Non-Conceptual Negativity: Damaged Reflections on Turkey

Zafer Aracagök, Franco Berardi

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Along the length of the road that stretches from Edward Said to Gayatri Spivak, the constellation of Orientalism has hit the ground in unforeseeable ways. The critique of the Western subject, which constituted its own subjectivity by dominating and othering the East, has transformed into the project of the construction of the Eastern subject who, having already been secularized by enforced modernism, is forced once again to privatize the transcendental within the absence of an opposition as such.¹ Yet here Spivak has committed a big mistake: Islam has never been a religion that let its transcendental be privatized and the project has thus ended up in the obliteration of the subject and its surrender to the transcendental. If this is one of the basic reasons why today the masses who desire repression, exploitation, and domination have been successfully created, another should be sought in the unprivatizable transcendental’s capacity to be embodied in the figure of a profane despot in flesh and blood. Orientalism, which has turned into the preservation or the prolongation of the melancholia for the transcendental, is today a sinking ship.