

恥的現象學

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課程設計

The soft music of shame

In the preliminaries of this seminar, I would like to present some remarks on the current “rhetoric of shame”. In brief: why are we more and more frequently inclined to say “I’m ashamed of this and that” (I’m not directly responsible of) rather than: “I object firmly to this or, I completely disagree with that, I radically disavow this or that”? All this, in particular, when political or public matters are at issue... What is this shift of the human subject (of the contemporary citizen) towards “sentimentality”, what is the exhibition of his/her moral suffering a sign of? What is surfacing on such occasions – a kind of “politics of shame” - or, on the opposite, the very negation of what politics should be? What does this way of *staging* shame (the intimacy of the subject) as a reaction to present events or situations really teach us about the condition of the human subject in contemporary democracies – in the West and beyond?

Furthermore, I would like to stress the difference between the classical definition of shame (in the space of Western philosophy) as a feeling (Spinoza, Sartre) and the approach I am promoting, that of shame as an *affect* which makes an opening into the most intimate or secret dimension of the subject – I mean “shame of being him/herself”, shame of being what I am. Shame as it unveils the extreme fragility of a human subject. This can be considered as both the existential and ontological dimension of shame – I refer here to authors like Levinas, Deleuze, Agamben...

By borrowing examples from literature, cinema, theater (etc.), I would like to make a phenomenology of shame as a limit experience or ordeal for a human subject, that is, an affective situation in which his/her moral and psychic integrity is endangered. A limit experience of the world, the others and oneself, shame is so extreme and tantalizing that it cannot be identified/associated with what we usually call “experience” (Erfahrung); for it is a collapse, it splits up the subject. It is not just a strong feeling, a moral suffering, a psychic challenge – its horizon is, basically, *desubjectivation*, a destruction of the subject him/herself, a total collapse – brief or lasting. This is why this limit experience is, by definition, traumatic. It frequently becomes a wound that never heals – the unforgettable, the incurable.

I will consequently insist on shame as something “total” in terms of experience, utterly intense, an ordeal which transforms the human subject not only morally, psychically, but physically, as well. He/she begins to sweat, to blush, to shiver, he/she looks down, stutters, etc. Shame being pure intensity, can also easily be designed or expressed in terms of *color*: red, at least in the West – see on this *The Scarlet Letter* by N. Hawthorne.

Finally, I would like to “revisit” Ruth Benedict’s classic essay *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* which takes shame as a cultural matter into consideration, a stake in terms of cultural patterns, this by opposing “shame cultures” like Japan to “guilt cultures” - Western cultures, basically. I would like to show how biased and oversimplifying this “reading” of shame is, notably by referring to some exemplary Japanese films and to various objections raised by Japanese scholars as well.

Bibliography

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 Nathaniel Hawthorne: *The Scarlet Letter* (1950)
 Giorgio Agamben: *Remnants of Auschwitz* (1998)
 Gilles Deleuze: *Critical and Clinical* (1993)
 Karl Marx: Letters to Arnold Ruge (1843)
 Emile Zola: *La faute de l'abbé Mouret* (1875)
 George Orwell: *Such Were the Joys* (1952)
 Karl Jaspers: *Die Deutsche Schuldfrage* (1946)
 Chikamatsu Monzaemon: *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki* (1703)
 Franz Kafka: *The Trial* (1925, posthumous), *Metamorphosis*(1915)
 Jean-Paul Sartre: *Being and Nothingness* (1943)
 Sigmund Freud: *Totem and Tabu* (1913)
 Sophocles : *Oedipus in Colonus* (401 BC)

Filmography

Ingmar Bergman: *Shame* (1968)
 Federico Fellini: *Il Bidone* (1955)
 Victor Sjöström: *The Scarlet Letter* (1926)
 Kenji Mizogushi: *The Life of Oharu* (1952)
 Kon Ichikawa: *Kokoro* (1955)
 Gus van Sant: *Paranoid Park* (2007)
 Andrzej Munk: *Passenger* (1963)
 Stephen Daldry: *The Reader* (2008)
 Atom Egoyan: *The Sweet Hereafter* (1997)
 Lucrecia Martel: *The Headless Woman* (2008)
 Emil Weiss: *Falkenau* (1988)
 Calin Peter Netzer: *Child's Pose* (2013)
 Nuri Bilge Ceylan: *Three Monkeys* (2008)
 Roberto Rossellini: *Il generale della Rovere* (1959)
 Kazuo Kukori: *The Face of Jizo* (2004)

Opera

Richard Wagner: *Lohengrin* (1850)