

<http://somatosphere.net/?p=13516>

Subjectivity After the Subject

2017-04-27 10:05:43

By Sadeq Rahimi

One: Whither The Subject?

It has been exactly 8 years since I wrote the [introductory installment](#) of a mini-series on political subjectivity for *Somatosphere*. When I wrote on political subjectivity at the time, aside from exploring and communicating ideas, a good part of my agenda was to help propagate the concept of political subjectivity in cultural and medical anthropology –the notion that politicality is not something that some people do, but something that is intertwined with meaning and meaning making, and hence defines the very experience of subjectivity that makes us human beings. As I write this here to initiate what I am hoping to become a follow up set of posts on subjectivity and its future, ‘political subjectivity’ is no longer a new construct nor in need of propagation. There are numerous books and articles on the topic, and the discussion has moved forward to create intriguing inquiries such as hauntology, and the relationship between intergenerational transmission of affective patterns and political subjectivity.

For me, this has been a satisfying development to see, despite an acute awareness of the fact that this progression is by no means simply a fruit and consequence of intellectual desire and efforts of individuals like myself, but in some eerie sense, the inevitable outcome of much larger historical, technological and geopolitical movements. Satisfaction aside, in other words, these years have given me the fascinating opportunity of witnessing the incredible ways in which these broad global patterns of movement have given rise to specific intellectual trends, and have pushed specific philosophical, anthropological and psychological questions to the forefront.

I am aware that what I have just described amounts in many respects to nothing more than an ordinary account of change, insofar as history of ideas is concerned. But, in addition to the fact that the velocity of change in our day has made for much more fascinating and tangible observations of such developments, the point I want to pull out of this account is the significant implications of both this unavoidable velocity of change and, as a result of it, the explicit fashion in which we see sociocultural events and phenomena, discipline-wide intellectual trends and theories, and all the

way down to individual experiences, desires and urgencies, are practically immediately forged by global-level trends and processes that often seem to have no direct or apparent ties to these registers of experience.

In other words, not simply the fact of the speeding change, but also the clarity of the type of impact these changes are exerting on our very human-ness has brought us to a point that requires us to start making sense of these processes from a diachronic, or in fact a pantemporal point of view. I have written on this topic of pantemporality [elsewhere](#), and I may have to come back to it in more detail at a later point here as well. But for now, what I mean is the fact that human temporality (or 'historical time,' as Hegel termed it), and hence the genealogy of ideas, does not work in the basic linear fashion we tend to think it does, it seems to have an underlying logical structure that moves in a circular fashion (starts from future, goes on to past, and ends in present, and moves on to future and so on), and at the same time it is also structurally disjointed, making for experience that is present to various temporalities at any given moment. Bringing this observation to the question of transformations in human subjectivity would in some sense amount to asking the question of whether there is a broader, more comprehensive framework in which we could understand and conceptualize "subjectivity" –a framework that immediately and inevitably transcends the substantialist understanding of human subject *en-soi*, and the anthropocentric sense in which we have always perceived it. The alternative framework desists from locating a subject at the center of subjectivity, and opens the doors to models of understanding human experience and human subjectivity that may offer us the option of conceptualizing human subjectivity liberated from the human subject.

I have said a number of things here that may require more elaboration, and I am committed to coming back to do so in near future. The reason I have brought these up was in fact to set this post up as an introduction to what I am hoping will become another mini-series, dedicated to examining the future of the human subject, from a theoretical point of view and in the context of real-life observations such as the accelerating trends of change. The discussion will move through various lines of thought, but central to it all will be the question of where subjectivity (not the debate, but the experience itself) is heading, and what, if anything, we might need to do in order to make sense of this moving (and disappearing) target. In some sense then, the real question might be whether it is reasonable to expect the human subject as we understand it to transcend the fast and vast transition that is taking place. And what would this all mean in terms of the 'nature' of the human subject.

I look forward to working through these intriguing themes, and will be very grateful for receiving your positive and critical input from both intellectual

and experiential points of view.

AMA citation

Rahimi S. Subjectivity After the Subject. *Somatosphere*. 2017. Available at: <http://somatosphere.net/?p=13516>. Accessed April 27, 2017.

APA citation

Rahimi, Sadeq. (2017). *Subjectivity After the Subject*. Retrieved April 27, 2017, from Somatosphere Web site: <http://somatosphere.net/?p=13516>

Chicago citation

Rahimi, Sadeq. 2017. Subjectivity After the Subject. Somatosphere. <http://somatosphere.net/?p=13516> (accessed April 27, 2017).

Harvard citation

Rahimi, S 2017, *Subjectivity After the Subject*, Somatosphere. Retrieved April 27, 2017, from <<http://somatosphere.net/?p=13516>>

MLA citation

Rahimi, Sadeq. "Subjectivity After the Subject." 27 Apr. 2017. Somatosphere. Accessed 27 Apr. 2017. <<http://somatosphere.net/?p=13516>>