

Rejected Intimacy

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Abstract

The concept of intimacy is approached from the perspective of the philosopher José Luis Pardo to think the exhibition, through the social networks, of moments that could be of intimacy. From that point on, it is about the theme of the instinctual levees raised by Freud and about the scopic drive involved in the act of exhibiting. It is posed the difference between the law as the public that operates in the intimacy and the public-look that overwhelms the intimacy.

Key words

Intimacy, law, scopic drive, instinctual levees.

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Outside is the world, the parents, the law, the armies, the registers in which to inscribe your name, the circumcision that will give you the belonging to a people. Outside there is smell of wine. Outside there is the men's camp. Here, inside, there is only us, the warmth of animals surrounds us and we are safe from the world until dawn. Then they will enter and you will cease to be mine. But while the night lasts, while the light of a wandering star falls upon us, we are the only people in the world.

Erri de Luca

Shortly after her son was born in the stable of Bethlehem, Miriam tells him about the world that awaits him. She speaks of a momentary "us", sheltered from the outside and from a "them" -men, father- that rules the world and that will get in at the right time, imposing a name and a mark to locate him as a subject in a filiatory chain and as a member of a community. Then, outside the world the "us" will become blurred and she will lose the possession of her product recently appeared from the expecting sac.¹

That outside is not already inside, while law that founds the space 'us' of which men are excluded? This question could be answered in different ways according to the notion of intimacy with which one thinks about it.

Unlike Miriam who places an inside-outside in reference to the law of men, Paula Sibilia locates the emergence of the notion of intimacy in relation to a physical space that can close its doors to the outside look with the constitution of the bourgeois nuclear family. In her statement, the terms "private" and "intimacy" seem interchangeable. However, the respective antonyms of both words speak of a significant difference; while "public" is antonym for "private", "mistrust" is the one for "intimacy". By impregnating "intimacy" with the idea of trust-distrust, the

¹ De Luca, E. *En el nombre de la madre*. Siruela. Madrid, 2007.

complex relational frame of subjects becomes central to the treatment of that term.

On this subject, the philosopher José Luis Pardo maintains the importance of differentiating "private" from "intimate". Private is opposed to public, while "public" and "intimacy" are, at the same time, inseparable and irreducible terms. That's why "[...] where intimacy is threatened, these threats express a crisis of the civil space."²

From this postulation, the author advances in a fine analysis of the organization of the Greek *polis* based on the ethics of moderation that requires the mastery of power to give rise to *potestas* (political power). "To this kind of life, which is neither private nor public, and which constitutes the **peculiarly human form of being animal**, we will call it intimacy in this writing."³ (I emphasize the idea of human animality in relation to the quotation from the epigraph in which Miriam refers to the animals' warmth that surrounds mother and son, where the law of men still does not rule, according to her words.)

In the Greek *polis*, one of the differences between the sovereign and his subjects (slaves, wife, and children) was referred to the use of public space, where only the sovereign could express himself on the subjects of the City. The voice of the subjects was reserved to tell about pleasure and pain in the domestic sphere.⁴ Pardo wonders "Are we not mentioning, through this feature -intimacy- something that is also peculiar to Language, at least as much as rationality?"

With this question he opens the issue to the linguistic perspective, placing two dimensions necessarily at stake in the use of language. The intimacy of language, its *phoné*, would be the implicit meaning that encompasses all possible meanings with the resonances shared by the members of a community, what that word evokes in each one beyond the established meaning. On the other hand, explicit meanings

² Pardo, José Luis. *Políticas de la intimidación. Ensayo sobre la falta de excepciones*. HTML version of the file <https://revistas.ucm.es/index.php/ASEM/article/viewFile/ASEM9899110145A/16745>. P.145.

The author differentiates intimacy from private: "However, this distinction-solidarity between City and intimacy cannot be confused with -nor overlapped- the "classical" distinction of the public and the private: when this confusion occurs (as often in some contemporary philosophies), the political tends to identify with totalitarian abuses of power and the defense of intimacy is subsumed in an equivocal and perverse pretension of the government of the private over the public."

³ Ibid, p.147.

⁴ "[...] the "art of governing" (both the House and the City) consists in knowing how to contain the *potentia* so the *potestas*, the civil peace or the domestic order could be. The good sovereign is the one who contains himself of doing everything he can (anything to any of his subjects). Just as the good head of the family is the one who does not display the deadly *potentia* that gives him his natural authority." Ibid, p.148

compose the *logos* of language, based on manifest agreements, publicly established by a certain society. In the Greek city, the *logos* was reserved for men, while the *phoné* was the language of the subjects with which they expressed their sufferings and their joys.

While in the *polis* the division between the public and private spheres clearly delimited each one's functions, including the public or intimate use of language, in our society such separation is not in force and the intimate language, the pleasant or painful voice, can become public, as well as anonymous. In the virtual networks there are innumerable videos of intimate moments shown to an unknown audience. I use the term "intimate" with the sense established by Pardo because I believe that even when the separation between the public and the private tends to disappear, in a family organization still a certain asymmetry is preserved, with the responsibility of those who hold parental authority. For us, psychoanalysts, that inner core is a relational structure where each one takes up a certain place; this place gives birth to the human that is subject to the action of the unconscious stimulated by the drive. It is the "[...] crucible, the place where the drives are worked, the fantasmatic tingling and the **elemental encounter of the biological and the institutional set up by the parents.**"⁵

I emphasize this Legendre's expression because it clearly articulates intimacy, "that particularly human form of being animal" in Pardo's words, and the public as a law that delimits roles, responsibilities and rights in the intimate sphere of the family. In this space, the body of the *infans* is devoted to the manipulation of who fulfills the maternal function, both as regards the survival and the imprint that will constitute the erogenous body.

In the projected video, the mother shows in the public sphere the crying, the anguish and also the voice of her daughter, who as a subject in the *polis* could not express her suffering beyond intimacy, but now makes a public voice of the *phoné*. At the same time, she denounces the "sovereign", the mother, by the intrusion of the public through the recording. The appeal "Can you stop recording me while I am crying?" also reveals the lack of compassion of the one who exercises the *postestas*. The inseparable relationship between intimacy and public is revealed operating in the mind of the mother where the public space is the recipient of the

⁵ Legendre, P. *El inestimable objeto de la transmisión*. Siglo XXI. México. 1996. p.161.

filmed scene. It is not about the place of the law but a public-spectator of what could have been a moment of intimacy.

I wonder if the camera is capable of stripping, separating or preventing the girl from making sense of the unexplained discomfort that invades her. Another element to be considered in the scene is the pressure exerted by the mother to impose a rational sense to the girl's words, she forces the displacement of the *phoné* typical of the ludic world where the imagination survives and can freely express itself by being replaced by the *logos*. She asks for a dictionary definition, "What is a husband?" in a context of expression of her suffering for "not to have", a deprivation that she feels as a disadvantage in the presence of those who she assumes that definitely have it.

It is not a question here of judging in an appreciative way the fact of showing or showing oneself, but to question the possible effect of the undifferentiation of places between those who exercise power and those who are in charge of them, and of reflecting on the effect of intrusion of the public-gaze, not law, forcing and expropriating the privacy of their natural habitat. It is the expropriation of the intimate voice by the imposition of a rational language, as well as of the exposure of the intimacy of the body.

In relation to the body, it attracts my attention that Sibilía and Pardo situate at the same time (18th century) two events that appear to be in opposition, such as the emergence of the notion of privacy-intimacy, proposed by the first, and the desacralization of body raised by the Spanish philosopher in the following terms:

[...] the desacralization of the body, (that) runs parallel to its politicization, stops being the scenario of the exception [...] to become the place of the norm and the normalization. [...] this new vulnerability of the de-sacralized bodies that exposes them to the immediate action of the micro-powers in a way previously unimaginable, throws individuals and populations towards the mere "natural" animality, glimpsed by Bataille, as extreme danger or infernal destiny of unlimited secularization, and presents the human sciences as techniques of control of the beast of labor.⁶

Is not the exposition of bodies in intimate situations a form of desacralization? In the video, the intimacy of the girl -her body and the autoerotic activity- is offered to the eyes of spectators, with the background of the smiley tone of who should take

⁶ Pardo, op.cit. 160.

the place of the mother. It is evident that the stimulation to speak is only for the purposes of public exposure; it is not a dialogue but a manipulation aimed at achieving a production to be exhibited.

Look \longleftrightarrow be looked at

It would not be wrong to speak of a compulsion to take photos: to transform the experience itself into a way of seeing. In essence, having an experience is transformed into something identical to photographing it, and participation in a public event increasingly equates to look at it in the form of photography. The most logical of the aesthetes of the nineteenth century, Mallarmé, stated that in the world everything exists to culminate in a book. Today everything exists to culminate in a photograph.

Susan Sontag

From the psychoanalytic viewpoint, the channeling of the sexual drive is an essential requirement for the regulation of the relationship between humans. In this regard, I would like to refer punctually to the scopic drive and to the compassion, posed by Freud as one of the instinctual levees, among which are also the social construction of morality and of authority that circumscribe the pulsional path in the framework of the social practices.⁷

Freud places compassion as one of the repressive powers and he also claims it is "one of the most generous sources of humorous pleasure."⁸ Instead, in "Drives and Drive Destinies" (1915), he argues that compassion cannot be thought of as a transformation of sadism, but as a reactive formation against the drive. He promises to address the issue later but we don't have any subsequent specific development.

⁷ Freud, S. (1905), 1978 Tres ensayos de teoría sexual. AE VII. Buenos Aires. p.211

⁸ Freud, S. (1905) El chiste y su relación con el inconsciente. AE VIII. Buenos Aires, 1978. p.219

In "Drives and drive destinies", Freud situates the problem of seeing around the sexual member; however, much earlier, in "Project of Psychology" (1895) he refers to the visual perception of the neighbor, this one as a privileged object, as it is, at the same time, the first object-satisfaction, the first hostile object and the only auxiliary power. It is striking that he didn't return to this first sagacious and complex concept when he will later address the theme of the scopical drive; there he leaves aside the importance of the primordial Other, of the *das Ding* differentiated from the attributes that lend themselves to identification. Starting from these Freudian concepts, Lacan advanced in the development of the problem of the gaze as object cause of desire and in relation to the constitution of the ego in the stage of the mirror.

The theme of the gaze involves different concepts -drive, desire, self, other, Other- which could explain Freud's hesitancy about locating the first step of the scopical drive as an activity directed at a foreign object to correct himself immediately, placing it as autoerotic as directed to the own body. This hesitation, as I understand it, would account for two different vertexes regarding the gaze; the gaze in relation to the primordial Other one raised in the "Project", on the one hand, and on the other, the satisfaction of the drive of seeing or of showing oneself up, developed in "Drives". In this article, by restricting the scheme of the drive of seeing around the sexual member, the place of the Other is diluted in relation to look at - to be looked at. The emphasis on the drive's activeness necessarily leads to locating the look as the first step of the scopical. Lacan, on the other hand, will emphasize the initiative of the Other, not only in the field of the word but also in the one of the gaze, as well as in the constitution of the erogenous zones generated in the privileged contact between the only auxiliary power and the infans in the beginnings of his life.

In the video scene, the intimacy would be threatened from different aspects, among them:

- The absence of compassion in the face of the anguish of the girl and/or the use of compassion as a humor source.

- The stimulation of the verbal exchange with the simple purpose of the exhibition.

- The intrusion, not precisely of the camera, but of the gaze of the audience that operates in the mother as the recipient of what has been produced.

- The force to move the expressions of the fantasy and to replace them with the logical reasoning.

What is the cause that moves the mother to expose her daughter to anonymous gazes? Is it about offering an entertainment product in the style of the animals trained and exhibited in circuses? Or, will she be motivated by the wish to show off something valuable? The priority to the eye that looks does not deprive the child of her mother? From what mother would it strip her? It could be said that she strips her of the protection of that unique auxiliary power to leave her reduced to the place of object of exhibition, of phallus of the mother.

The objection would not lie in the exhibition but in the interference of the recipients, anonymous indeed, in the present of the impossible dialogue between the girl and her mother. The action of the mother, oriented not towards the girl, but towards the audience to which the filming is directed, is clearly captured and objected by the girl. Cecilia's reproach-request of not to record her while she is crying denounces the absence of compassion by the effect of the intrusion of others as a look. In this case, the camera represents others-look that prevents a possible encounter between mother and daughter.

The idea of public-specular before public-law led me to think about the theme of sexual practices in public spaces related by some adolescents today. Would the intimacy experience be prematurely overwhelmed by the public-specular? Did the wine, the men with their public law and the armies enter prematurely, together with a circumcision out of time? Also the incidence of the castration of the Other has its time in the constitution of the human subject.

In any case, it is worth questioning the status of the Other-look to whom the subject-product to be exhibited is destined, which surely contributes to the expropriation of experience⁹, that is, to the impossibility of subjectifying what has been experienced. Is with this impossibility that some adolescents live their sexuality today?

⁹ Agamben in his book *Childhood and History* points out that the expropriation of experience is part of the modern science project that privileges the rational knowledge from which the imagination is expelled by "unreal". The experience supposes an indescribable nucleus, therefore incompatible with the certainty, at the same time that it supposes a place of authority, of transmission of the experience.

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