

## Surplus Enjoyment as a Strategy of Consumption of the Postmodern Subject

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**Abstract:** The study analyzes the problem of enjoyment (jouissance) in transition from modernity society to postmodernity society. Two models of the subject, such as “the knowing subject” and “the enjoying subject”, have been formulated as a result of historical and philosophical analysis. The researchers emphasize that the articulation of enjoyment is associated with the modern body articulation through repressive social practices. In postmodernity, the phenomenon of enjoyment is problematized as an external consumer strategy of pleasure which determines the subject. Enjoyment gets object if it is removed from the sphere of the inner, subjective to the surface, it becomes an Explicit Law of social being. Enjoyment becomes inevitable, outer, objectified in relation to the subject itself. Man as a real historical subject loses social responsibility for the production of his own individuality and identity and becomes a consumer of ready-to-use mechanisms of identification and satisfaction. Thus, enjoyment takes an alienating form of pleasure strategy and the subject imagines enjoyment rather than actually derives it.

**Key words:** Surplus enjoyment, pleasure, desire, subject, consumer society

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### INTRODUCTION

Modern culture is abound with references to the subject of pleasures, temptations, enjoyment and desires. Since the 60s of the 20th century, the enjoyment phenomenon has become an attribute of culture, value and sense of what constitutes the lifestyle of a modern man. This is evidenced by the mass media, people’s way of life, their clothes and habits. But, according to Foucault (1996), ‘economy’ of enjoyment, i.e., its accumulation occurred much earlier. The humanistic turn that began in the Renaissance opened a positive sense of the world of passions, enjoyment and desires. According to Lacan (2008) “from a particular day on, surplus enjoyment can be calculated, can be counted and totalised. Here what is called the accumulation of capital begins”.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

From the point of view of methodology the research is an integration of the two largest schools of the 20th century-psychoanalysis and structuralism, moreover, not only the fundamental works of the representatives of these schools would be regarded but the researches of their methodological successors as well. These two schools are the most suitable ones for the investigation of the subject under analysis. The scientific consideration of human identity and enjoyment begins right from the psychoanalysis. Structuralism set out the cornerstones for the studies of mechanisms of functioning of “social”

that is logically continued in poststructuralism. Apart from that at the heart of poststructuralism, there is a methodological differentiation of the modern and the Postmodern, that is of great importance for us.

### RESULTS

**Two models of the subject:** Despite a rapid growth of the axiological and social value of enjoyment, the rational justification of pleasure becomes more problematic. Descartes (1994) in his research “Meditations on First Philosophy” tries to question his own self and find the grounds of his existence. He conducts an imaginary experiment in which he refuses to acknowledge his corporality and considers himself as having no hands, eyes, flesh and blood or senses, desires and appetences. Thus, after exclusion of everything false and accidental, according to Descartes, it is only thinking and “my” perception of myself as the body, based not on senses, but “intellectus”, left. The Cartesian turn in philosophy only articulates the idea that had been in the air, since Proto-Renaissance and the Renaissance the idea of omnipresent power of reason. According to Foucault (1977), modernity is an era where “it is within knowledge representing itself that the sign is to perform its signifying function; it is from knowledge that it will borrow its certainty or its probability”. Actually, a certain cognitive attitude toward the subject that cognizes, knows, understands something clearly appears in this period and this particular knowledge becomes a productive force

which determines its existence. Thus, a certain model of the subject, “the knowing subject” is formed. The appearance of such a subject is possible only in a progressive way: through accumulation of knowledge, information; through gradual development and broadening of the cultural and social fields.

The origin of another model “the enjoying subject” is associated with an inverse way of pleasure established in society, the way wherein satisfaction is achieved not by outgrowth of cultural codes and fields, and by accumulation of experience and knowledge but through sublimation of some negative energy, a force that subsequently acquired the status of the unconscious.

**About the modern body:** This vision of enjoyment inevitably raises the question of its essence and origin. Obviously, the universal structure of enjoyment is the body which fixes the inverse power and is a conductor of the unconscious. The concept of the body was firstly explicated with the concept of the “subject” in the Renaissance. With the development of capitalist relations the explication takes place as an objective need to control own body and own passions (Ossowski, 1987). By the 18th century, the body began to be interpreted from the point of medical, political, economic, technical motives. During this period, there emerged two sides, two tendencies, two ways of articulation of corporality. On the one hand, there is an explication of the body as self-knowledge, as knowledge of a psycho-physiological entity, on the other there is an idea of the body as something more than just biology. Such a body is a consequence of satisfaction of man’s desires and enjoyment is its necessary attribute. We mean transgressiveness and intentionality of the body.

Bataille (1997, 2006) stresses that the human body is totally transgressive, it requires experience of going beyond: “The state of transgression is caused by desire, demand for the deeper, richer and incredible world”. Unsurprisingly, transgression is associated with enjoyment, with a sense of realization in oneself of something greater than actually exists. This experience of completing oneself to a certain wholeness, integrity contributes to satisfaction of a certain internal demand for “Ego” which Zizek (1999) calls the “sublime body”.

**Enjoyment of ego:** Enjoyment of ego totality is an experience of the borders of own subjectivity. Barthes (1994) considers the ability to keep total as a guarantee of satisfaction and “the site of a loss, the seam, the cut, the deflation, the dissolve which seizes the subject in the midst of bliss”. This postmodern peculiarity, to build through destruction, is rooted in it. At the same time,

Barthes (1994) separates pleasure as a sense of comfort (which is possible only in perception of the conservative, conventional social forms) from enjoyment derived through the gap, destruction of cultural forms. Enjoyment is associated with a psychophysiological sense of discomfort and a feeling of perplexity. The same idea is found in works by Derrida (1993) who believes that the text should be wrapped up in some corporeal form so that the reader longing for enjoyment “in the result would be seized with a new palpitation, a new tremor, thus opening a new space of experience in the end”. Barthes specifies another distinction between pleasure and enjoyment. Pleasure can be expressed whereas enjoyment can’t. Pleasure can be verbalized whereas enjoyment excludes any possibility of language articulation. Any enjoyment by the very act of expressing “causes the letter and all possible speech to collapse in the absolute degree of the annihilation”.

Enjoyment of ego totality can also be understood in a psychoanalytic sense. Lacan (1999) writes: “Ego is a pure object”. In this case, the subject appears to be a certain void, a “gap” in the social being and the object is a certain sense, it is potential ‘everything’ that fills this void up (Zizek, 1999). The fullness of being of the subject is the way of its enjoyment, whereas any trauma, i.e., the loss of the object appears to be a scene of the loss of enjoyment and satisfaction. Thus, the main function of enjoyment is actualization/retention/realization of the subject. Zizek (2014) writes: “Jouissance is thus the ‘place’ of the subject... his ‘impossible’ Being-there, Da-Sein”.

**Surplus enjoyment as enjoyment of the other:** In his researches Lacan (1999) often uses the “J’ouiss-sens” neologism which translators and specialists render as the subject’s agreement with the meaning. Apart from wordplay, this concept is of great importance for the explanation of the way Lacan understands enjoyment: the subject derives enjoyment if and only if, it accepts a certain sense and, in this sense, enjoyment is declared a phenomenon that has a “surplus” overtone. Desire requires a social situation, a sense. Even a sexual intercourse, which as one would think could be considered as simple satisfaction of sexual needs, becomes what it is only due to imagination. According to Zizek (1999), “any sexual pleasure that we find in touching another human being, is not something evident but inherently traumatic and can be sustained only in so far as this other enters the subject’s fantasy-frame”. Enjoyment can not be reduced to pure satisfaction of needs by means of the object. It may occur only by virtue of the nonarticulated, unconscious linguistic fiber, by virtue of

the big other. Actually, the presence of this other makes enjoyment surplus in the sense declared in Lacan and Žižek's writings about it. So, enjoyment can be conceived only as enjoyment of the Other, only as a situation with the subjective dimension allowing me to enjoy. The subject, according to Lacan's concept, derives enjoyment rather primitively. To get satisfaction it just needs to include desire into the structure of its own experience. And, it does not matter who bears this desire: my very self or someone else.

Apart from that the appeal to the other who preserves enjoyment can mean that the search for enjoyment is carried out by the subject not in the context of the established cultural forms and linguistic spaces but on the border between these spaces, in the area of pathological social failures. Enjoyment is conditioned by some kind of unawareness, ignorance (Žižek, 1999). Thus, the idea of pleasure from risk arises on the basis of "learning through experience and the letter of what is not yet bygone" (Bataille, 1997). Although, risks can be dangerous and unjustified and pleasure may never come; the very possibility of getting enjoyment provides pleasure to the subject. The subject, in this case, does not control desire; the rationalization of enjoyment is impossible. The subject ceases to be a customer, it becomes an organ of enjoyment that reads the elements out (Baudrillard, 2011). Modern rulemaking structures of enjoyment break down and the imperatives of faith, duty and reason dominating in social consciousness in modernity are replaced by imperative of unconscious sensual desires. In modernity sensuality, sexuality and pleasure were the central phenomena of man's social life, as much as reason, politics and ideology, though they were concealed.

In postmodernity the problem of suppression of pleasures and sexuality is no longer actual as with the development of the consumer society pleasure turns to be a commodity (Fromm, 2000). Enjoyment gets objectified, it is removed from the sphere of the inner, subjective to the surface, it becomes an explicit law of social being. Enjoyment becomes inevitable, outer, objectified in relation to the subject itself. Baudrillard (2000) writes "Sexual pleasure has become a requisite and a fundamental right". In the world of pleasure in everything, man has no right to suffer. But, the world of enjoyment is not just a dominant system of social production, it is also a type of a new hedonist.

#### **DISCUSSION**

But is such a man a real hedonist, i.e., does enjoyment provide genuine goodness? Does it help to achieve happiness?

Marx and Engels (1956), the main ideologue of the problem of alienation, treats enjoyment as a connection of man with the world and considers it in two aspects. The first aspect is subjective enjoyment that contributes to satisfaction of man's sensual mastering of objects, for example, using them in the process of physical and spiritual labor. And sensual enjoyment differs from sheer animal satisfaction of wants. Man perceives the object as man: you have to be musically educated to enjoy the music, you need to have artistic taste to appreciate the art work. The second aspect is referred to the subject-to-subject enjoyment when man derives enjoyment if someone else enjoys the process and the results of his actions: a chef derives enjoyment if the dishes he cooks bring pleasure to restaurant customers, a master is glad if someone enjoys using the thing he makes. Ultimately, any activity should give man enjoyment. And, according to Marx, it is possible only in disalienation.

The theoretical search for the grounds of the "enjoyment society" was continued by Freudo-Marxists who tried to build a healthy society based on liberation and enjoyment. Reich (1997) wrote about the necessity of the Cultural Revolution and establishment of truly human living conditions based on understanding and recognition of own sexuality. Marcuse (2003) marks that the new society is possible only in the conditions of actualization of suppressed but organic and essential human sensual needs; the aim of such a society is "to make the human body an instrument of pleasure rather than labor". The ideas of the sexual revolution, of rehabilitation of sensuality as the highest human goodness originate from this period. And, these ideas resulted in real, though short, social practice. We can recall America of the 60s and the hippie movement with its ideals of love, all-good enjoyment and pacifism. However, the phenomenon of enjoyment arising as a theoretical foundation of freedom turns into a customer strategy of pleasure based on a set of sensual stereotypes and emotional clichés. Baudrillard (2000) underlines the utilitarian nature of enjoyment. Enjoyment as such is just an energy, an inverse force, it has no strategy and can not have any. But, enjoyment can be used as a material, as an object by a different social element, for example: by art, ritual, religion. If we talk about modernity, enjoyment was a battle for power and capital in this period. In rising postmodernity the struggle for power remained but changed the scope. The strategy of pleasure is a consumer strategy which includes market, communication and creative industries. Žižek (1999) writes "In contemporary 'consumerist' societies we, the subjects, are no longer interpellated on behalf of some big ideological identity but directly as subjects of pleasures". Man as a real historical subject loses his existential and social responsibility for production of his selfness and

individuality; he becomes just a consumer of ready-to-use things, ideas, strategies and devices. The desiring machines creating our bodies, organisms and desire appear when and where capitalism reveals its universality, comprehensiveness and despotism (Deleuze, 2007). In the “consumer” society, every single man comes under influence of this machine with its mission to create desires, satisfaction of which does not reduce them but on the contrary, makes them stronger. Thus, the desiring machines become “hyper-exploitation zones” that use and alienate man.

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion we have a narcissistic subject fearing real sensual, emotional, physical contact with another person. This kind of subject does not need another person; it is able to derive entire enjoyment itself. The subject is deprived of its core; it is no longer a personality; it has no selfness and identity as something stable and unchanging; it may even not have its individual self. “For writes Fromm (2010) they constantly change their egos according to the principle “I am as you desire me to buy”.

Pleasure becomes not just a desired emotion of the subject but also an imperative imposed on man by society. The slogan of this imperative is well expressed by Zizek (2014) “Like it or not, enjoy yourself!”. Representation of pleasure becomes continuous, total. A clear contrast between labor and leisure, work and holiday disappears. Thus, enjoyment moves into the sphere of profanity, routine, everydayness. Enjoyment must be constantly represented not only in exceptional cases. Fetishization of enjoyment leads to exclusion of other ways of reality representation: existential experiences of one’s own being, such as love, friendship, empathy, suffering and sympathy, whereas pleasure itself turns into an oppressive torment to man.

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