotations of the endless funerals and

exhumations of the subject. In the alternative critical psychologies that have gained popularity in the North Atlantic states in the past two decades, the notions of subject and subjectivity seem to play a crucial role. Even if the elaboration of the concepts emerged from completely divergent traditions, there are certain remarkable similarities which deserve attention.

The critical psychological tradition of Marxist origin (Holzkamp, 1983; Tolman and Maiers, 1991) in the final analysis restores the subject as the creator of itself or of its life. The subject with a specific gnostic distance from the world has the chance to choose, and then to win or to lose in the midst of the countless meanings, possibilities and constraints of its societal landscape. The heart of the matter in this critical psychological position is the idea of expansion and extension: Expansion towards possibilities of the context, and extension of the self to a better, omnipotent, generalized self.

By displaying the other side of the 'alternative stream', the poststructuralist tradition of argumentation (Hollway, 1984; Parker, 1992) creates the subject as a mere positioning between power relations. Self-legitimating strategies and the claim to power give the subject its name as an abstract subject: The individual as a subject – who has to be understood as the everlasting and thus permanently changing object of discursive practices – controls the possibility to successfully justify its current place in the discourse and of the maximization of its own power. As to critical psychology, the basic idea is that of expansion and extension: expansion of one's own possibilities for dealing in power relations; and extension of the self in order to have a more easily justifiable self in dialogical conditions.

Our question is not whether these ideas are true or false. Their divergence has its origin in the varying organization of the conditions of the visibility of societal space. Our quest is to trace all these small paths which let this variety of ideas appear true; that is to explore the social space and the different perspectives it offers. That is to take the perspective of implicit sense.

Our quest is now to explore the social and scientific space in which these alternative accounts came into being. The generic origin of alternative critical psychologies could be found in doubts about the naturalistic virginity of the so called 'psy-complex' (Rose, 1985): that is, all the professional languages for understanding and explaining the other and the self in mainstream psychology. Psychology as a discipline emerges in traditional historiography as an Immaculate Conception in the scientist's mind aiming at an objectivistic reflection of substantial human capacities (Danziger, 1997a; Staeuble, 1991).

As already hinted, our commitment is to engage the same critical stance on alternative psychologies and to trace the conditions of knowledge production in them (Latour, 1987; Knorr-Cetina, 1981). Alternative psychologies should not be excluded from critical scrutiny, because they rely on the productive forces of discourse as much as traditional psychologies do. By no means can they remain outside the dynamic drawing in of sense, and of the

production and reproduction of certain species of subjects. The languages of alternative psychologies are made true (real), they creep into our speaking and acting, we reproduce them through our speaking and acting, we make them real and they make us real through their deep dependence on and anchoring in social space -- which was supposed to be the target of their critique.

What does that mean exactly? If the definition of the subject in alternative psychologies is not an essential one, then what made and makes this definition so meaningful for us? We have already depicted the lack of concern for sense in alternative psychologies, but what made them so productive? Who finally is the subject of extension and expansion? Is it the 'Zeitgeist', or the millions of real, empirical subjects, or maybe some scientists and intellectuals of the West? Is it the subject itself or intellectuals speaking in the name of the subject?

When we seek an answer to these questions we have to look for the image of human beings inherent in alternative psychologies. The subject which constructs itself through extension and expansion either in the discourse or in its own realm of life is an intact, proper subject. The image of human beings in alternative psychologies is as a self-entrepreneurial subject which tends to establish a generic order in its environment by either using power or its potency to act. Here we can observe a striking resemblance between this image and the context in which this image has been fabricated. The intact, self-entrepreneurial subject represents the imperative of the proper functioning of the North Atlantic countries and thus corresponds to a concrete geopolitical order and to an ethical impetus in this specific order (Burchell, 1996). In alternative psychologies, we used to think that implicit truth was an unaccomplished emancipation project. We located the reality of alternative critical psychologies in a desired hereafter. Yet, we want to assert that this truth is something completely different from the ideological preformation of emancipation and liberation. The playground of critical psychologies is aggressive neo-colonial neo-liberalism. And we now recognize that the invisible, excluded other is an inherent part of the articulated (Derrida, 1967). Thus, the constitutive outside of alternative psychologies is post-war neo-liberal rationality.

The reality of global capitalism: Where the subject can also be mute

What will happen if we accept that the subject is not as intact as critical psychologies suppose? What does the defense of a position which installs a principally mute subject mean? In the net of the hierarchical power relations of the world system which is transnational global capitalism (Altvater and Mahnkopf, 1996), positions actually do exist which produce subjects who remain silent and speechless; or at least have a voice incompatible with ours. This is the

uneducated subject searching only for food, the subject of the third world's aggressive nationalisms, the subject of massive rapes in Bosnia and lynching attacks against women in Afghanistan, the subject of rebellion in South Mexico and Colombia and so on. This subject strives for liberation and at the same time reproduces atrocity.

This subject is not intact, morally clean, or 'politically correct'. But this is not merely an effect of its violent, philistine and unruly character. It is a consequence of the fact that this subject does not fit into the global standards set by North Atlantic countries and transnational organizations. This subject is implicitly defined as 'uncivilised' because it either has no right to speak in the global language of economic efficacy and information technology (as post-structuralist tradition suggests) or because it seems to have no intention to speak with regard to any common respect (as critical psychology suggests). Appearing completely unfit for political discourse this subject has a lack of expressiveness anyway. When this subject may articulate itself, it serves as mere example for a footnote in texts on cultural studies or enlivens the travelogue in the feature pages of tomorrow's newspapers.

In neo-liberal societies the right to speak is owned by the person who reflects and acts, who knows the status of surrounding power relations, who has a position which permits him or her to have a voice in the first-world genre. This is the privileged subject of alternative psychologies. These psychologies obliterate the other subject, the morally unclean, ambivalent subject, or at least they see it as a palimpsest inscribed again and again in the eternal return of objectivity.

We have thus not only to challenge the concepts used in mainstream psychology by deconstructing them, as we said earlier, but we must also question the subject of knowledge in general, and open its constructedness to the perspective of sense. In other words, the subject matter of psychology – mainstream or alternative – is only a specific transformation of the North Atlantic, neo-liberal world into a subject. Furthermore we have to recognize that the subject matter of alternative psychologies may be just a specific mode of an indigenous, western psychology (Kim, 1997). In the near future what seemed to be the vanguard positions of alternative psychologies will be inducted into mainstream psychology and will very effectively colonize the discourses of psychologies on the periphery. Postmodern, discursive, cultural, and critical psychologies, activity theories, and their derivatives in western psychology build a new version of North Atlantic psychology.

Taking this into account, we have to reconsider the incapability of speech and the paternalistic structure of languages. We have to counter the logic of subjectivity with its sense. As mentioned before, sense never left -- it was always here, implicitly underlying our expression and acting. Reintegrating sense into subjectivity is a political project of rediscovering the partialized subject. Let us explain that further.

Sense as a political representation

The authors of this paper live in a rapidly changing Germany, we are participating in specific ways in reproducing our society. We have to confront our emancipatory visions with melancholic realities, while we contribute to the exclusion and marginalisation of others, and we are still zealous to be concerned about the 'voiceless'. We desire, and nevertheless fail to remember, arrangements, capitulations, resentments, attempts. These coincidences give us an idea of the fact that the power to colonize thought and lives is not in the hands of an omnipotent colonizer. As mentioned in the preceding analysis of sense, we have to face being a kind of 'colonizer' and 'decolonizer' at the same time. At the intersection of these two opposite moments, within the deep ambivalences of our existence we search for sense, which reintegrates and legitimates the unthinkable, giving space for the possibility of introducing the political project of reassembling subjectivity and the processes of subjectification. This project aims far beyond imputation, victimization, or the mere shifting of fickle demarcation lines. We want to debunk meanings and signifiers as empty cocoons, as a masquerade of responsibility with no recognizable person behind.

This exchange of priorities between meaning and sense introduces our concept of sense. Admittedly it is not an entirely new way of thinking: Vygotsky claimed that the meaning which is enclosed in words is not a constant and unchangeable magnitude, but an available potency, which materializes -- in the literal meaning of the word -- through its subjective application (Vygotsky, 1934; Papadopoulos, 1999). He thus defines the possibility of creating the non-identical. Meanings do certainly exist, but they become real only when they are used (Wittgenstein, 1953). And they are subjective because they represent possibilities of expression.

Subjective sense exceeds the possibility of objective theorization because cognitive, volitional and emotional aspects, which cannot be isolated as distinguishable features of subjective experience, converge in it (Vygotsky, 1934; Hildebrand-Nilshon and Kim, 1997). Vygotsky firmly rejects every possibility of an essentialist treatment of the constitution of the subject based on an operationalization of the elements of consciousness. Sense displays the way persons come to terms with themselves and act referring to their subjective, situated perspectives. Sense does not explain the principal themes of psychology such as thought, cognitive processes, emotion, volition etc. Sense produces the condition of individual existence, sense is the presupposition of speech and at the same time is altered or reproduced by speech, it is the implication of cognitive processes, volition, emotions etc.

At this point we see that reintegrating sense into subjectification could serve as an inauguration of political representations in our categories. Sense exceeds the possibilities of an objectivistic generalization because it re-establishes a connection to our lived realities on the one hand and on the other hand reveals the partiality of our existence. This return to a partially concrete perspective of the existence of persons, also means the dismissal of a metapsychology which attempts to acquire ostensible, objectivistic clarity. Reintegrating sense into subjectification not only concerns the realities of people, but also affects the realities of the production of knowledge. Sense has a hard center which lies in the rootedness of its enunciation in concrete social spaces. Sense does not portray an objectivistic representation of some 'natural kinds' found in the lives or in the psychic processes of people (Danziger, 1987b). The rootedness of sense challenges the image of psychology, and even disturbs the complacent exceptionality of alternative theories. As Broughton comments: "At risk of hypocrisy, I would argue that to make a career out of criticism would amount to a contradiction in terms. I would go so far as to say that critical developmental psychology can not be contemplated or sustained without a personal, perhaps visceral commitment." (Broughton, 1987a, p. 23) The complete perception of sense does not dispose of the idea of development and logic; on the contrary it raises the question of a fluid, vitalized perspective on the narration of logic and development.

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