



WHAT IS MODESTY?

- VII -

RECAPITULATION



Draft board in a french town (Museum of Nice)

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Temporarily, modesty can be defined as the conscious impossibility of statement, of showing, or of supposing certain psychic phenomena, bodily acts or attributes, in contiguity with desires, needs, or emotions.

A) in the gaps of the symbolic system

By its intimate nature, the modesty phenomenon appears to have a privileged link with the love universe. But in fact, the census of the concerned functions contradicts any privileged relation with sexuality. We have said that modesty is expressed by a " totalitarian power ", **at all places, in all times, when the symbolic system is at fault** ; this influence permits avoidance, but also the prevention of certain gaps in the process of symbolization, and, to some extent, to preserve the

Law. But this Law would not only be set up on the subject of sex.

a) **Non-symbolized** - In the case of the excremental conducts, which is executed without relation with another person, the verbal exchange is useless and this abolishes the problem. But any other mode of communication, in the same way, must be occulted. Essentially, the optical screen prevents this risk: the solution is material.

b) **The non-symbolizable**. - Here we sufficiently insisted: the sexuality reunites in itself the strongest contradictions. It must reconcile what is irreconcilable, i.e.:

- on the one hand, **a close bodily relation with another person**,
- in addition, the **indispensable verbal preamble**.

Any symbolic substitution being non-valid, this vacancy gives place to its opposite, *separator*, named "**diabolic**", this gaping hole being none other than the "**Original Sin**". Admittedly, from a socio-cultural point of view, the human behaviour of coupling is doted with a sense, legalized and rich with symbols. But in the desired moment of pleasure (the enjoyment) the act requires neither sense, nor symbol, nor other than the natural law, nor other than bodily communication. At this point, all symbolic substitution ceases and all verbal exchange. The solution is the revocation of all linguistic accompaniment. **The person is out of the act**.

c) **the diversion of the symbol** - In the excessive alcoholic behaviour the representative function of the cultural gesture can no longer be assigned to the real act. This behaviour is caused by the "**pure state impulse**" and it overflows the "social protocol", convened and suitable. We find a situation of verbal vacancy which leads towards the rupture of sense, and, in the patient, causes a well-known **verbal avoidance**.

B) the abolition of the space of the word

Between cultural suitability, which delimits it, and the emotive influence by which it is revealed and expressed, modesty is first experienced, and imposes itself on everyone, **by an abolition of the word space**. At this point of the *exposé*, certain essential characteristics of this event must be summarized.

a) Modesty exists **only in the communication** (between people). In the area of bodily acts, it introduces only one interdict: the rigorous opposition to any informative gesture, all sign, all intention to communicate on the act in question, in all manners, and in all forms, verbal, vocal, visual, etc...

b) **There is no decency in respect to our own ideas**, kept in secret, and no communicated. Intimate thoughts, be they the most licentious, generate neither

shame nor scruple, if they are not guessed at.

c) Beyond "the inner eye", about which we spoke above, and which indicates a culpability, one would note that some people feel guilty, even when alone and without any relation to another person; in truth, in such cases, **there is always a form and a way of communication with a supra mundane being** (or its representation); the reported observation, at the end of the preceding chapter, constitutes an edifying example of it.

In connection with this phenomenon, we can describe, historically, **a sacred modesty**, sensed in the holy places. This is always in connection with faith in a real presence. Be the sacrality historical, religious, or in personal veneration, it always cause a strong moral emotion - whatever the reasons, and outside of any sexual connotation. In such an emotive repercussion, each gesture, each word is constrained and even ritualized. This is generally the case in a necropolis, a place of worship, a place of prayer.

C) the free circulation of the desire and the pleasure

a) On the other hand, as the thought remains secret, the sex act accomplished under the conditions required by social manners does not cause culpability, scruple or shame : **modesty does not prohibit anything**.

This apparent paradox is important to know, because the force of the modesty inhibitions hides this reality, which is not immediately perceptible. Let us determine that modesty censures neither pleasure nor desire: it does not take care of the interdicts in relation to the Oedipus. When the stating is blocked, and when the rigorous visual censures exist, neither the desire nor the pleasure are directly affected. The deformation and the constraints of speech and gesture, when they are of a modest nature, go hand in hand with free circulation of desire.

b) **The modesty phenomenon is always eminently conscious**. Clearly distinct from the refusal and the denial, it tells us what can be said and displayed in human behaviour. For no one can be unaware of what should not be known, nor suppose to know what should not be said, nor see, show, hear, or make understood. Thus **modesty, well adjusted, indicates a correct acclimatization of the person to the society in which he lives**. It is an essential criterion: cured, the man who had lived in the sepulchres appeared "seated, clothed and with his senses intact".

D) An inhibition independent to the context

But an erotic provocation undergone, and unauthorized, an insult, suspends linguistic faculties. In other words, **the inhibition of the word is autonomous, independent of the context**, consented or imposed, of the bodily communication which causes it, whether desired or endured.

Without direct relationship to modesty, the deactivation of the "significant chain" opens the door to **archaic libido reviving**. This gulf restores the contact with this "formless mass of incestuous libido", which constitutes the affectivity of early infancy. This last point can explain **the cultural concept of "original sin"**, moreover well named. This tearing of the symbolic chain draws the permanent guilt feeling of alcoholic subject. It generates, therefore, this feeling, so particular, of the **guilty victim** after sexual aggressions and indecent assaults.

We ourselves dismiss the hypothesis that modesty would reflect a sexual culpability, or some repressed desire (exhibitionism, for example). **The culpability does not directly form part of sexuality.**

There it appears in two successive stages:

- 1) a conflict in mutually exclusive communication procedure;
- 2) the tear caused by this conflict in the symbolic chain.

Such a conflict usually appears without direct relationship with antagonisms, usually known, in sciences of the mind:

- in the social structures (individual / society opposition);
- in the inner person (conscious / unconscious opposition);
- and, especially, instinctual compulsive conflicts.

E) the safeguarding of listening

This concept has not been approached up until now. But current life show that, whoever is not bold enough to make certain remarks, accept to hear them, or even to enjoy them, if they are stated by another person. Verbal modesty, which troubles the stating, does not prevent listening (contrary to repression).

In alcoholology, decency constitutes the most habitual obstacle, to the language. It is noticed that the statement of alcoholic disorders, by the therapist himself, causes neither crisis, neither rupture, nor serious dispute. Quite to the contrary, the patient is attentive **when the doctor's observation falls true**. The patient feels a great embarrassment when speaking of his illness, but he initially wishes this difficulty to be accepted.

F) Secret and lies

Modest reserve is not pathological. It is not uniquely in the morbid states that **modesty obliges to lie and dissimulate**. Modesty, which obliges secrecy, obliges to lie **even without voluntary intention**, and often in spite of the contrary desire of

speaking, communicating one's ideas, one's feelings or one's desires.

The secrecy is part of modesty and, in versus of sexuality, family silence is often accused in our society to explain certain "complexes". "*In my family one never spoke about these things, it was taboo.*" Under the same roof, the love life of each person is secret, and these secrecies are well kept. In the family contiguity the rupture of modesty in communication is essential, and, the secret, which interrupts reciprocal information, is also a condition for the exercise of the sexual life.

For the adolescent, have a good feel of this lie margin is a condition of personal development. **It is by learning to lie that he will become an adult.**



BARKA Nina. The judgment of Paris. (Nice, international museum of naive art)

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Site créé le 02 août-1997. - Dr J. Morenon, 8 rue des tanneurs, F-04500 [RIEZ](#)

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