



RESEARCH PAPER

Psychological Resistance to Socio-political Interpellation in Albert Camus' *The Outsider*

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ABSTRACT

Ideologies play an important role in human life and can influence human behaviors and actions. This paper investigates the nature of socio-political forces that try to determine an individual's behavior and in return how the individual resists these interpellative attempts in Albert Camus' *The Outsider*. The theoretical standing of the study rests upon Althusserian concept of Interpellation while the protagonist's psychological resistance is examined in the light of Freudian psychoanalysis. For Althusser (1971) interpellation is a process through which an individual's behavior is controlled by the ideological state apparatuses (ISAs) prevalent in the culture. Through close reading of the selected text, this study explores the socio-cultural influence of ISAs, such as family, law and other cultural agents, on the protagonist in the novel. Whereas, the psychological resistance of the protagonist to these agents are examined in the light of Sigmund Freud's theory of Psychoanalysis. The findings of the study suggest that interpellation process has influenced the protagonist psychologically which is evident through his dialogues at several occasions.

Introduction

The idea of ideology has undergone an evolution of changes. At present ideology is more than just the idea of reproduction of the conditions of production; i.e. the bourgeois takes the social, political and economic control over the proletariats and continue to rule over them by creating a situation of repression (Marx & Engels, 1888). The Marxist explanation of ideology addresses the exploitory nature of ideology where people are influenced to believe in certain ideas, in other words they are enclosed in a system from where they cannot find escape. But at present, even the idea of ideology has become ambiguous; it is not

just the institutional ideologies imposed on individuals that are questionable but the disturbing confusion regarding the individuals' own selves (Akrami&Ekehammar, 2006; Sibley & Duckitt, 2008). Ideology, thus is no more influential from the outside world, it is now the mental state of an individual that keeps on pushing and pulling one in between contrasting poles of ideas. The belief systems of men and women are now in a constant to and fro motion between the adjacent poles of virtue and vice and it has become very difficult to decide where one ends and the other begins. Ideology has become a source of psychological oppression where it is not just the social pressure/boundaries that restrict human understanding but also the emotional oppression of beliefs which make wo/men indecisive in dealing with the basic behavioral norms of the society (Ratner, 2013).

The metamodern *subject* is oscillating between the implicit and the explicit beliefs and ideals; and is ultimately in a psychological flux between right and wrong as perceived by the society and him/herself (Vermeulen&Akker, 2010; Turner, 2011; Abramson, 2014). With the growing political insecurity and social anxiety, the socio-cultural *subject* is caught evermore into the web of ideas that all stretch human psyche to different/ multiple dimensions which highlight the questions for the metamodern human; who am I? and How do I fit into/divert from the socio-cultural idea of who I should be? This study attempts to explore the psychological notion of ideology and the individual's resistance to it from a social psychological perspective; the society, no doubt, shapes the psyche of humans but how far does the psyche of humans shape up their social identity/position/role in their cultural setting? How does this oscillation between the unconscious interpellation of social institutions and the conscious psychological resistance to it affect the life and social position of an individual? And last but not the least, how does this tug of war end between the society and the individual psyche end? To address these questions, this paper draws on Althusser's concept of ISAs and Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis as its research framework.

The Outsider (1982) by Albert Camus, revolves around the protagonist who is the narrator as well. His peculiarity and strange character is the center of discussion of the whole novel. Mr. Meursault is considered as an emotionless and absurd individual; he does not adopt the traditional approach towards life and shows emotional detachment towards ideals of society. The novel is divided into two parts, both parts have one significant event. Part one includes the death of Meursault's mother. Meursault takes a two days leave from office to attend his mother's funeral. People find Meursault as an indifferent and peculiar person who does not weep at his mother's death and day after the funeral he is found swimming with his girlfriend, Marie. Part two reveals to the readers that Meursault has committed a murder and is under a legal trial. The Magistrate, Public prosecutor, Judge and Chaplain find the behavior of Meursault strange as he is not guilty of his crime and does not show any fear to the upcoming execution. Meursault does not turn towards religion and continues to resist the psychological pressure exerted by the society. The novel ends at the outburst of Meursault as a response to Chaplain's insistence to confess his crime and turn towards God.

Material and Methods

This study uses *close reading* as a method to analyze various sentences, clauses, and phrases related to the role of ISAs in the psychological development of the protagonist. The selected data from the novel, *The Outsider*, is analyzed with the view that societies construct realities and individuals are psychologically forced to believe in the social realities created for them. Reality is socially defined and is a reflection of every individual's experience of life; it defines how an individual personally understands the world around instead of how things objectively define the natural order of the world or life. Individuals are subject to accept such realities that are already created for them and also those whom they construct for themselves (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). However, there are many who don't accept the process of social interpellation, instead resist it and fight for the social acceptance of their realities. The analytical perspective of this study is psychoanalysis. The protagonist's psychological resistance to the social norms and parameters of the society is analyzed by his practice of various defense mechanisms as a shield to the social pressures to accept social norms and behaviors. Freudian Psychoanalysis takes into account the inner conflicts and processes of mind which determine human behavior. The defense mechanism, in particular, will be focus of this study as it helps in understanding psychological resistance.

Ideological State Apparatuses as Psychological Manifestation of Ideology

Any individual's beliefs are consciously/unconsciously developed by the society's power norms and dictates that formulate the rules *to be who and who not to be*. Althusser (1971) coined the term "interpellation" to explain the un/conscious socio-cultural process of acceptable acculturation which comprises of an ideological "hailing". This hailing is a form of addressivity that tags them with a particular identity, thereby transforming normal individuals in society into *subjects*. Ideology works in subtle ways to 'recruit' subjects among the individuals by the process of *interpellation* or hailing. The subject is ultimately, a socio-ideological product of the ideological drilling of norms that s/he receives since early childhood. (Medina, 2005).

Althusser (1971) considers two major apparatuses of interpellation through which the society asserts its invisible power: the *repressive* state apparatus and the *ideological* state apparatus. The repressive state apparatuses are used essentially to assert power by the use of physical force to ensure that the subjects follow the norm, such as the army, police or prison, etc. People may use physical resistance against such forces and protest against them. The ideological state apparatuses work by inculcating a natural un/conscious desire among individuals, conditioning them to believe in the criteria of accepted behavior as the natural means of correct attitude. The ideological state apparatuses include many preaching/educating social institutions such as the family, the school, the church, the media, etc.

Gergen (1991) explains a complicated relationship between self and society where latter dominates in the making of self. Heidegger (1977) investigates how culture determines a person's priorities and choices. In other words how cultural forces direct and drive a person's modes of thought and behavior. For Cushman (1990) human identity is constructed by social, political, and cultural forces. For him a person's culture has a deterministic role over his personality. This concept is seconded by Tomm (1998) who views self as *internalized other* and noted that individual identity embeds influences of all the people s/he meets or even hears about. The cultural influence however is not fixed and complete but it is fluid and continuously experiences an evolutionary process with time and place (Foucault, 1976; Hall, 1990; Haraway, 1991). These theorists claim that human personality is always in a process to negotiate with social influences. Interpellation is a passive process and it deals with the psychology of the individuals or group of people. It forms, modifies or subverts their ideologies and consciousness; its resistance, therefore, is found not physically but psychologically. The tussle between social forces and individual psychology creates a tug of war where individual mind oscillates between persuasion and resistance.

Psychoanalysis and Resistance to Ideology

Felluga (2001) observes that psychoanalysis tends to locate and analyze *microstructure of power* within the individual in relation to the individual's ideological systems. Resistance has been defined in psychological terms as an attitudinal stand against an attempt of persuasion or an intrinsic motivation to defy persuasive attempts (McGuire, 1964). Knowles & Linn (2004, p.6) argue that psychological is a "response to pressures for change, the source of resistance is sometimes attributed more to the person and sometimes attributed more to the situation." The ego plays an important role as an inner motivation to resist any threatening situation. The process of resistance can surge when the cultural or behavioral conflict arises. Human minds usually resist changes that challenge their long held beliefs and ideologies (Hahn & Cohen, 2009; Cohen et al., 2007). Brehm (1966) considers resistance as a form of "reactance" which originates when one's freedom of choice is threatened by outside forces. When a person feels that someone else is restricting him/her to freely act according to one's own will s/he is bound to react and resist that limitation of freedom. The resistance can also appear when an individual challenges the authority of established social beliefs and system. Interestingly, other researchers (Cohen, 1964; McGuire, 1964) hold that resistance is not the opposite of persuasion but it is an unconscious process which enables an individual to protect his/her self-esteem & personal values, and helps sustaining individual identity (Pitman & Heller 1987; Steele, 1988). This makes psychological resistance as a protector and projector of individual-identity. Jacks & Cameron (2003) observed that *protection of self* is among various other major intrinsic motivations for psychological resistance against persuasions.

Freud (1957, 1959, 1962, 1966; A Freud, 1946, 1993) asserts that the process of resistance is embedded in unconscious mind which resists the social persuasion

to maintain individual identity. So, while interpellation works from the outside, resistance operates from within the individual and both share power practices simultaneously. Nonetheless social pressures assert an authority over the individual self which is very difficult to overcome. Freud termed this process as 'Defense Mechanism' which operates at unconscious level to encounter the anxiety producing situation and save the 'ego'. For Freud defense mechanism is a psychological force which counters the human aggressive and sexual drives and impulses. Human beings generally want to hold a positive view of them but if they feel that their self-image is in a threatening state, there is a need of a mechanism to counter such situations. These processes are generally known as Defense Mechanisms (Crammer, 1991, A Freud, 1936). Clark (1998) maintains that Freud described 17 distinct defenses whereas majority of them were almost similar yet Anna Freud (1966) prescribed two main motives for defense: anxiety and guilt. Fenichel (1945) believed that the protection of self-esteem is the primary motive behind projection of defense mechanisms in human mind. Thus in contemporary psychoanalytical theories, the defense mechanisms are observed in psycho-social perspectives which doesn't come in conflict with Freudian defense mechanisms but broadens its scope and implications. (Fenichel, 1945; Kohut, 1977; Crammer, 1991; Baumeister Dale, &Sommer, 1998).

Robert Feldman(2011) explains defense mechanism precisely under 8 main categories: Repression, Displacement, Rationalization, Denial, Projection, Sublimation, Reaction formation.

Interpellation by ISAs and Psychological Resistance by the Protagonist in *The Outsider*

The Boss: The most immediate interpolative agent to whom the reader is exposed is Meursault's Boss who symbolically represents *authority at workplace*. In the very beginning of the novel the readers are introduced to the protagonist, Mr. Meursault whose mother has just died and he wants to take leave from his office. For this purpose he goes to his boss who in response is not pleased with this. His displeased attitude and reluctance to answer reflect the process of socio-economic interpellation which is aimed to manipulate the protagonist.

"I asked my boss for two days off and he couldn't refuse under the circumstances. But he didn't seem pleased. I even said, 'it's not my fault.' He didn't answer" (3)

The *Boss* here stands as an Ideological State Apparatus of socio-economic interpellation. He is the representation of the ultimate authority at workplace to whom Meursault as a subordinate has to confirm obedience.

Three clauses in the above passage show the interpellation process:

1. He couldn't refuse under the circumstances

2. He didn't seem pleased

3. He didn't answer

These clauses project the process of interpellation as clause-1 shows that the boss is not willingly allowing Meursault to leave office and his reluctance works as pressure tactics to negatively influence him. Clause-2 depicts that he is made to think that his mother's death is an unpleasant event for the office work and Meursault is indirectly held accountable for it. His reluctance to answer Meursault's question (clause-3) gives impression that he is reinforcing his unpleasant behavior to increase the sense of guilt in him. Meursault expects that his boss would offer his condolences to him but the unpleasant behavior of the boss triggers the process of interpellation which pushes him in a justifying position. In this awkward situation the protagonist is more worried about the reaction of the boss than his mother's death. The feelings of sorrow, which is a natural reaction to death is immediately transformed to anxiety as a reaction to economic insecurity.

There is another occasion of interpellation when the Boss wants him to take the charge of the new branch of the business in Paris to which Meursault shows no interest. The boss shows disappointment with him and makes him feel that he lacks the essential spirit of a good businessman.

Following sentences here reflect the process Interpellation

- 1 You're a young man, and I imagine that sort of life must appeal to you.
- 2 He then asked me if I wasn't interested in changing my life
- 3 He looked upset and told me that I always evaded the question and that I had no ambition, which was disastrous in the business world.

The sentence-2 here shows that the boss tries to induce the conventional ideas of economic growth in Meursault's mind to determine his ways. He tries to make him believe that in an ideal life of a young man there must be a good job and social status. The phrase "changing my life" shows boss' thinking towards Meursault's current life; that his life is ordinary and cannot be regarded as *Ideal life*. The sentence-6 shows how Boss, as an ISA Agent, is making Meursault guilty for his dispirited attitude towards the job offer. The progress in business world is being conditioned with the high ambition and absence of ambition is shown as a disaster in this field. The boss interpellates Meursault into the fact that his current behavior is not suitable for his progress and that he should be motivated enough to change his socio-economic condition.

The response to the unpleasant behavior of the boss, the clause 'it's not my fault' project the idea that Meursault wants the boss to believe in him that he could not be held accountable for his mother's death. The immediate next thought in

Meursault's mind is that he should probably not have said that. This is what in Freudian terms regarded as *Moral Anxiety* (Freud,1937) which is a kind of guilt or shame arising from breaking moral or social codes. Sentence-9 reveals two aspects of psychological resistance: *Projection*; Meursault tries to project his own feelings of guilt in his boss. He further *rationalizes* the fact by considering that the he should not be held accountable for his mother's death, instead the boss should have paid condolences to him.

The Warden: The warden stands as a cultural ISA who endorses social codes and practices in his conversation with the protagonist. Meursault meets him when he goes to receive his mother's dead body and finds his first comment as a reproach; he clearly tries to make him feel guilty for keeping his mother in old people's home.

4 Mrs. Meursault came here three years ago. You were her only means of support.'

5 You're a young man, a different generation, and she must have been bored living with you." (4)

The Warden's comments exemplify how the process of persuasion and resistance operate at unconscious level. The clause "You were her only means of support" is an effort to transmit the idea in Meursault's mind that his mother was fully dependent on him and as a son he did not do much for her. In Sentence-11 the warden tries to make Meursault believe that he and his mother belonged to different generations with different tastes. The second clause in this sentence indirectly indicates that Meursault did not enjoy the company of his mother and considered her a burden. Through the ironic placement of idea, the warden indirectly blames Meursault for putting his mother away for his own fun.

These comments bring a sharp and immediate impact on Meursault's behavior, prior to this he was planning to visit Emmanuel's place to pay condolence for his uncle's death but there is a shift in his thinking altogether now. He starts justifying his position for keeping his mother in old age home.

"She cried a lot the first few days at the old people's home. But that was only because she wasn't used to it. After a month or two she'd have cried if she'd been taken out of the home because by then she was used to it. That's partly why during this last year I hardly ever went to see her anymore." (5)

Meursault's rationalization in the above passage reveals the working of *superego* which operates on the principle social norms and values. The act of keeping his mother at old-house is rational decision for Meursault and his mother, and for him there was no harm in doing so because of his job schedule and economic issues but Warden's reinforcement of social codes and traditions activates the defense mechanism and his mind oscillates between guilt and ego.

The Magistrate: The Magistrate represents two interpolative social institutions: law and religion. His interaction with Meursault during the trial replicates the conflict which existed between Meursault and other ideological apparatuses. He tries to interpellate him by using legal and religious ideologies. Holding a magistrate office he probes the motives behind shooting Arab and as a Christian he wants him to believe in God and repent for his crime which was conditioned with a religious sin. The simple confession and calmness of the protagonist disturb the magistrate and his quest to see him on his knees, begging for Christian mercy is reflected in following extracts.

The magistrate wants him to repent and beg for forgiveness. The text shows that the magistrate wants him to cry like a child, the way other criminals do. He tries to inject Christian ideology of repentance in him by painting his crime as a sin. The phrase 'waving his crucifix' shows that the magistrate wants him to be overwhelmed by religious signs which have a least effect on him. At the very beginning of their first conversation Meursault is showing resistance to the Magistrate's interpellation by saying 'I thought my case was very simple' to which he replies, 'That's your opinion'. The excerpts from their conversation show the beginning of the interpellation process.

The religious ISA is dominant in this conversation and the Magistrate endorses Christian ideologies in Meursault's life. The use of symbols and vocabulary like crucifix, repents, and believe *in God* proves to be an effort to challenge Meursault's self-beliefs of religion and law. As a nonbeliever in God, Meursault is branded as person with false consciousness which needs to be changed, and as a criminal his crime cannot be restricted to a legal case only but also to be tagged with a religious sin. "Ideology existing in a material ideological apparatus, prescribing material practices governed by a material ritual, which practices exist in the material actions of a subject acting in all consciousness according to his belief"(Althusser,1971:21). So, more than a criminal act of 'murder', it appears that he is being prosecuted for his crime of non-conformity to social norms.

The response of Meursault, however, is based on his resistance to accept these ideologies. He tries his utmost to keep his disbelief in God intact. His resistance can be seen when he denies believing in God and continues to show calmness. 'It had nothing to do with me and I told him so' (64). Meursault displays indifferent behavior towards the magistrate's preaching and as a sign of his resistance is later deciphered by him and he says, "I have never seen a soul as hardened as yours" (64)

The Prosecutor: The prosecutor, directed by his professional requirement, tries to convince the court that the crime of the protagonist is heinous for which he deserves a severe punishment. On the basis of the witnesses provided by the Warden and Caretaker, the prosecutor makes the most to prove him a *monster*. "And I felt something stirring up the whole room; for the first time I realized that I

was guilty". (83) The *ironic gleam* of the prosecutor makes him more conscious of his past apathetic behavior.

The questions which he asks from Marie tend to endorse more guilt in Meursault and prove to the court that his insensitivity towards his mother's death, and physical relation with Marie after his mother's funeral, has a direct link with the murder.

"The prosecutor who was leafing through a file asked her bluntly when our liaison had begun. She mentioned the date. The prosecutor remarked indifferently that it appeared to be the day after mother's death". (86)

The mentioning of *intercourse* and *Fernandel Film* in the court makes Meursault a moral criminal as well who did not mourn his mother well and returned to his life without any display of sentiments. "I accuse this man of burying his mother like a heartless criminal." (87) The prosecutor further accuses him for *shameful debaucher, unconscionable* and *heartless criminal* (89). "I accuse this man of burying his mother like a heartless criminal". This shows that Meursault was convicted more of defying social conventions than killing an Arab. His trial revolves much around his personal behavior than his actual crime. Meursault's lawyer questions this by saying, "But after all, is he being accused of burying his mother or of killing a man?"

The interpellation occurred at this level creates a disturbance in the Meursault's thinking. His response to this can be observed after the court adjourns. He draws his attention towards nostalgic smells, colors, cries of newspaper sellers, birds, trams and shouts of sandwich sellers (89). Freud terms this behavior as *Repression* where 'Unacceptable or unpleasant impulses are pushed back into the unconscious' (Feldman, 1993, p.443). Meursault's diversion of his attention towards the sounds and smells demonstrate the activation of his defense mechanism, he tries to escape the anxiety producing situation by taking abode in his past.

The Chaplain: The role of the Chaplain in the text is quite similar to that of Magistrate. He also attempts to impose the religious ideologies on Meursault. The chaplain tries to make Meursault feel guilty for his crime and he emphasizes that he must repent for his crime. He wants him to weep like a child as most of the criminals do before their execution. 'Every man that I've known in your position has turned towards Him.' (108). This interpellative strategy of the Chaplain is directed more towards fulfilling a social convention than an act of repentance, as Meursault is contented with the legal obligations and does not see his crime as a sin.

Meursault reacts to this interpellation, as ideas of life after death and condemnation are far beyond his understanding and he seems more concerned in his present but like the magistrate, the chaplain insists on thinking of the next world and purge his soul before departure from this mortal world. " 'my friend': it

wasn't because I was condemned to death that he was talking to me like that; in his opinion, we were all condemned to death' (108). Thus, symbolically anyone who refuses to follow the standard norms is considered dead by the society.

The interpellation of the chaplain is resisted by the protagonist but he doesn't stop endorsing his ideologies and remarks:

6 He told me that he pitied me.

7 According to him human justice was nothing and divine justice was everything.

8 He was expressing his certainty that I was burdened with a sin from which I must free myself.

9 'I am on your side. But you can't see that because your heart is blind. I shall pray for you.'(109-111)

Meursault's resistance to such emotional and religious appeals can be noted in his rejection of showing fear on facing the 'terrifying ordeal' and denial of turning towards religion.

10 I didn't have much time left. I didn't want to waste it on God.

11 I told him he wasn't my father: he was on the same side as the others.(110)

Despite Meursault's resistance, the chaplain's persuasive attempts do not fade out and this creates an outburst in Meursault and the following speech shows his frustration. Meursault's outburst reveals his inner tension which was haunting him unconsciously. His continuous resistance to the interpellation and his failure to neutralize the effect of social demands can be seen in this monologue. His mentioning of his mother's death, Salamano's dog, little automatic woman, Masson, and romance with Marie symbolize that all these events and people to whom he resisted weren't removed from his mind altogether and his unconscious self has remained in an unending conflict. This portrays the dilemma of metatmodern individual whose identity is a sum of various conflicting influences where self has to negotiate between multiple binaries. However on the call of super-ego Meursault tries to *Rationalize* the situation by generalizing his mother's death as a social phenomenon, i.e. instead of using 'I and my' he uses 'he and his'. Thus this monologue depicts the inner frustration of the protagonist which resulted due to the interpellative processes undertaken by various agents of ISA.

Marie & Old Salamano: Marie and Old Salamano are not projected as ISAs and they do not explicitly challenge Meursault's beliefs but they are representative of cultural power which according to Foucault is inevitable part of human relationships. The relationship between Meursault and Marie is not a complex one. Marie doesn't stand as ISA agent who deliberately tries to interpellate him yet she

expects more emotional attachment from him. Her insistence to express his feelings, which he lacks, creates an emotional space between the two.

Old Salamano is another passive ISA agent who does not directly challenge Meursault's beliefs but his emotional attachment with the dog stimulates the guilt in his mind. He feels that he has apathetic nature and he couldn't grieve his mother's death the way he should have. This sense of guilt can be analyzed soon after he sees the old Salamano weeping for his dog. "Then his bed creaked and from the peculiar little noise coming through the partition wall, I realized that he was crying. For some reason I thought of the mother." (37). Meursault unconsciously establishes a relationship between his lack of emotions for his mother and Salamano's desperate attachment with his dog.

Conclusion

This study investigated the play of interpellation and the psychological resistance in the novel. The chief objectives of the analysis were to examine how ISA agents propel their ideologies in the individual and to what extent the individual can psychologically resist to this interpellation. The framework for stylistic analysis of the text was based on the theories of Louis Althusser and Sigmund Freud specifically Interpellation via the ISAs and Defense Mechanism. The study found that the interpellation of the protagonist is visible at many occasions. Apparently, he is indifferent and guiltless character yet at several occasions he is found giving justifications for his actions. The ISA agents like the Magistrate, Warden, Prosecutor and Chaplain stand for religious and legal interpellating institutions while The Boss, Mother, Marie, and Salamano prove to be Family and Cultural ISA agents. We have tried to keep the focus of our investigation limited to the process of interpellation and resistance, and not dealt with the themes of the novel. It is evident from the analysis that the ideologies take control of human mind and it is very difficult to resist the process of social interpellation. As a result individuals who refuse to the ideological conditioning of the society tend to oscillate psychologically in between the notions of right and wrong ultimately giving in to psychological/moral confusion and little sense of achievement.

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