

The Object World of Man

Boyana Nikolova

MA, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Cultural Studies

ABSTRACT:

The essential meaning of authenticity is in fact a touch of the illusory truth of being. The antique object, though completely anachronistic in relation to the present, is fully fitting into all kinds of spaces because it represents a part of ourselves. Man is not at home in a functional environment. On the other hand, however, through their historicity, the artifacts refute the very presence of history, because although they are authentic, they find themselves in an environment that is not at all authentic for their existence, and this is because the ancient object presents itself as authentic in a system whose essence is not authenticity at all, but the calculated relation and abstraction of the sign.

KEYWORDS: Object, Man, Authenticity, Time, Value, Identity

*„Tout s'enforce vers sa forme perdue“
(Everything moves towards its lost form)
Andre Gide*

INTRODUCTION

By objectifying the object reality when it has lost its functionality, man gives it a completely different discourse, he gives it other meanings. Non-functionality means another type of functionality - that of the search for identification with itself. The possibility to carry out this process takes place precisely in the primordial need for authenticity and credibility for one's own existence. The antique or "signed" object provides one's connection to one's authenticity. Although illusory, it is always necessary because it is self-affirming and at the same time a negation of illusoriness. When the modern world is nothing but a technicised functionality, the "I"-sense is dispersed among details and "self-satisfied" buttons. The way for it to find its identity with itself is to look into its past, into the calm and comfortable "authenticity" of birth.

The idea of man immediately using his primordially given sense to feel his connectedness to the world around him sounds alien and fits poorly into the fabric of our psyche. There is usually nothing more secure for ourselves than our sense of ourselves, our own self. That self seems to us self-contained, well-constructed in relation to everything else. This impression is deceptive, the "I"-rather continues inward, without clearly delineated boundaries, into an unconscious spiritual self that is signified as an Ego serving as a facade. (Freud;1991)

THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE OBJECT

The "I" is initially opposed by the "object" as an entity that is outside the self and only after a particular action is it pushed into the open. The clash between the selfhood and the otherness of the real is only the first stage of a kind of union. The need for co-community is projected onto objects so that they become "their own" and "close" to themselves. This projection grows into sublimation to such an extent that the objects become "subjective" and the person is "emptied" of his subjectivity because the dissipation of the "I"-ness is its being contained in the object.

But the saturation of meanings in space and the absence of such in the self only leads to the painful frustration of not being able to be authentic and possible. Since falling into a pure interiority is in any case impossible, it is at least possible to escape from the multifunctional seriality of contemporary objects and to look for others that allow our re-entry into a kind of revelation of being. Such objects are most often the antique or the “signed”. With their marginality, they are in fact the center of becoming. For Baudrillard, on the one hand, they are an emanation of historicity, a resurrection of the fundamental dimension of time, but not actual time, but its signs or cultural scars that the antique object retains (Baudrillard;2003).

On the other hand, however, through their historicity, they refute the very presence of history, because although they are authentic, they find themselves in an environment that is not at all authentic for their existence, and this is because the ancient object presents itself as authentic in a system whose essence is not authenticity at all, but the calculated relation and abstraction of the sign.

The illusiveness of this authenticity, though conscious, is necessary for the ensoulment of the human essence, which has in any case become “disembodied” among the “density” of functional objects. And although the antique object is non-functional, it still has the function of providing a warm presence to the past. It always fits into the structures of its surroundings. Where it exists, it is fully experienced as “warm”, unlike any modern “cold” surroundings. With its indifference, the antique object is always “eccentric” (Baudrillard;2003) and if it is authentic, it is always somehow false. The mythological inscription in space directly correlates with the requirement that it be valued and valorized, because the main thing that the authentic object carries with it is value; it communicates a value that has already been lived without being diachronic to time. On the contrary, it has consolidated it, promising an uninterrupted continuity. The duration of time does not matter when value is involved. And value is being created only within the mind because only the reflection can create meaning. “Time, unlike its so called “attribute” – the duration – is a multidimensional phenomenon in the semiotic way of understanding” as Nikolov points out (Nikolov{3};2024). Therefore the object’s value becomes the most significant phenomenon of its own temporal being.

According to Baudrillard, the time of the mythological object is past done: it is that which has a place in the present as having once existed and is thus based on itself, it is “authentic.” It is a sending back into the distant past of a former being, a process which in the imaginary is tantamount to an elision of time. (Baudrillard;2003) This completed event which it signifies is birth. I am not the one who is - that is the anxiety. I am the one who was, according to the thread of a birth back in time. This object is a sign of that thread, falling from the present backwards in time. Re-birth is re-becoming and re-being in the world. At the same time, it is an assurance of warmth and truthfulness. There are two aspects to the mythology of the ancient object - a nostalgia for roots and an obsession with authenticity - a kind of mastery of the beginnings and endings of being - birth and death. To have been born is to have had parents. The involution to the sources is obviously a regression to the mother, and the demand for authenticity is a search for kinship with the transcendence of the father because he is the source of value. In this sense, a kind of narcissistic regression is taking place, the point of which is the discovery of the self. In Freudianism, narcissism can occur at a point when the libido also begins to invest itself in objects external to the subject. The subject's identity is constructed through the function of the *Other's discerning gaze* (“*Mirror Stage – acc. to Lacan*”).

But when this *Other* is precisely the object, and the ancient object at that, it is loaded with imaginary identifications. But this “I” or this image of the object is 'outside' the subject and cannot have the claim to fully represent it. In this process, the subject invests an object external to itself, which cannot be conflated with the subjective identity, but which is nevertheless the object-image of the one it is perceived to be, together being all that this process entails - the lure, the delusion, and the alienation. The narcissistic fate of the subject consists in

knowing that he is deceived. He knows that the authenticity of this subject has already lost its authenticity, i.e., the “I”-ness has receded, yet he performs this introjection in order to appreciate his own self.

Narcissistic regression is in fact a re-return to the roots of selfhood, and so narcissism is not the egoic withdrawal from reality but a union with the universe. According to Marcuse, narcissism is beyond any immature autoeroticism. It denotes a fundamental connectedness with reality that could give rise to an overarching existential order (Marcuse;1993). In other words, narcissistic regression may carry within it the germ of a different principle of reality- the *libidinal cathexis* of the ego may become the *libidinal cathexis* of the objective world.

And this energy, with which the ancient object is charged, is conceived as the repose and absorption of life and death. They can be harnessed even by the presence of a family portrait or a “cultural” graffiti. And yet the absurdity of this authenticity does not negate the “catch” of the alluring offer of being by-yourself.

Perhaps an escape to the past is an escape from the present. Escape from the false being of the present is the hiding behind a falsity - that of illusory authenticity. By removing the mask (*persona – acc. to Jung*), we sink “supposedly” into ourselves in order to impose another resonance - that of nothingness (*fr. personne - nobody, pron.*). A similar confrontation with the “person” and with his “nobody” is carried out by one of Romain Gary's characters in the novella *The Forger*. (Gary;1994) His character is a collector of paintings. He is the ultimate connoisseur of forgeries. Among so many inauthentic things, the only real thing in his life is the beauty of his wife Alfiera, whose subjectness he extrapolates in the objectivity of his paintings and in their absolute and categorical veracity. She becomes a beautiful canvas whose presence brings security to his life, protection from the falsehood of an otherwise false existence. Ultimately, the change of subject to object and vice versa (Alfiera's beauty turns out to be the result of plastic surgery) is proof that objects (in this case, paintings) are much more real and solid than man's false flesh. Through authenticity, one gains both the freedom to be and the security of being. Though illusory, this state is the way to come home to oneself. By projecting oneself into an object, one exposes one's authenticity and presentness. “In fact, to convince someone in the existence of capability for reflection is possible only in such a case when this 'someone' is capable to direct his attention not only to the object. but also, to his perception of the object. (Nikolov{2};2024). Tragedy becomes the satisfaction of the need to be. The object is loaded with psychic energy (*cathexis*). However, what this energy is cathected into are separate thoughts and notions about the object so that it comes as close as possible to our requirement (Brennan;1993).

CONCLUSION

Among other things, the authenticity in the ancient object is the desire to transcend the dimension of economic prosperity, to illuminate in a cultured and abundant symbolic sign some social success (Baudrillard;1996)

Authenticity in the originality of an artefact is the sum of all that it carries with it from its origin, from its material durability to its quality as a historical witness. Today, according to Baudrillard, the “aura” (Benjamin) takes on other contours. The meaning of the original passes from the re-creation of visibilities to the act of their invention. The value is transferred from a kind of sublime objective beauty to an idiosyncrasy in the artist manifested in his gesture.

“We are in time and no longer in space, in difference and no longer in likeness, in series and no longer in order.” (Baudrillard;1996) This means that the authenticity of the sign is now essential. Here subjectivity triumphs in the machine-like repetition of itself.

The essential meaning of authenticity is in fact a touch of the illusory truth of being. The antique object, though completely anachronistic in relation to the present, is fully fitting into all kinds of spaces because it represents a part of ourselves. Man is not at home in a functional environment. He needs something like a piece of the Cross, making the church a holy place, a detail of absolute reality, located at the core of the real, placed within him to give it value. Through this object, the resentment of the “I”-ness is centered and identified with “the original and ideal situation

of embryo and evolved to a central and microscopic situation of the thing before birth" (Baudrillard;2003), where the environment was nothing else, namely, the discourse of the thing in relation to itself, because everything is directed towards its lost form.

REFERENCES:

1. Gary, Romain – ‘Le faux’ – ‘Histoires á lire’, Paris, 1994
2. Plamen N. Nikolov (2024) Phenomenology and Lived Phases of Perceived Time - International Journal For Multidisciplinary Research, Volume 6, Issue 2, March-April 2024. [DOI 10.36948/ijfmr.2024.v06i02.15841](https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2024.v06i02.15841)
3. Nikolov, P. (2024) Reflection on the Essence of Time. Open Journal of Philosophy, Volume14 No.2, DOI: 10.4236/ojpp.2024.142033
4. Бодрияр, Жан - “Към критика на политическата икономия на знака”, *Sofia*, 1996, p. 105
5. Бодрияр, Жан - “Системата на предметите”, *Sofia*, 2003
6. Бренън, Чарлс- “Увод в психоанализата”, *Sofia*, 1993
7. Маркузе, Херберт - “Ерос и цивилизация”, *Sofia*, 1993, p.178
8. Фройд, Зигмунд - “Ерос и култура”, *Sofia*, 1991