

Towards a working definition of *subject* and Other (Derrida reference)

In terms of *subject* and the capitalized Other, this article's references are to a text by the philosopher Jacques Derrida. While the Derrida text does not use either term at least in an introductory section concerning the first-person pronoun 'I', the inferences drawn here of subject and Other, albeit with a tendency project particular meaning and application into them, suggest a more liveable generalisation than as theorised by Lacan. In the context of 'I', Derrida (2008, p.3) refers to "I am, "I follow," "I follow myself", "I am (in following) myself". What Derrida is following is "the crossing of borders" between man and animal." In the present context, it is not the implications of animal in its fundamental less- or non-self-conscious nature, so much as the one that Derrida suggests he follows in his awareness of the 'I' of himself, in a sense in which this can also be the Other. In writing of the 'I' in terms that disclose himself, Derrida is also committing himself to self-reflection as his own subject. Derrida (2008, pp.3-4) does, however, term the animal the 'other' in a non-capitalised sense, and infers both the Lacanian specular other (first theorised by Lacan in/as the *mirror-stage*) and the *object a* conjoined when he states of the 'insistent gaze of the animal' towards one: 'The gaze of the seer, a visionary or extra-lucid blind one [...] A reflected shame, the mirror of a shame ashamed of itself, a shame that is at the same time specular, unjustifiable, and unavowable'.

While in Lacanian theory the other of the mirror-stage is associated with identity formation in the pre-linguistic Imaginary, the *object a* that the other morphs into as later theory is itself non-visual, a 'blind spot' in the object (Žižek, 2006, p.17), operative in the language-based Symbolic only to allude to the lack of explication in any terms whatsoever in the Real. Derrida's 'extra-lucid blind one' may bring the specular and the inexplicable together. The mirror of a shame', itself 'ashamed', may strike a chord in one who is concerned with, in a sense, over-determining oneself by inventing a heteronym, a fictional alter-ego who projects one's desire; this idea of looking at oneself in terms by which others can view one's self-looking, that endangers shame....

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In the early years of this idea of heteronym in the early 2000s — although I wouldn't have known that this were it at the time — I was shy of it to the point of embarrassment to be so associated, and Asian mural references provided a metaphorical subterfuge; not a bad thing in any case,

because one's ideas in their opening banality need to be either culturalised, or some aspect of their cultural precedence used as a displacing filter.

However, the artifice of such a strategy may increase the density of the question. Derrida (20028, p.10) asks of himself "Who?" But "Who therefore?" For I no longer know who, therefore, I am (following) or who it is I am chasing, who is following me or hunting me.'

The nearest sense that Derrida (2008, p.102) may infer an Other that is more Lacanian denominated is where he states: '[...] the other or the unconscious of the "I think" (interpreted along Nietzschean but also Freudian lines); it is the other that thinks me and the other that follows me where I am (following) that which haunts in advance the "I think that accompanies all my representations"'. While the latter is written in a disparaging vein against Descartes' division of human from all other less advanced species of animal, the implication of the other as a kind of sinister aura that 'thinks' through and as one may confer with a negative conception of the big Other. Derrida (2008, p.102) continues: '[...] this unthought in the "I think", where the animal that I am (following) follows me from the place of the other or of the unconscious [...]', Derrida critiques both Levinas and Lacan for their relegation of the animal in the aforementioned Cartesian sense, although Derrida (2008, p.120) cites Lacan in terms of the big Other situated in language as a code whose role may be potentially articulated: "[...] the fact that one can speak of a code only if it is already the code of the Other [...] since it is from the other that the subject is constituted, which means that it is from the Other that the subject receives even the message that he emits".

This ambiguous use of the term *other* in the context of animal may be considered an instance of a more generic understanding of the otherness of which the Lacanian big Other is imbued. From Lacan's own perspective, according to Derrida (2008, p.121), '[...] the animal has neither unconscious nor language, nor the other, except as an effect of the human order [...]'.

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My own animal, my dog, passed away on 6th October, 2019, the date of the day after the flood that prevented me from my yearly commemorating his passing at a temple or church, as the case may be, in this year 2024. While the dog, Fasai, could

obviously never speak, there was something about him that required respect, such that in Christian spiritual terms I have always thought him deserving of a commemorative candle. A sense of subject, in this respect, as well as Other, was and still is imbued in Fasai as both an extension and other of myself.

References

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