

Phenomenological Perspectives of Shame in an Academic Setting in Sri Lanka

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Abstract: This paper essentially deals with the Phenomenological perspectives of 'shame' in an academic setting in the context of Sri Lanka with a view to provide a description where the study is confined to numerically four subjects of which around main subject, the three other subjects were moving around. Phenomenology covenants with the science of phenomena concentrating the study of consciousness and the object of direct experience. Phenomenology also has a close association with psychology and philosophy. However, psychology plays a crucial role to play on phenomenology of shame. Thus, this papers aims at providing a description on phenomenological perspectives on shame in relations to academic setting of Sri Lanka.

Keywords: phenomenology, perspectives, psychoanalysis, academic setting

I. INTRODUCTION

Phenomenology deals with the science of phenomena as distinct from that of the nature of being which is an approach that concentrates on the study of consciousness and the object of direct experience. More often, phenomenology has a very close association with psychology and philosophy amongst which psychology is playing a pivotal role on shame. Hence, this paper aims at presenting some phenomenological perspectives of being shame in the academic setting of Uva Wellassa University of Sri Lanka.

Despite the exegesis of the term 'shame', shame has been the subject of discussion of several disciplines such as psychology, philosophy and psychoanalysis inclusive of a general topic in great literature. Tracing out the etymological aspect of shame, it goes back to Indu-European root (Karleoon, and Gustav, 2009) referring to "hiding" "concealing" or "covering up". According to Heidegger (1980), Sartre (1956), Tomkind (1963) and, Niedenthal et al. (1994), the shame has been defined in terms of psychoanalysis as context dependent. The hermeneutics of shame is elicited in terms of context dependency.

In the context of philosophy, the shame is viewed as a philosophical and cultural phenomenon which is in terms of cultural anthropology (Elias, 1978). It is also viewed as self-consciousness in terms of philosophical anthropology (Sartre 1956). The exegesis of shame in terms of philosophical cultural anthropology is evident that most of the researchers have dealt with closed shame and not about open shame. Once again, in the context of psychology, the shame is discussed and debated in connection with guilt. Some researchers point out that both guilt and shame involve a perception of one's

self (Roseman 1984, Smith & Ellswarth 1985) where pain, tension and, arousal are regarded as systematic attributes of guilt and shame.

In the general context, the shame has to do something with negative assessment of one's self (Tangney, 1992). That is being ashamed of what his or her perceptions are about oneself. Some phenomenologists consider that the shame props up at a situation where an individual's denunciation is occurred at a time engage in a reciprocal context. According to Wurmser (1980), the shame is further aggregated at a time of one's proclamation of experience is not regarded and loved.

Study Context

This study was limited to one of the public universities in Sri Lanka where the study was conducted over a period of three years and four months on open shame with reference to the main subject and three other subjects who are moving around the main subject. The information was recorded collected through purely participatory observation over several occasions and they were analysed with reference to phenomenological- psychological perspectives.

II. MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY

The researcher was completely detached from those respondents particularly from subconscious mind the behaviour changed accordingly letting free for the respondents to behave on their own accord. The main subject was an educated abroad and had not been exposed to tertiary education in the Sri Lankan context but later had been exposed to work in the higher education sector. The three other subjects are from academia where they have had their undergraduate education at three different educational settings in the local context. By detaching from the subjects, the researcher started collecting behavioural aspects with reference to their education, ethics and etiquette, principles and values to find out to what extent the closed shame and open shame works out on both phenomenological and psychological ground for deepening the understanding of shame in relation to the subjects. To do this, psycho-phenomenological and hermeneutical approach has been utilized in providing a substantial description of the subjects.

III. DISCUSSION

From the discipline point of view, the shame is a deeper emotion which transcends beyond the being guilt (Tangney & Dearing 2002). In this study, it was found that the shame was

totally unpleasant and thereby the behaviour is rejected by the disciplinarians on ethical ground.

The first principle applied in this hermeneutical analysis was to use intentionally covered consciousness and intentionality as preamble to the description. Accordingly, the researcher wanted to find out whether the subjects were behaving with open consciousness and intentionality or with closed consciousness and intentionality at every occasion the subjects got involved. The moment the main subject got into the position pronounced that the main subject would be here not for one term period but for two terms with the first impression: the notion took root at first sight. The main subject kept his notion in the inner side of the mind and started slowly in acquaintance with everyone whilst implementing own strategies to achieve the set objectives. Meanwhile the other subjects who were moving around angled the main subject to win their goals making complicated relationships with each other while waving plots for trapping others in the stratagem.

The intentionality of the chief was reflected that the main subject began to bombard about own extensive experience accumulated over the years spent abroad particularly Soviet Russia with his consciousness. It was identified that the main subject's inner intentionality was to sabotage every other subject who attempts excel above the main subject in all matters and wanted to deliver a picture that the main subject was the cock of roost. Gradually, other ordinary subjects began to realise that the main subject was blunt and hollow-minded since the main subject depicted a true peculiar picture antagonizing everyone except the above stated subjects moving around.

The researcher further observed that the main subject's intentionality was directly associated with consciousness and all such behaviour was an attributed play and not being away from own subconscious mind. The surrounding environment made the main subject to realize that the key subject was a part and parcel of the organization and own temporarily nature of the position was completely lost where the open shame began to play where the researcher exemplifies the subjects experience in relation to phenomenology.

The meaning of the experience of the subject in terms of phenomenology is also equally significant to find out how shame works in an open setting. In this situation, it was found that due to inner shame in accepting the reality was demonstrated with the subjects' behaviour. The institution where the key subject now serves on a baseless ground was established by a renowned personality which is a fact in the academia and other professional contexts. Whereas the key subjects together with the other three subjects are reluctant to accept this owing to covered shame which is exhibited at all public situations. The key subject despite being new to the institution yet boasts about the years of experience not at least knowing the value proposition of the theme in the institution which is at time exhibiting features of sycophancy to cover up

hidden shame. The same feeling also has to do with the theft of ownership where the subjects feel guilt and shame.

One of the other important aspects in phenomenology is that the consciousness and intentionality are based on experience itself. What happens here is that the responsible tries to avoid detailing out or clarifying the experience in relation to concepts and frames of references as the subject is well aware of inability to perform as the subjects are falling out of such experience. In this context, the ethical ground seems intentionally forgotten since the guilt and shame work together against the truth in inner mind.

The other important aspect is the other subjects except the key subjects stated. Most of the subjects of the institutions are congenitally blind since they demonstrate no willingness of observing what was happening instead ordinary subjects engage in their routine works which is a healthy phenomenon for the key subject and other three subjects to achieve their destructive vision. The research employed another strategy for further investigation of how shame and guilt works in the key subject and the other three subjects. The strategy employed was to use the social media: the face-book where the research from time to time posted some ironic and ambiguous yet pithy statements to observe the behavioural phenomenon of the subjects. Most of these quotes were from William Shakespeare' psycho-analysis of the mind and some quotes are from George Orwell' Animal Farm which has some direct relevance of the psycho-socio behavioural pattern of the subjects.

Interesting enough, the researcher was able to observe proactive results of the total behavioural patterns of the subjects particularly the main subject and three others and the reaction was prompt. The key subject was moving around the office being unable to articulate, tolerate, consuming sufficient liquid while also hardly attempting to exhibit some heroic nature with much difficulty but total failure. This shows the key subject being guilt and shame of what the key subject committed against his inner heart. Further, the subject made it a habit to leave the office early being unable to resist the negative feelings of the mind which once again demonstrates the shame of being guilt.

It is also worthwhile to discuss in brief how other three subjects react to the social media postings and in particular to the behaviour of the main subject. The other three subjects were highly provocative that they attempted various ways and means to stop the reaction of the researcher against the subjects. For this, the subjects began to inquire about myriad means with a view to stop the interactions and requesting by other means to hold an olive branch. At this situation, the shame plays in a way that the subjects worked towards retaining a baseless person to indulge ulterior motives such as commissions from projects, promotions, recruitments and nepotisms etc. it is observed from this utter behaviour of the subjects that when there is guilt there is often shame haunting.

Thus, there is no doubt that the experience of both guilt and shame is really painful. This has been proven in the behaviour of the subjects concerned which is generalized in any social context. This occurs chiefly due to negligence and such other related substance. The key subject began to experience the shame once denouncing the fact that the institution was established for a different purpose which was clearly presented. Whereas the key subject together with other subjects was reluctant to ask from those who involved in establishing the institution due to shame which way it ought to be lead. Instead, subjects easily were fallen into cattle route where other most of the traditional institutions heading towards. Thus, the subjects were held responsible for making divisions among members of the institution and several plots were woven around for easy management which now leads for its destructions of values, ethics, unity, theme, vision and mission. What was interesting to find out that albeit the craving for the institution particularly for the chair, none knows where to head and have fallen into the plot they themselves woven around.

The Experience of Egoism

The researcher's experience of egoism in relation to the subjects also plays a vital role in the phenomenology of shame. This occurs particularly when somebody works in a mindless situation where pain or suffering is inflicted in one's mind due to negligence. In this situation, the main subject and the other subjects felt totally neglected by the founders where pain was inflicted in the main subject's mind shared by the other subjects. The following example illustrates this very clearly as to how someone was inflicted at an occasion where the key subject happened to face for an interview securing the seat.

'The key subject wanted to stay in the seat for the second term with egoistic hope that he could enjoy privileges being in the seat. There was a conflict of interest arose in relation to candidates applied. The researcher was totally against since the main subject which started destroying the values of the institution introducing a stagnated culture that other traditional institutions were suffering. However, the researcher was one of the members of the interview to observe where the key subject had to be present his development plan. Meanwhile, the main subject employed another strategy to get consent of the researcher's vote and the key subject failed in it. What the research told the one who sought the consent of the researcher was that he would vote given the key subject would answer two questions being posed for the key subject not about any other item but about the vision and the mission of the institution. At this point the key subject got unnecessarily excited as is totally unaware of the strategic vision of the institution. Thus, the key subject was inflicted and started reproaching the researcher'.

This excitement occurred of being totally unaware of the strategic development plan of the institution. The interest of the key subject was only securing the seat for which the other

subjects worked in supporting the key subject. Thus, the ego governed the main subject in reproaching the researcher and other constituents since the key subject felt constituents were not supportive in his effort.

Another significant aspect one needs to observe in this case is that the background information, the ethical ground and the practice of justice. In this study, the main subject is an educated called and displays as a well-rounded subject. The key subject was assigned basically for a single term where 75% of the internal governing body did not favour him. After the term, shamelessly, having gone behind favourites, forgetting own favourite political ideology, disguising got the term extended which the key subject does not deserve despite other subjects being deserved. The key subject acts as if the subject was forcibly given this irrational position. Although the key subject does not show his guilt and shame, the key subject displays it vividly in the behaviour which is both psychological and behavioural play in the context.

The above behaviour reflects the psychological and phenomenological aspects of shame. It reawakens painful infantile experience of the subjects however attempt to hide the truth. The worst selection of this type of behaviour is that it is terrifying as it has revealed something about the self. This is the occasion that the researcher should shed light on the confrontation to the horror of the context at the moment of shame which is equal in the strength to the intensity of displeasure being registered in the key subject.

On the other hand, the shame cannot hide and is exposed for the gaze of the others however tries to conceal. One's body reveals and demonstrates the experience of shame. The best way to feel shame is to observe one's bodily behaviour and thus shame cannot be hidden.

IV. CONCLUSION

As per the discussion above, the shame is a phenomenon that cannot be hidden by any means. It is revealed through bodily behaviour of the given subjects in relation to give objects. Although guilt has something to do with shame, the pure shame has nothing to do with guilt. It is purely based on the reaction, and behaviour of the subjects. In this phenomenological aspect psychology plays a pivotal role which is identified in the case presented. This could be used as a base for further research on both shame and guilt and then pure guilt and pure shame to find out how each of these is distinguished from one another.

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