

Notes for Unit V Affectivity and Intersubjectivity

LOVE:

1) Love of others and self-love:

These two are often viewed as being opposed to one another. A common formula within Christian spirituality that expresses this is "You can only love others (or God) if you hate yourself." This means that humans are basically selfish, always looking out for "Number I". Consequently we either disregard others, are different to them or "love" them only for some ulterior motive that benefits us. Thus to love others we must hate ourselves i.e., fundamentally repudiate the selfishness that constitutes our self-love. Conversely, any real love of others would seem to demand a total disregard of self. This opposition is expressed in the traditional contrast between egoism and altruism.

Egoism and Altruism share a common assumption: self-love is the same as selfishness or acting for the sake of your own interest with true regard for the interests of others.

Egoism--human love is basically self-centered; we always look out for ourselves, considering others only so far as it seems to benefit us.

Altruism--we are capable of loving others but only if we totally disregard ourselves.

What is important here is that both of these views ultimately regard self-love as selfishness.

Egoism and motivation are theories about human intentions or motivations and not just the behaviors. So, egoism says that all of my actions are self regarding. But self-regarding or selfish motivations are compatible with actions that help others, are indifferent to others or harm them. In each case, the person is focused on what is in his or her interest not the interest of the other person. So, while egoism does not claim that we necessarily act to harm others, it is incompatible with a claim that we can respect others: that is, treat them as valuable in themselves independently of our interests.

Note that we cannot 'read' people's intentions or motivation simply by observing their behaviors. Moreover, egoism is basically a metaphysical theory since it maintains that we always act to serve only our personal self interest. It is for this reason that it is very difficult to provide counter examples to the egoist. Regardless of what one proposes as a non self-regarding action, the proponent of egoism will always posit some self-regarding motive, even if it is an unconscious motive. Effectively the proponent of egoism claims to have a theory which is empirically irrefutable.

The altruist agrees with the egoist that self-love and love of others are mutually incompatible. But the altruist believes that we can act for the interest of others, but only if we utterly deny our own interest. Of course, it is impossible for the altruist to ever empirically show that anyone has performed a completely altruistic act. That's because we do not always know what motivates our actions. Ofttimes people will claim to do something for some reason only to discover later that in fact they were motivated by something that was not apparent to them when they acted. Moreover, altruism seems psychologically impossible since if I choose to do something—and we are concerned with deliberate actions here—I have to be aware that it is my action that I am performing. It's, thus, hard to see how I could perform such actions without any regard for myself.

The problem here probably lies in the assumption that self-love always means selfishness. One way to see this is that the egoist effectively argues that since every intention that underlies my actions is my intention, the content of the intention must be self-regarding. That is, the egoist confuses the owner of my intentions (which is me) with the object of my intentions (which need not be me). With this in mind, there is no reason why in principle I cannot perform an action with two different intentions: I act for the sake of another's interests and simultaneously act for the sake of my own interest.

In contrast to this we might observe one of Jesus's commands: "Love others as yourself." This saying suggests that love of others is bound up with self-love; indeed, is grounded in self-love. If this is so, self-love certainly cannot mean selfishness. Rather, it would mean self-respect and self-acceptance.

Recall that human freedom is intentional or purposive in character; as Aristotle says, we organize our lives to live-well. Self-love, properly understood, is precisely our desire for and commitment to achieve our own well-being. This love can be seen in fundamental opposition to love of others only if we atomize human beings. However, if we insist on the essential sociality and intersubjectivity of human existence (to be a person is to be a person with others in community), then we must insist on a fundamentally integrated relation between our own well-being and the well-being of others. On this view self-love is indissolubly connected with love of others. Thus the opposition between self-love and love of others collapses. Egoism wrongly reduces all self-love to selfishness. Altruism is psychologically and existentially impossible given the self-conscious and intentional character of human existence.

2) Love based upon attractiveness/love as affirmation of the other (Luijpen)

Love based upon attractiveness is a form of love that I confer on another person because I find them attractive. This means, that the criteria for whether I love another person is based upon what I find attractive—that is, my own personal likes and dislikes. Others may love me because they find me attractive but for entirely different reasons than I find them attractive. Others may not at all reciprocate my love since they don't find me attractive (or at least attractive enough to say they love me -- they might still 'like' me).

This sort of love is conditional in character. My continued love for the other depends upon them remaining sufficiently attractive to me. If what I find attractive changes; if the other person changes; or if I find someone more attractive, then my love for the other may vanish. This love is also conditional since it does not mean that I affirm a person simply for who he/she is. So, when we date someone we are often on our best behavior trying to make a good impression on the other. That is, we try to figure out what the other person finds attractive and present ourselves in that light. OTOH, in a friendship or when we live with someone (say in marriage), we don't want to put on an act. We want to be ourselves. Unless we are really good at acting, we're going to do that anyhow when we live with someone. In this case, love based on attractiveness may collapse unless people can move beyond it to mutually affirm each other for who he/she is -- lumps, warts and all.

Love based upon attractiveness is a form of romantic love can be very intense. In such love, people can make extraordinary sacrifices for each other. But, the bond of love remains (mutual) attraction. There is obviously nothing 'wrong' with such love. But it can't provide the basis for enduring love among people where we at some point must work to affirm others for who they are.

This notion of love as affirmation of the other is the sort of love that Luijpen tries to describe. It is not fundamentally a feeling for others but an active stance towards others. Love of others as an affirmation of them means that we act for others. Such love arises out of our freedom. In particular, it is offered to others as a gift. That is, such love properly is offered to others with no expectation of something in return. Such love is also universal in nature. In principle this is a love which we are bid to offer to all others—strangers and our enemies. (Here one can think of the teachings of Jesus).

Such love is ultimately grounded on a self-love-- that is an affirmation of ourselves as persons who have the capacity for love. As we discussed in class. The traditional focus on reason as what defines humans can often lead to an overly individualistic notion of ourselves. We each exist as separate and independent individuals who often need others but don't essentially need them. Love, as Luijpen describes it, is never just self acceptance, but the acceptance of others since such love assumes that persons are always persons with others and, thus, for others.

Love, then, is diametrically opposed to jealousy. The problem with the jealous person is that he/she cannot stand rejection. Accordingly, the jealous person tries to dominate the beloved to ensure that the person will continue to love the jealous person. But jealousy destroys the very foundation of love as a gift freely offered by the other. Since love, as Luijpen describes it, can only be offered to other persons; the jealous person ultimately eliminates the possibility of having anyone to love. Finally, as Luijpen notes, love as affirmation of the other is not merely an acquiescence to others. In particular, the self acceptance that underlies love as an affirmation of others runs counter to 'accepting' abuse or denigration. When people are abused—sexually,

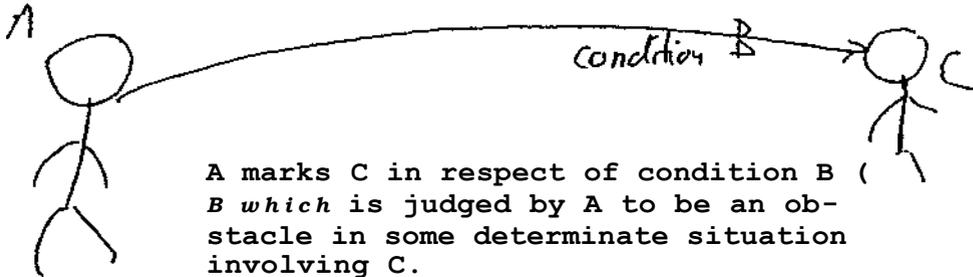
physically, or emotionally—the underlying message is that they are defective as persons who deserve to be punished, harmed and manipulated by others. People who are abused and ‘internalize’ such abuse can often become masochistic. That is, they seek to affirm themselves by finding others who will abuse and punish them since they mistakenly believe that this is what they deserve. People who abuse others are effectively sadists. They do not truly love others but seek to abuse them for their own gratification. That is, abusive relations between people can easily become sado-masochistic in character in which one person allows themselves to be treated as a mere object by being punished and abused; while the person who abuses reduced the other to a mere object in the abuse.

II. Stigmatization

A. The difference between stigmatization, marking, and stereotyping.

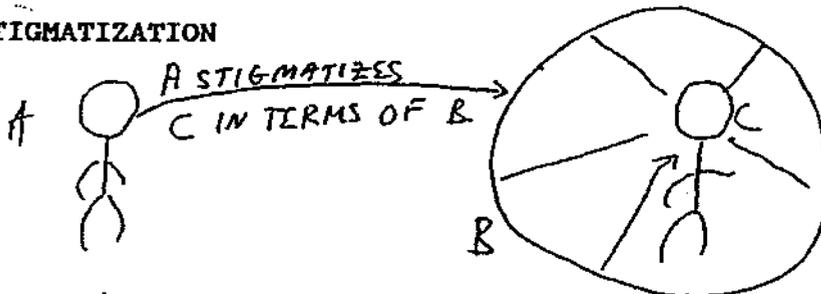
Stereotyping: Stereotyping is primarily cognitive in nature. It consists in making hasty generalization. So, we have an positive or negative experience with one member of a group and then conclude that other members of the group act in the same way. Or, we have have general ideas about a group and then simply apply them to members of the group that we encounter. Stereotypes can be positive and negative. They are not necessarily linked with hostile feelings of rejection towards individuals. As we will see, the affective elements of hostile rejection is essential to stigmatization.

MARKING: B represents a condition such as blindness, poverty, etc. which pertains to C.



- (1) A may be mistaken about B or legitimately mark C by B.
- (2) in marking C, A is not reducing C to B; B is not judged to be an obstacle in every situation.
- (3) Marking-C by B does not imply a denigration of C as a person

STIGMATIZATION



- (1) A takes B to be fundamentally destructive and threatening in character.
- (2) A's impressions of C are so engulfed by B, that A cannot experience C except in terms of B.
- (3) With respect to A, B envelope C; more importantly A defines C in terms of B.
- (4) So, B is no longer just a condition or attribute of C; C is reified in terms of B--C is (for A) nothing but a B (blind, retarded, etc.).
- (5) So for A everything about C is corrupted by the presence of B.
- (6) Stigmatization involves a process of definition, reification and hostile rejection of the stigmatized person. From the standpoint of those doing the stigmatization, the stigmatized cease to be fully human, rather "more like animals than people."
- (7) People can, of course stigmatize themselves. Thus they view themselves as essentially worthless. This leads to a masochistic manner of existence in which people affirm themselves through deliberately seeking out failure and punishment.

(8) As Sartre points out the stigmatization of others is essentially sadistic in character.

"It is the dramatic essence of the stigmatizing process that a label marking the deviant status is applied, and this process typically has devastating consequences for emotions, thought and behavior. Many words have been applied to the resulting status of the deviant person. He or she is flawed, blemished, discredited spoiled or stigmatized. In the classic case, the mark or sign of deviance initiates a drastic inference process that engulfs impressions of the deviant target person and sets up barriers of interaction anti' intimacy." [E. Jones, et. al. Social Stigma, 1984, pp. 4-5]

Crucial here is the notion of "impression engulfment." The stigmatized condition engulfs or overwhelms the impressions which the marker (the person or group doing the stigmatizing) has of the stigmatized person. That is, the stigmatized condition dominates the marker's experience of the victim so that it becomes perceived as the dominant trait of the victim's personality. When the process of stigmatization is internalized, when victims stigmatize themselves, then they see themselves as dominated by the marked condition. This means that a stigmatizing condition is not merely a characteristic or attribute of the victim but is taken to define the core of the, victim's personality. Thus, it serves as a locus or site within which the victim's life takes on meaning (or, more precisely, loses meaning) both for the victim and for others.

On the basis of the stigmatization, the victim is defined to be deviant, worthless, defective, spoiled dangerous, etc. and, indeed, so defined as the core of his or her being. So then, stigmatization essentially reifies individuals, for they are viewed as nothing but the bearers of the stigmatized condition (eg., alcoholic). That is, stigmatizing roles are not simply played out by victims; they engulf and consume the identity of victims."

[from J. Jones, "Poverty as a Living Death," Philosophy Research Archives, 1986, 595-96].

B. Existential Consequences of Stigmatization

I would like now to trace out the relation -between -stigmatization as a social psychological process and human freedom, anxiety and mortality.

We are now in a position to understand the anti-Semite. He is a man who is afraid. Not of the Jews, to be sure, but of himself, of his own consciousness, of his liberty of his instincts, of his responsibilities...of everything except the Jews. He is a coward who does not want to admit his cowardice to *himself*.... In espousing anti-Semitism he does not simply adopt an opinion, he chooses himself as a person. He chooses the permanence and impenetrability of stone, the total irresponsibility^y of the warrior who obeys his leaders--and he has no leaders.... *The Jew* only serves him as a pretext, elsewhere his counterpart will make use of the Negro, or the man of yellow skin. The existence of the Jew merely permits the anti-Semite to stifle his anxieties at

their inception by persuading himself that his place in the world has been marked out in advance.... Anti-Semitism, in short is fear of the human condition. The anti-Semite is a man who wishes to be a pitiless stone, a furious torment, a devastating thunderbolt--anything except a man.

(This passage is from Jean-Paul Sartre's essay Anti-Semite and Jew in which he expresses the affect of anti-Semitism on the anti-Semite. What Sartre says here can, of course, apply to other forms of stigmatization.)

This passage calls for several comments:

- (1) Recall that anxiety belongs essentially to the human condition as defined by freedom. Anxiety discloses the- essential vulnerability, precariousness and mortality that defines us. It also exposes the conventionality of the ways in which we-secure our lives in an every day taken-for granted manner.
- (2) As E. Jones, et. al. observe , we stigmatize various conditions because they fundamentally imperil us. We take them to be death dealing. We believe that to be subjected to these conditions would irrevocably ruin our lives and strip them of - real .- .significance. To be subjected to them would involve being subjected to a living death.
- (3) If we recall the distinction between fear and anxiety, we can see how stigmatization of others is an Anxiety-denial "mechanism." For by marking off the stigmatized as essentially different from us and as a determinate group, we are then able to make definite and manage our anxiety. We turn anxiety into fear and externalize the source of that fear.
- (4-) Thus in stigmatizing others we not only reify them but (as Sartre observes) we also reify ourselves--we wish to become like stones--impervious, invulnerable and exempt from the responsibility which belongs essentially to freedom.
- (5) It is this sense then that anti-Semitism is not merely an opinion that the anti-Semite has but a way in which the anti-Semite-Choo^{se} him .or .herself •as -a person.
- (6) In this sense anti-Semite represent not only a hatred of the Jew but more fundamentally a form of self-hatred--a refusal to accept oneself as a -human being.