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THE SCENE OF HUMILIATION

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Abstract: Embarrassment, shame and humiliation form a spectrum of negative emotions that are both self-conscious and other-regarding. This paper studies this spectrum to understand humiliation. Conventional studies on humiliation presuppose intersubjective mediation between the self and the other and a visceral disapproval of humiliation. This negative or symbolic relation between emotion and ethics has its root in the inability of modern practical reason to propose a theory of ethics. Based on Abhinavagupta and Damasio this paper proposes to look at emotions as impersonal, ownerless and desubjectivised. Emotion is the management of the supplementary nature of the self. Fandry, a Marathi film reveals the scene of humiliation as that of the hunt where intersubjective relations remain suspended.

Keywords: humiliation, decolonisation, emotion, shame, embarrassment, self-respect, ethics

Humiliation is a political emotion. It involves asymmetry in power or status and immediately raises the question of justice. Exploitation and domination set the stage for humiliation. Humiliation isolates the victim but often makes reference to dimensions of social existence like caste, race and gender. It is a self-conscious emotion and the humiliated suffers a global denigration of the way in which the self appears to itself. However it also involves the self's appearance to others – exposure of one's vulnerability or defect - to others. Humiliation can ignite indignation and can also lead to the proud assertion of identities and efforts to form non-humiliating collectivities.

Humiliation may be viewed as part of a spectrum of negative emotions including embarrassment and shame.[1] Normally, we do not want to see ourselves as experiencing these emotions. They are not happy emotions. They involve a negative evaluation of the self or the appearance of the self in front of others.[2] Often they are seen as forming a continuous spectrum. A lot of conceptual labor has gone into exploring the continuities and breaks in this spectrum of negative emotions. Some may see humiliation as an extreme form of shame and distinguish both from embarrassment. It is also possible to put embarrassment and shame together and distinguish them from humiliation. Embarrassment is the result of our perceived inadequacy in the light of social mores or etiquette whereas shame involves strong moral evaluation. In embarrassment one suffers from diminished self-esteem whereas in shame we lose our self-respect. On this scale, humiliation involves global destruction of self-respect. In embarrassment and shame we hide our face and wish to disappear. However, humiliation does not leave us with any such escape routes. Humiliating stereotypes and nicknames immobilise us. We shall stay away from these debates on classification and try to follow the labor of the negative that is at work in these emotions.

The negativity associated with these emotions is not prescriptive. This negativity could be the harbinger of positive relations with the self and others. Having a sense of shame may be seen as necessary to a moral life by way of a critical attitude towards our shameful conduct. We are concerned about our appearance to others because others and their views about us matter to us. We endorse those standards and evaluate ourselves according to these standards. In shame I avert the looks of others by covering my face and not the face of others. I cover my face because I am hiding from myself too. I am not hiding from the hostile reactions of others but from an attitude that I have internalised. In a caste-ridden society we may expect an oppressed caste to recognise their condition as humiliating in order to break free and establish a decent society. So negative emotions harbor the potential for positive transformations.

Ethics aims at the transformation of emotions. Such transformation involves one’s relationship with one-self and also with others. How does humiliation come to be, create indignation, and lead to resistance? What is the locus of emotion if we were to track this transformation? How does a self-deprecating emotion which makes you want to disappear from the world form solidarities to resist and change humiliating situations?

Decolonising Humiliation / Shame

Humiliation and shame occupy pride of place in the emotional world of de-colonisation. The project of decolonising theory has its root in the European experience of shame about the involvement of its concepts and discourses in colonialism. Humiliation suffered by the colonised is also one of the triggers of decolonisation. The shame felt by the western academic in responding to this humiliation, using the very western categories whose deployment was instrumental in generating this feeling, also drives the project of decolonising theory. Paradoxically, it is the same western theory that enabled the colonised to feel their situation as humiliating and respond with indignation. For example, conversion to Christianity and English education have enabled the lower castes in India to recognise their living conditions as humiliating. However the self-critical decolonising mind looks at Christianity and English education as part of a colonial imposition. A revisionist decoloniser may claim that the very idea of caste is a colonial construct. Such radical decolonising criticism can undermine the very experience of humiliation experienced by the lower castes. Thus the decolonising critical discourse can, on the one hand, trivialise the emotional response of the colonised and thereby humiliate them further, and, on the other, create a sense of shame within themselves for its emancipatory theoretical impulses. While the west makes it imperative for all other provinces to celebrate their difference it is ashamed of its own difference. The critical discourse from the west tries to undo its own binaries, but, 'without being bruised by the fragments' (Visker 145).

It is often said that the west privileges reason while the east celebrates emotion. The fear that emotions and sensations could cloud reason is perhaps universal and was shared by all traditions of thought. Even in the west philosophers from Spinoza to Damasio are concerned with the potential of emotions to transform themselves and those who experience them thereby acting to augment resources for the powers of reason. It is true that, both in the cognitive and moral domains, the rational modern subject is expected to maintain autonomy from the turbulence of emotions. However, as modern western thinkers such as Kant have shown us, in the aesthetic domain, emotions, even when given a free play, indirectly or symbolically indicate our moral destiny and the resilience of our cognitive powers. The idea of the autonomy of the aesthetic domain comes from a certain interpretation of western modernity. This interpretation has been questioned by philosophers from Gadamer to Rancière.

The project of decolonising emotions that starts with an alleged denigration of emotion in the west and then proceed to search for the celebration of emotion in the east will continue to play out colonial anxieties about difference. It is equally presumptuous to expect the availability of an emotion-dominant theory in the east. Critical history has shown that some well-known candidates for such a theory such as the theory of *rasa*, were given a theoretical status and brought into relation with aesthetic practices as part of the colonial nationalist project of inventing a national art and heart.

How does the shame of the colonised encounter the shame of the decolonising western academic? Can these shames come face to face? The contemporary revivalist tendencies in Indian theory demand extreme vigilance from western decolonisers and their Indian comrades. For example, the *rasa* theory of Abhinavaguta is an obvious choice for those who look towards Indian ideas on emotion to decolonise western theories of emotion. However, we now hear that Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS) the Hindu nationalist organisation, has decided to celebrate Abhinavagupta as part of its cultural and political maneuvering in Kashmir (Pathak). RSS glorifies the brahminical image of the past and legitimises caste. Should we here appeal to the western binary between thought and its context and isolate the thought of Abhinavagupta from its political appropriations? How do we respond to the humiliation of the Dalits that may be worsened by the brahminical appropriation and denigration of their emotional universe?

Shame: Self and Other

Sartre describes a paradigmatic situation of shame. Someone who peeps into a hotel room through the keyhole will be ashamed when he is caught unawares by approaching footsteps in the corridor (Sartre, 2003: 301). To feel ashamed he need not directly encounter the other. The look of the other is always on me. Shame is at once a self- conscious and other-regarding emotion. A phenomenologist like Dan Zahavi sees this Sartrean situation of shame as attesting to the interpersonal nature of the self (Zahavi 214).

We matter to ourselves, and to others. Our self-regard conceptually involves the regard for others. We feel ashamed because others' attitude towards us makes us realise our defects. It has been argued that embarrassment is caused by one's failure to meet social expectations. Those embarrassed need not have accepted the values implied by the expectations. However, he is concerned about his appearance for others.Shame, it has been argued, involves a stronger moral evaluation and deeper sense of the self. Here, one sees oneself as falling short of a moral standard that one has acknowledged as valid. Dan Zahavi has vigorously argued against seeing shame as being based on an entirely intrapersonal evaluation, independent of the evaluation of others. Even someone who is ashamed in his own eyes has the look of an implied other casts upon him.

However, Sartre's description of shame does not wholeheartedly endorse an intersubjective account. The look of the other fixes me as an immobile look stuck to the keyhole. I am fixed to a point of view that I cannot assume as my own. Shame reveals a mode of consciousness that is mine, but not a being-for me. I see myself as this being for the other.

It is not that his look fixes me as an object that lacks freedom. It is my nature to be that thing fixed by his look. The other's existence is my fall. It is not the look of the other that matters but the other as look. This 'me' fixed by the look does not belong to my possibilities. 'It is the limit of my freedom, its "backstage" in the sense that we speak of "behind the scenes".' It is given to me as a burden which I carry without ever being able to turn back to know it, without even being able to realise its weight.' (Sartre, 2003: 262). I am separated from this background-being by the nothingness of the other's freedom. By my shame I claim the other's freedom as mine. The look of the other embraces everything in my world. My world flows towards the other and I fall into this flow along with the door and the keyhole. Thus the look causes an internal hemorrhage of my world. Along with the world I flow out of myself.

For Sartre, the existence of the other is my fall. The other is hell. Zahavi who insists on the intersubjective relation between the self and other views this as an extreme position and rejects it. It is in humiliation that the other is hell. The violence that remains contained in shame and embarrassment hits without reserve in humiliation. In shame one covers one's face. The humiliated is totally immobilised. In humiliation, one is subjected to an insidious control by others leading to a destruction of one's self-respect and self- control. We shouldn't be surprised if the humiliated join the obscene laughter of the perpetrators. It shows the collapse of mutual understanding that triumphs.

In shame one takes the evaluation of others seriously. It acknowledges our shared moral life where others matter. One endorses the other's evaluation about one's deficiency. This does not mean that we need to accept any specific moral value of the other. Zahavi discusses the case of a secular woman who wears a *niquab* because she respects the feeling of others in the community. She feels shame if she happens to come before others without the niquab. This does not mean that she accepts the value of wearing the niquab. She values the recognition of others. However, her humiliation as the stereotyped 'muslim' target presupposes a disruption in inter-subjective mediation between the self and the other. The names hit and wound instead of addressing her self.

The humiliated need not accept the evaluation of those who humiliate. One may think that the shame one experiences is a well deserved one. This is unlikely in the case of humiliation. There seems to be a clash between one's self-assessment and the perception of others. One is degraded to an unacceptable level. The shared moral values and moral life collapse. Humiliation is felt as unfair. It may lead to revenge and hatred towards the humiliating other. For Zahavi, humiliation is a transitory state that would either induce shame or lead to hatred. Both these are expected to reestablish the intrapersonal and interpersonal status of the subject destroyed by humiliation. The violence of shame that causes an internal hemorrhage in the self and the world is missing in Zahavi's reading of Sartre.

Recollecting an experience of humiliation from the past brings out the disjunction in the subject. "How could I be the one who underwent that experience?" is the question through which one recollects a past experience of humiliation. I could not have been the subject of that experience. The experience was undergone by me. The experience I recollect has the feature of being experienced by a self. I know what it meant to undergo that experience in the past. However, I can fit that experience into my autobiography only as already always disowned. Borrowing a distinction from Galen Strawson between the episodic self and diachronic self (or narrative self), we may say that the episodic self which underwent the humiliation in the past may not fit in smoothly with the narrative self (Strawson, 2004). (This resistance to narrativisation brings the memory of humiliation close to déjà vu in which I have the experience of a past which does not belong to my autobiography. I have the memory of an experience that does not belong to my past.)

Here we may note efforts ranging from Max Scheler (Emad, 1972) to Martha Nussbaum (Nussbaum, 2004) to theorise shame as an intrapersonal affect. According to Nussbaum we are susceptible to a primitive shame that is prior to the acquisition of any sense of normality or shared moral values. Based on object-relations psychoanalysis she argues that shame manifests our vulnerability to the pressures of reality. It has its origin in our primary narcissism that entertains aspirations and ideas regarding us. Shame is a response to our deficiencies and our dependence on transitional objects that are external and unpredictable. The association between sexuality and shame is also seen as evidence for this primordial vulnerability. Zahavi is correct in not taking this account as an exclusively intrapersonal theory of shame. The lesson from object-relation psychoanalysis is that our sense of the self is dependent on exteriorisation and dependence on transition objects. Our response to our imperfection is prior to any sense of perfection. As psychoanalysis clarifies, the transition object does not exist. It has no 'fact to the matter' that fulfills or supplements any preexisting lacuna. A theory of shame that misses this point mayfind its ground either in an innate sense of self worth – as in Nussbaum – or in the availability of an implied other – as in Zahavi. Inter-subjectivity and a visceral refusal of evil remain the horizons for such theorising.

Avishai Margalit argues that if humiliation involves a total destruction of self-respect for the victim then it could be self-defeating (Margalit, 1996). A humiliating situation renders the victim's self respect to justifiably plummet.[3] Only those who have self-respect can be humiliated. Even the perpetrator has to minimally acknowledge the value of self-respect. If the victim loses self-respect totally, he/she will no longer be humiliated. Margalit sees the situation of humiliation as unfolding within a master – slave dialectic. The humiliator is an aspirant to omnipotence. He wants his absolute superiority to be recognised by the victim. Such recognition has value only if it comes from a free human being who is minimally in control of himself. The victim sees his impotence in comparison with the inflated self-importance of the perpetrator. The perpetrator behaves as if the victim is non-human. However, at the ontological level, it does not deny humanity to the victim. The freedom of the victim is curtailed in order to show that he is not treated as a human being. Though humiliation is possible, it is self-defeating. However, its success is its failure too. Conversely, in every humiliating situation we can see the promise for a non-humiliating society.

However, Margalit acknowledges that this master-slave dialectic of mutual recognition may not be available in institutionally conducted acts of humiliation (Margalit 181), for example, the acts of humiliation conducted by clerks, policemen and officials who act under the cover of an institutional framework. Such perpetrators, or institutions, do not demand any recognition from the victim. Margalit tries to reformulate the wounding of self-respect outside the demand for mutual recognition. He identifies three important features that provide justification for the victim to feel humiliated – exclusion from the human community, loss of human control, institutional practices that treat human beings as subhumans. These features are aspects of a symbolic cruelty which violates self-respect. An act by which a human being is humiliated in one of these features represents a cruelty which ought to be morally avoided. One may feel justifiably humiliated even by a worthless person. One may find one's own living conditions humiliating. Here, the humiliator is not an individual. The victim's reasons for feeling degraded need not refer to the value of the one who degrades.

Margalit begins his book on the normative foundations of a decent society with a detailed analysis of humiliation. This negative beginning is based on the hope that the normative principle to avoid humiliation will offer a foundation for a decent society. Negation of decency will provide moral percepts to move towards a positive account of a normative society. It is not easy to provide a positive account of decency. But no one disputes the claim that any society worthy of a future should not allow humiliation.

Human reason's ability to pursue positive values may be weak but it hasn't lost the ability to turn away from evil. This move at once acknowledges the impossibility of ethics and also its indirect or symbolic availability at the heart of our visceral disapproval of evil.

Modern moral philosophy locates the sources of normativity in our reactive attitudes towards others or in commitments implicit in our communicative interactions. Even though morality no longer seeks its ground in substantive notions of good, acts of apologising, addressing, avoiding humiliation, etc. reveal our implicit normative commitments. The non-availability of substantive ideas of the good is not seen as a lack. Our ignorance of the moral law makes freedom possible. By submitting himself to a law whose content he does not know, the moral agent contracts the possibility of guilt even before committing himself to any action. Such is the negative relation that characterises the respect of moral law.

Emotion and Ethics: Limits of the Ontology of Finitude

According to Foucault, the modern west is unable to produce a positive ethics. He attributes the impossibility of a positive ethics to the primacy of practical reason endorsed in modernity.

Modern thought has never, in fact, been able to propose a morality. But the reason for this is not because it is pure speculation; on the contrary, modern thought, from its inception and in its very density, is a certain mode of action. Let those who urge thought to leave its retreat and formulate its choices talk, and let those who seek, without any pledge and in the absence of virtue, to establish a morality do as they wish. For modern thought, no morality is possible. Thought had already 'left' itself in its own being as early as the nineteenth century; it is no longer theoretical. As soon as it functions it offends or reconciles, attracts or repels, breaks, dissociates, unites or reunites; it cannot help but liberate and enslave. Even before prescribing, suggesting a future, saying what must be done, even before exhorting or merely sounding an alarm, thought, at the level of its existence, in its very dawning, is in itself an action – a perilous act (Foucault, 2001: 357).

At least since Kant, modern western philosophy has accepted and celebrated the primacy of practical reason. The facticity of man – often called the human condition – becomes the condition of the possibility of knowledge and action. The three foundational questions of modern critical thought – What can I know? What should I do? What can I hope for? – presuppose the question "what is man?" Man is at once the ground of all positivities and an element in empirical things. The conditions of possibility of his object of experience are the same as the conditions of possibility of his experience. Man cannot know the world independently of his relationship with the world. He cannot get out of his representations and know the thing in itself. He is destined to gather himself from his own limits. His limits open him to freedom. Such is the ontological finitude of man. Finite reason oscillates between transcendental and empirical employments. The moral law does not tell us what we ought to think about what we should do.

In many ancient traditions of thought, ethics was the achievement of theoretical reason. They did not privilege action nor gave primacy to the question, "what should one do?" There were rules of conduct to guide actions. The good was not necessarily ascribed to actions. The task of serious ethical reflection was to free oneself from the bondages of action. Aristotle is often seen as the liberator of western thought from the speculative haven of Platonism. He is credited for bringing reason closer to the empirical world, and to everyday moral concerns. However, even his *Nichomachean Ethics* takes up action as an end in itself and his theoretical accounts do not always aim at action-guiding. However, for modern western philosophy, Aristotle is the source for a practical ontology of being (Sanil, 2013: 409).

Theories of intersubjectivity that are elaborated in terms of communicative rationality, dialectics of mutual recognition between the self and the other and the phenomenological chasm between the visible and the invisible are extensions of this ontology of finitude. Neither the linguistic turn in Anglo-American philosophy nor the hermeneutical turn in phenomenology escape what Foucault diagnosed as the interminable oscillation between the transcendental and the empirical. Thought is incapable of an immanent relationship with being. Thought can access being only by getting entangled in history, body, language etc. Vain attempts to master this entanglement lead either to positivism or to the Kantian criticism of limits. Both make ethics unknowable. Theories of humiliation that are based on intersubjectivity and mutual recognition appeals to the good that is in principle unknowable. They can only count on our visceral or juridical disapproval of humiliation conditions.

This does not mean that Foucault's diagnosis implies a total dismissal of the entirety of modern philosophy. He was detecting traps, monstrous possibilities and fault-lines within modern thought as part of pointing out routes of escape that open to an outside. Sartre, by placing the transcendental structure of existence not in consciousness but in 'the look' offers a way to formulate shame outside the phenomenological consciousness. However, this way of thinking is unavailable within existentialism as humanism. Sartre's most radical insight may not be available within the unified philosophical view ascribed to him. Existentialist ontology uses irony and the absurd to propose the absence of ethics as ethics.

Agamben explicitly poses the question of shame as a question about the impossibility of ethics in his study on the paradigmatic case of Auschwitz. He has shown that after Auschwitz, the self-other relationship modeled on tragedy can no longer furnish an ethics of shame/humiliation (Agamben 95). The Muselmann, the inhabitant of the camp, disrupts the link between humanity and dignity. He belongs to a zone of humanity where notions like dignity and self-respect have no place. 'This is the specific ethical aporia of Auschwitz: it is the site in which it is not decent to remain decent, in which those who believed themselves to preserve their dignity and self-respect experience shame with respect to those who did not' (Agamben 60). An ethics which sees in humiliation only a juridical command to turn towards the ideal of decent society or a theological self-humiliation of god, refuses to address the grey zone of the Muselmann who has shamefully survived the undignified death of victims. This shame in figure of the 'autistic' Muselmann makes no reference to dignity or decency. Modern ethics which is contaminated by juridical notions such as guilt, responsibility, pardon etc. cannot see the shameful situation in the camp where the perpetrator and victim do not map onto notions of the self and the other.

Fandry: The Scenes of Humiliation

Fandry (2013), a Marathi film directed by Nagraj Manjule, constructs vivid scenes of caste-based humiliation where all social or human ties are suspended. This film tells the story of a family belonging to a lower caste whose traditional occupation is catching and maintaining pigs. Jabiya, the youngest son of the family goes to school and is fascinated by a girl, Shalu, in his class who belongs to the upper caste. He tries out fashionable clothes, new hairstyles and black magic to appear decent to the girl and get her attention – but in vain. A pig pollutes a temple procession and Jabiya's family is asked to capture it. The film ends with a long sequence where Jabiya and family were made to hunt for the pig outside the school wall and were watched by his schoolmates and other villagers who ridiculed the pig hunters. Shalu was also among spectators of the scene of humiliation. After the hunt, while walking away with the captured pig, a group of boys follow the family and continue to make fun of them. Finally, Jabiya, turns around, and throws a stone at the humiliators, breaking the lens of the camera that has always been the spectator of the scene of humiliation.

The movie sets up the scene of humiliation as a scene of the pig hunt. The family that chases the dirty animal degrade themselves in the eyes of the onlookers. The hunters become the victims in the eyes of the laughing crowd. The hunter-victim relation between the family and the crowd is also reversed in front of the camera which in turn becomes a victim of Jabiya's stone. This is not the only hunting scene in the film. From the beginning Jabiya hunts for a mystic black bird whose ash is believed to have the power to attract the attention of a woman across caste boundaries and skin colors. In some sense his pursuit of the girl is also a hunt.

What is the significance of making hunting the stage for humiliation? Chamayou has argued that the manhunt is an ontological situation of our social existence (Chamayou, 2012). This is irreducible to war, struggle for recognition, or communicative interaction. Hunt is the operation of what Chamyou calls a cynegetic power. A hunt is not a confrontation; it is a chase. The relation between the hunter and the prey is unequal and asymmetrical. The prey is not an enemy who demands recognition as an equal. The hunt does not belong to the war of nature or the cultural conversation of mankind. The hunt is not a duel and involves a third party – the Muselmann in the Nazi concentration camp, or the dog in royal hunts. Hunt characterises the situation of colonial regimes, slavery and refugees.

According to Chamayou the hunt does not obey the dialectic of master-slave (Chamayou 34). The latter shows how the unequal power between the master and the slave unfolds as a struggle for the mutual recognition of their equality which they achieve through the labour of the negative. The master risks his life while the slave who is scared of taking risk accepts unfreedom. However, the master comes to recognise his dependence on the labour of the slave and the slave rises to the awareness that he has nothing to lose but his chains. The master-slave dialectics presupposes that the option of risking life was available to the slave. The slave who is already a prey does not have that option. He is on the run and survival is his only option. The prey with his intelligence might reconstruct the movement of the hunter in his own body and thereby invert the relationship with the hunter. The hunter could be turned into a prey, chased, trapped and killed. However, at no point does the hunt appeal to any shared normative presuppositions of mutual interaction or collective existence. The hunt offers no sign of moral progress or any value orientations for a future coexistence. It could offer the proper scene for humiliation.

Fandry shows that humiliation takes place in a scene where the ethical is suspended. All members of the family are engaged in the pig chase. However, the chase causes the family to disintegrate. The father throws stones at Jabiya who is reluctant to join the chase. During the chase, the sister runs into men defecating in public and is shamed. While they try hard to drive the hiding pig into the open, the hunters – individually and collectively – are on the brink of a humiliated disappearance. The camera shows them in this disgusting disappearance. In the focused and intense physical activity of the chase they are revealed as being on par with the hunted animal. Having lost all control of the dignified postures of their human bodies, they cannot even cover their faces. Jabiya acts from this vulnerability and blinds the camera.

As we said earlier, hunting is a subhuman situation that pervades human existence from slavery to the surveillance state. Humanity is not involved in an ongoing cultural conversation or defined by an avoidance of bestial (?) war. It is said that the victims of Nazi humiliation and extermination did not offer any visible resistance. Humiliation paralyses the body and denies self-control. Humiliation is not a justified response to this loss, but the loss itself. A prey on the run cannot be expected to hold its ground, strategise and fight back. Hitting back at the humiliating crowd and breaking the camera lens is not a calculated action to put an end to a humiliating situation. In that act, Jabiya, who is unable to hide his face, blinds the eye of the other.

In an earlier scene, we see the family standing at the mouth of a cave throwing stones inside to drive out the hiding pig. This scene is shot from inside the cave, the camera taking the point of view of the pig struggling to escape the stones. Here the camera too is a potential victim of the hunter’s stones. By luck, the camera survives this attack. The camera can now face the world only with the sense of shame of the lucky survivor. It witnesses the rest of the scene as a shameful survivor. It can no loner occupy the point of view from which it has been viewing the world. Jabiya’s stone, like the Sartrean look, attempts to fix the camera to its point of view. Here, the directorial decision to end the film coincides with destruction of the camera. This is also the moment where Jabiya transforms the prey-hunter relationship to that of enmity toward the humiliating crowd. Humiliation transforms into hatred and destroys the scene of humiliation. The film ends with humiliation turning into hatred and hunt into resistance. However, this cannot be represented from any standpoint – neither that of the humiliated, nor the perpetrator, nor from the neutral position of the camera. An emotion in motion is not housed in any of them.

Ownerless Emotions – Abhinavagupta and Antonio Damasio

Emotions are supposed to be felt and owned by a feeler. You cannot have an emotion without feeling it. The assumption is that you can only feel those emotions that are your own. Having an emotion is necessary for feeling and knowing and also expressing it. However, the aesthetics of Abhinavagupta and the neurobiology of Damasio allow us to think about ownerless emotions. Emotions may be generated in a scene before they are ascribed to any subject.

In a novel or play, who is the owner of emotions? – Is it the author or the character, actor or the reader/viewer? Both in western and classical Indian aesthetics several arguments have been produced to deny that any of the above is the owner of the emotions. This answer is partly motivated by the enigma of aesthetic experience where we relish even unpleasant and negative emotions.

In an insightful interpretation of Abhinavagupta, Arindam Chakrabarti shows that for the former, aesthetically relishable emotions are ownerless (Chakrabarti, 2009). The object of aesthetic relish is an extra-worldly emotion that combines feeling-exciters (*vibhava*), expressive consequents (*anubhava)* and transient feelings (*vyabhichari)*. *Rasa* is the experiencing of this stable sentiment produced by the mechanism of determinants, consequences and supports. In order for this to be relishable, the sentiment should be delinked from the personal or depersonalised.

Neither the actor nor the audience is the seat of emotion. Emotion is taken in through a distinct mode of apperception. This involves universalisation and is distinct from experience, memory, or appearance. Universalisation is a process of de-subjectivisation. We can experience love without ascribing it to a bearer as 'I am in love' or 'he is in love'. We may relish the beauty of Parvati seen through the eyes of Shiva. The relishing is neither Shiva's nor mine. The experiencing self is at ease with this impersonal experience. (There is no need for us to understand this easiness along the lines of a disciplined spectator of modern western theatre who sit glued to the paid seat with minimal expression of appreciation or even a couch potato in front of the home TV.) This relishing is not a subjective act at a deeper level. Instead, it is the accomplishment of a de-subjectivisation. It is not that emotions are produced and then relished. It is in the act of relishing that the essence or juice of emotions comes to be. The experiencer sees himself not as the subject but as woven by the strands of emotion. He identifies with the emotion but not as its bearer. To make this possible he has to leave behind his personal and worldly concerns as he steps into the theatre.

We do not run away while relishing a fearful movie scene. This is not because we merely entertain the thought of the fearful without asserting its reality but because we delink the tie between the emotion and our ego. The fear we experience is not my fear or the character's or actor's fear. It is a de-personalised fear in general. This fear dwells in an opening which is the logical space of infinite becoming.

According to the myth of the origin-drama, the art is created as a pedagogy to bring the emotion-driven people to the right path through play. However, as Chakrabarti clarifies, this is not an apologia for a didactic play with a message. It may be argued that the conception of depersonalised emotion is applicable only in the aesthetic domain. Only *aloukik* or non-worldly emotions that we experience in art have this feature and not the mundane or *laukik* feelings. As we indicated earlier, after Gadamer and Rancière, we are under no compulsion to accept the thesis about the autonomy of the aesthetic domain. If we give up the idea of the autonomy of art we could hold that what we experience in art is our original relationship with any emotion. Art puts us in touch with the origin of emotions in a desubjectivised space. Art teaches us what it means to be in a state of emotion. It is an apprenticeship to feeling emotions while overcoming the obstacle of having it. One relishes the emotion not as its subject; one can feel it only through desubjectivation.

We learn from Damasio that feelings are not mental residues of our real life encounters. He distinguishes between emotions and feelings. Emotions are the body's response to certain stimuli. This is an unconscious and automatic response. When we are afraid of something, our hearts beat faster, mouths go dry. We experience the feeling of fear when we become aware in our brain of these physical changes. The brain records in neural maps what is going on in our body. Feelings occur when these maps are read. These records are compiled in many somato-sensory centers in the brain.

The proto-self is a coherent collection of neuronal patterns which map, moment by moment, the state of the physical structure of the organism in its many dimensions. This ceaselessly maintained first-order collection of neuronal patterns occurs not in one brain place but in many, at a multiplicity of levels, from the brain stem to the cerebral cortex, in structures that are interconnected by neuronal pathways. These structures are intimately involved in the process of regulating the state of the organism. The operations of acting on the organism and of sensing the state of the organism are closely tied (Damasio 169).

The experiencer of the emotion is a decentered proto-self. When I say I am afraid, there are many proto-selves which need not share a causal or narrative identity with me. It is not necessary for the brain to have external stimuli to feel. As well, the brain may ignore signals and hence need not feel all the emotions. Emotion is a reflexive structure through which vital regulations are affected.
We might then conclude that *the foreignness of the inside to itself* born of the intensity of excitation from internal sources, would be, in reality, *managed from within the nervous system* in a functional and interactive manner, thanks exclusively to the collaboration of several *cerebral* agencies (Malabou, 2012: 39).

Emotion is the management of the foreignness of our interior. It arises from the play of several agencies internal to us. The brain is the scene of this play. It is the scene and not a substrate of emotions.

Damasio insists that this proto-self is not a little person inside us. It is a dynamic interaction between various centers at different parts and orders of neural activity. It is not an interpreter. 'It is a reference point at each point where it is.' It is unlocalisable, dynamic and dispersed.[4] Such is the neural basis of our impersonality.

Abhinavagupta and Damasio show the way for generalising the lack of self-coincidence we located in the experience of humiliation. Emotion in general is a management of this non-coincidence. Externalisation and supplementation are constitutive of the self. It is through emotional learning and management that the feeling subject gets access to the self. This lesson enables us to think about shame and humiliation outside the dialectic between the self and other and their mutual recognition. Emotion is learning and one needs to learn one's way into emotions. One of the tasks of a theory of emotions is to furnish a manual for this learning.

Let me clarify that our effort to learn from Abhinavagupta and Damasio is not based on any revivalist claim that the former anticipated the latter. Nor do I hold that the modern neurobiologist provides physical explanation to the claims the ancient aesthetician made about the mental life of emotions. Each supplements the other without anticipating or providing fulfilment. These theories come from different traditions with their own intellectual contexts and objectives. An ancient aesthetic theory with *tantric* ambitions remains as alien to us as modern neurobiological research with its investment in cumulative growth in knowledge. However, we can use fragments of the one to illuminate fragments of the other and hope to form a constellation of concepts that could bring some intelligibility to our problem at hand. Abhinavagupta and Damasio help us to think about the ideas of de-subjectivisation and universalisation both on the mental and neuronal registers with a focus on emotions. This enables us to study humiliation without presupposing the availability of intersubjective interaction between the self and the other.

The idea of impersonal emotion denies the victim any immediate or privileged access to the emotional world of humiliation. This will also challenge the claim that members of a community or caste have privileged access to certain experiences. Such claims are made to celebrate Dalit autobiography as articulating experiences which are lived and hence can be narrated only by Dalits. Gopal Guru has strongly criticised such celebrations and denied autobiography its exclusive access to Dalit experiences (Guru, 2012). He expects theory to claim Dalit experience. His criticism of autobiography and art in general is directed against their claim to internal access to experiences. Once autobiography, like theory, acknowledges the impersonal nature of emotions and works with disjunction between the episodic and the narrative self then it could also make claims on the symbolic misery of humiliation. Then literature andMart become part of our apprenticeship to play on the scene of emotions – experiencing and also transforming them.

NOTES

1 Theories of emotions often privilege one emotion as paradigmatic and see others as derivatives or transformations. For Heidegger anxiety has an ontological primacy. In the classical Indian tradition we find debates about the primacy of one emotion over others. Abhinavaguta took *santam* (peace) as the primary emotion whereas Bhoja privileged *sringaram*(love), Bhavabhuti *karunam* (compassion) and Naraya Pandithar, *adbhutam* (surprise). This paper examines the spectrum of embarrassment, shame and humiliation to bring the last into focus.

2 Fear, disgust and hatred form another spectrum of negative emotions. I have explored this spectrum to study the composition of hatred in (Sanil, 2010). We negatively evaluate those whom we hate. It is not merely that we see at least some characteristics of the object of hatred as unacceptable. The hated one suffers a global denigration in our eyes. We wish the object of hatred to die. In shame we wish to hide from others. In hatred we wish to rebuild the world without the hated. However, the negative labor of hate can break with the escalating logic of revenge and open up the possibility of love. The Greek tragedy *Medea* unfolds this trajectory of hatred.

[3] An epistemological approach to emotions focuses on the justifiable grounds for a rational subject to have those emotions. Accepting the evaluation of others that one is lacking in some significant aspect could justify one's feeling of shame. That one is not counted as a human being by others could justify one's feeling of humiliation. These reasons could also furnish the grounds for a non-humiliating society. An ontological approach, on the other hand, uncovers the existential conditions for the emotions. Intersubjective relations between the self and the other could be the ontological ground for shame and humiliation. Shame and humiliation attest to the fact of being human and cannot be avoided. They hide in every nook and corner of human existence. This study would like to address the epistemological issue after a critical appraisal of the ontology of human finitude and intersubjectivity. We need to learn to enter the scene of emotions and to experience them. However this learning is not undertaken from the standpoint of the subject.

[4] 'The story contained in the images of core consciousness is not told by some clever homunculus. Nor is the story really told by you as a self because the core you is only born as the story is told, within the story itself. You exist as a mental being when primordial stories are being told, and only then; as long as primordial stories are being told, and only then. You are the music while the music lasts' (Damasio 191).

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