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Affective Discriminations: the Fragmented Subject, Affirmation, and Abusive Empowerment

In much of the discourses prevalent in Cultural Studies, the fragmented subject or the fragmented self have been key notions which serve to identify a proper constructionist/constructivist view of individual and collective subject formation. These notions have been linked with ideas of affectivity, which on the one hand is seen as a means of individual and collective empowerment, and on the other, as late capitalist commodifying intensities. What in the idea of the fragmented subject already signals a vanishing mediator giving way to performative construction, in the latter case becomes relations of biopower with no mediations or distance, where total identifications or projections prevail. These effects are seen to traverse individual bodies as well as collectivities, transforming everything into a subject-less network.

What in this narrative begins as fragmented subjects ends with no subjects at all. This also entails a weakening of the sign-function and consequently of ideology and its critique. This last coupling points to a cultural mutation where affirmation becomes all-powerful, entailing a re-enchantment of the world as ultimate empowerment or a continuation of ideology/hegemony with other means. Paradoxically, such weakening or loss of the subject has also led to affect-laden fundamentalist identity politics.

Hate speech or discriminatory affectivity is a kind of affective empowerment in the service of hegemonic struggles and identity politics within a double bind of defense and attack. In this paper, the theoretical issues sketched out above will be looked at in connection with Finnish blogs featuring hate speech or with an emphasis on verbal affective discrimination, mostly in terms of gender and “multiculturalism”.