

Pursuing the Emancipatory Purport of Subjectivity from Frankfurt to Paris

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Abstract

This paper is devoted to investigating the philosophical place of Subjectivity in contemporary thought. My justification for engaging in further study on this much-discussed concept is that three significant questions concerning subjectivity have remained insufficiently examined: 1) What is the problem inherent in the philosophical foundation of modernity from Cartesian Cogito to the Kantian autonomous will and to the Hegelian subjectivity? 2) Is there any possibility to overcome the proposed problem from an internal point of view and from the perspective of Jürgen Habermas? 3) Does the radical criticism by thinkers like Foucault and Derrida of the Enlightenment idea of an autonomous subject **lead to loss of freedom** or to deeply improving the robust notion of freedom? This paper examines these three questions in three sections. The first section argues that the Enlightenment's heritage is contradictory. On the one hand, the notion of subjectivity has generated a kind of emancipation. On the other hand, the subjectivity has enthroned a conception of reason and of method that can be interpreted as a new form of domination. The second section contends that Habermas's answer to the philosophical dilemma of subjectivity is to accept the criticism of subject-centered reason while seeking a basis for reason in communicative action. The third section references some contemporary thinkers in criticizing Habermas's conception of subjectivity. Based on his notions of modernity and subjectivity, I argue that the marginalized populations of the World - namely the Other - can no longer expect intellectual and ethical support for their plight from Frankfurt and should immigrate to Paris in order to pursue the emancipatory aspect of subjectivity.

Keywords: modernity, subjectivity, emancipation, domination, universality, Frankfurt School.

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