

Ethics, ideals, shame and modesty

Eroticism, modesty, segregation* (... and death)

"Modesty concerns sex as a secret."

Sex and horror, Pascal Quignard

Secret, "hidden", ...Lacan says - in Seminar XXI - that the hidden is what scientific discourse cannot swallow, cannot digest, and that it is nothing other than the absence of sexual relation.

Modesty is an articulator between eroticism and segregation, it functions as a veil when it comes to eroticism and as a barrier when it comes to segregation.

It facilitates erotic arousal when it comes to eroticism, and restrains violent and destructive arousal when it comes to segregation. In this sense, modesty is also a term of politics that buffers the prevailing hypocrisy and shamelessness.

The term "modesty" means, nowadays, in the current, usual and most common usage: honesty, modesty. But formerly it meant: bad smell, that is to say, modesty was the index that something smelled bad, it is awakened when something, one's own or the other's, smells bad.

And if something "smells bad...", the first reference is always to the other... as the presence of the imminence of jouissance, whether by his body, by his intentions, or by his malice, or by his always suspicious bad or good will. It is about the third party, the other and the self as third parties.

Modesty seems to run the risk of disappearing nowadays due to a certain forclusive effect of capitalist discourse. Lacan speaks of the demon of "modesty" in "The Meaning of the Phallus", of the Greek Aidos and of the German term scham, which is translated as "shame" and also as "modesty".

In German and English there are no two terms that make the difference that exists, both in Spanish and in French, between "modesty" and "shame". Freud's "scham" is always translated as "shame". But Lacan locates modesty, and not shame, in the constitution of the subject. The Latin translation of Aidos did not pass into either German or English. In English the closest term would be modesty, which is discretion, modesty. The English word shame is associated with aidos, but it does not mean exactly the same thing. Lacan points this out in "The signification of the phallus", where he says that "the demon of modesty aidos (scham) arises at the very moment when the mystery of the phallus is unveiled", that is, when the veil falls, the classically called "veil of modesty".

The signified is coined as the bastard progeny of the signifying concatenation. The signified is the bastard child of the signifier. And the veil of modesty is constitutive of the subject and of the rest of jouissance of which it is the product. The slash, the crossing out of the S of the barred subject (\$), indicates this bastardy. The barred subject is a bastard "son" of the signifying articulation.

Perhaps we could place modesty in the staggered picture of the seminar "Anguish", in correspondence with the place of inhibition, in which the clash of two mutually inhibiting desires takes place and which are those that preside over the modesty of the good to say in the order of desire, inhibited desires, still alien to the jouissance of the symptom that, once awakened by impudence, has as symptomatic consequences: disgust and shame.

Shame inhibits, without the restraint of shame, shame becomes a symptom.

The "well said" is well said because the truth is said and not said, modesty is in the "how much" we choose to say of a truth, without passing a limit that overflows in a jouissance that offends going beyond the limit of modesty. And the truth is only half told, but that is why the enjoyment is in the excess of the pretension of telling it all. In the modesty of good speaking, it is a matter of respecting the half-saying of the truth and refraining from saying "too much". To tell the truth but with veils that remain to be drawn back, avoiding the naked horror of the object a.

In the phenomenology of autism there is no modesty because there is no barred subject, there is no inhibition nor the possibility of a symptom, and there is no modesty because

there is no divided, barred subject, even if it speaks, because if it speaks, it does so without counting on its own division or that of the other.

As we can see in the series "Atypical", or better, in the "strange" character, also autistic, of Saga Nören in the series "Bron Broen", characters who behave without modesty in the public eye.

Saga's character is that of a policewoman who strictly abides by protocols and regulations, and who does not hesitate to change her clothes in front of everyone in the office where she works, and who, when she "needs it", without any inhibition, invites someone she has just met in a bar, to have sex at her home, and then, once satisfied, disgracefully, without love or contempt, dismisses him.

Could we not say, in this sense, that in Saga's autism, there is indeed sexual intercourse and that, for that very reason, there is no subject, and for that reason, there is not the same modesty at play as in others?

Could we not say, in this sense, that in Saga's autism, there is indeed sexual relation and that, for this very reason, there is no subject, and that for this reason, there is not the same modesty at stake as in the others?

Nowadays it is fashionable to vindicate "gender identity", the so-called "self-perceived identity", without the other, an identity that is presented as alien to any sexual question, to any erotic question, and in this sense, alien to sexuation, to any sexed identification. Gender identity is presented as performative, as a product of the act of affirmation of an identity... properly gender identity, alien to sex, sexuality and sexuation. Foreign to sex, but not to love and self-recognition. But gender identity has no "smell" of sex, and desire is not identity, it is rather lack of identity, lack of being.

But modesty does conjugate, well or badly, with the "smell" of the other, which smells good or smells bad, which awakens confidence or suspicion, which attracts or repels. In the famous phrase of the seminar "Anguish", "love allows jouissance to condescend to desire", modesty could well replace love, and thus be read that it is modesty that allows, or makes, jouissance to condescend to desire, both in eroticism and in politics.

After all, what is the reality of love? In *The Unwary Yerran* Lacan says that marriage is love as a reciprocal deception of two "knuckleheads," two dazed ones.

In relation to the logical tenses, modesty would be in play at the instant of the gaze, and shame at the moment of conclusion. Modesty anticipates something to the subject, it is something that awakens in the subject before he can think or notice it; whereas shame comes when it is too late, when there is nothing more to do.

The non-puddists err means that it is the warned impudents who err, the warned ones who have ideals of those who enjoy maintaining that there is sexual intercourse. And if there is sexual intercourse, the "virtues" are those that are held, badly or well, in the Aristotelian ideals: the Good, the True, and the Beautiful.

But if there is no sexual relationship, then, indeed, there is a subject and, ideals having fallen, the only virtue is modesty... in the absence of ideals. And what is modesty if not to refrain from holding and imposing ideals with sword and sword, which instead of presiding over the "good to say", preside over segregation to the extreme of the extermination of the other in the name of those same ideals?

Modesty is the only virtue that does not depend on moral ideals, it is not a moral virtue, it is ethical.

In *Radiophony*, p.62, Lacan states that "science is an ideology of the suppression of the subject", and in the Proposition of October 1967, he points out that the sustaining of identification with the ideal father and the universalization of the subject coming from science have as a correlate the advent of "a world organized on all forms of segregation". The Ideal pushes to eliminate the rest, shamelessly.

In this sense, in relation to the "good to say", the modesty of the analyst making semblant of the object is not to speak, because the object does not speak, it causes and makes it speak. To make the object speak as subject is perversion itself.

Without modesty there is no eroticism in sex, but abuse and obscenity; and without modesty there is no restraint in the face of the other reduced to the condition of object, and segregation then spreads because its root is that the other is not recognized as subject.

That is to say, there is no eroticism without the veil of modesty; and segregation is triggered when in the name of ideals, or of some ideal, the other is not recognized as a subject, as a similar, and thus the barrier of modesty is violated with him and in him.

Then, following Lacan, if there is a sexual relation, the "virtues" are those that poorly sustain the Aristotelian ideals, the same ones that Lacan fails to sustain in the Borromean knot.

And if there is no sexual relation, as Freud, Lacan and psychoanalysis maintain at each end of analysis: then, indeed, the only virtue is the one that psychoanalysis sustains with its practice as a social bond: modesty.

We could say, then, that in this sense, the discourse of psychoanalysis has the singular modesty that all universal philosophy lacks.

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1. Traditionally there are seven heavenly virtues: prudence, justice, temperance and courage (or fortitude) with the other three theological virtues: faith, hope and charity. For Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, modesty is not a virtue, but a sentiment or an exaltation of the mind.

2. * FCL Seminar: "Eroticism, Pudor and Segregation". Taught by Oswaldo Arribas, Clelia Conde, Norberto Ferreyra, Héctor Franch, Ursula Kirsch, Marta Nardi, Anabel Salafia and Noemí Sirota.