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### Democracy for impertinent citizens

Früchtl, J.

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It is 2010 when the *Wutbürger* (a newly coined German word meaning something akin to an outraged citizen) enters the political arena. The “Stuttgart 21” project, designed to make Stuttgart’s main station fit for high-speed trains and thus also for the twenty-first century, erupts in a lengthy political protest. This protest unites people from different social classes and generations, yet is predominantly led by older, wealthier, more conservative citizens. What is surprising is not only the tenacity of this civil disorder, but also the occasion. The protest is essentially about preserving an old building or, in more general terms, preserving the present from the tearing pace of change.

The established political parties and media have finally begun to show some understanding for this impulse to protest. Albeit in an often paternalistic tone, there has been a slow but sure recognition that the economic-technical-cultural movement answering to the name of “globalisation” since the 1990s, and described – sometimes optimistically, sometimes resignedly – as a given, is now displaying its flip-side: an apparently unstoppable upheaval which is tearing its way through all that is traditional without any emotion whatsoever. Either one adapts, or one is adapted: this is the simple and hard-hitting choice. The *Wutbürger* has, however, refused just to roll over and accept this. And with success. Both the notion itself

and its concomitant political gestures have spread like wildfire and at the speed of the digital media. And now, as we are currently forced to ascertain with Donald Trump, the *Wutbürger* has even reached the White House in Washington.<sup>1</sup>

It must be said, however, that the expression *Wutbürger* oscillates between having a positive and a negative touch. Sometimes it is used with respect, and sometimes defamatorily. This surely has to do with the fact that rage is generally viewed, on the one hand, as a negative, aggressive and socially dangerous emotion, while, on the other hand, we also speak of righteous anger and holy rage. Is the *Wutbürger* then not rather a *Mutbürger* (Supp 2010), another newly coined word, meaning something akin to a courageous citizen, refusing to cower before the entire weight of police authority? Are rage, courage and – my topic – impertinence not just as much political-democratic virtues? Is impertinence in speech and action not just democratically acceptable, but in fact necessary?

### **Impertinence: An Initial Approach**

Impertinence is a type of behaviour. It can emerge in an action or a remark. A typical reaction would be: “How impertinent to do that!” or “to say that!” And by “that” we mean something unashamed, cheeky, brazen. “And then he was so impertinent” – and here well brought-up female speakers hesitate at first, but then continue because they are at home with famous German literature: “as to speak aloud the Swabian greeting, the *Götz* quotation, ‘lick my arse!’”<sup>2</sup> English-speakers have the famous *f..*-word instead. The historical background to the *Götz* quotation is a dishonourable gesture from the Middle Ages made to enemies passing by, often from high up in the castle walls: a showing of one’s naked behind. Nowadays, football fans or anti-police demonstrators sometimes make the same gesture. People who have the words above thrown at them usually react with consternation – they feel affronted – and perplexity, but also with anger and, in its superlative form, rage. The impertinent individual – but also the unashamed individual – does something which they should be ashamed of and yet is not ashamed of. Everyday judgemental language does concede shades of meaning, however. ‘Brazen’ refers to

someone who is presumptuous, for example, but also to someone who is bold or, in American English, sassy. And ‘cheeky’ refers to someone who is naughty, but also carefree, forward, even plucky or audacious. All of which are certainly acceptable, even positive characteristics.

Let us start by addressing the impertinent character in his clearly negative variant. The present philosophical discussion allows us to draw upon a gripping, but also modest book, namely Aaron James’ *Assholes. A Theory* (James 2012, 5, 23, 27). We should pause to remember that this little book was preceded by two others, namely *On Bullshit* (2005) by Harry Frankfurt, in which the respected philosopher describes *bullshit*, the nonsense which we are confronted with in our everyday lives and also in philosophy, as something closely related to *fake* and *bluff*; and *The No Asshole Rule* (2007) by Robert Sutton, a bestseller in which the Stanford Professor of Management Science describes the way in which harassment of employees, usually practised by men abusing their power, is detrimental to morale and productivity.<sup>3</sup> Along these lines, James describes a character whom we all know very well. He is usually male; he walks past a queue with his nose in the air, one could even say walks past regally; he interrupts discussions with high-handed gestures; with his shiny bicycle he nearly knocks down pedestrians attempting to cross the street on a green light; and if angrily chastised, he coolly sticks out his middle finger; on the motorway he changes lanes like a racing driver on the run, squeezing into gaps between cars and then impatiently flashing his lights.

This type of person also exists, as we should say here to avoid an obvious misunderstanding, in a non-everyday sphere, namely that ruled by art. “Many people think you are – excuse me! – an asshole”, a female journalist once said, for example, to famous German theatre director Claus Peymann, to which he merely replied: “I would agree with that.” Not only have he and the no-less-famous actors Bernhard Minetti or Traugott Buhre repeatedly screamed at each other during rehearsals – art is about the “existential” after all – but Peymann has been “often aggressive”, as he himself freely admits, “especially to young actors” (Dössel & Peymann 2017). The writer Thomas Bernhard, who had very few friends, one of them being Peymann, was also remarkable for his clear yearning for status and money.

The tricks he played on the Suhrkamp publisher, Siegfried Unseld, some of which were shameless, are well documented, even though the publishing house ultimately reaped its reward for so many years of financial support. It was as if Bernhard had attempted to honour the self-description of another Austrian author, Heimito von Doderer’s: “The writer is a disgusting fellow” (Hintermeier 2015):

According to James, what unites these people as a type and makes them an object of theoretical interest, is a concurrence of three traits: they claim special advantages; they are immune to criticism; and they are immune to criticism because they believe themselves to have a claim to these advantages. They are therefore presumptuous by conviction, in other words they believe they have good – moral – reasons for their presumptuousness. The key concept for James is that of absent recognition. The type of person that we call an asshole or idiot or jerk or, in my semi-abstract use of the language: the impertinent self, is incapable of recognising others, incapable of viewing them as equal to himself. At the very least, he is the self-appointed first among equals (as in the case of Peymann and Minetti, or Peymann and Buhre). In this sense, he is incapable of seeing others at all. Shame means being seen – being exposed; there is no shame without (at least imagined) onlookers. Impertinence or shamelessness means consciously not seeing, consciously ignoring those who see you.

I shall address these two points – shame and being seen, shame and equality – in more detail in the following. And I would like to do so by differentiating levels of meaning within the concept of impertinence.

### **Social and Moral Impertinence**

Impertinence, I have said, means consciously not “seeing” the others who see you and who could thus expose you in public, it means consciously ignoring them, consciously disregarding them. The same is true of shamelessness. Shame is inextricably linked to the moral-practical principle of recognition. But the impertinent being belongs in more of a social context, the shameless being in more of a moral

context. Shameless (or a “disgrace”) is our word, for example, for that group of rich people who continually and disproportionately grow richer at the expense of others, disproportionately because they could not possibly spend all the money they have “if they lived to be a thousand”, and because they contribute to a world in which it is possible for the eight richest people – yes: 8 – to own more than is owned by 50% of the world’s entire population, i.e. 3.6 billion people (Sanders 2016, 185; 2017, 45).<sup>4</sup> It is shameless *that* they get excessively rich, and impertinent *how* they do so. People who upload photos and videos of injured, dead or dying people from their smartphones to the Internet in “car crash compilations” in order to get “likes” and “dislikes” are shameless. A behaviour is shameless which falls below basic moral standards, while it is impertinent to display such behaviour publicly. An impertinent creature and his bad actions know no guilt. Why, he asks himself self-confidently, should I wait in a queue when waiting is for the masses (in the deprecatory sociological meaning of the word), for losers and underdogs, and I am the top dog? I am not like all those others, I am better. The impertinent self would only feel ashamed in the way others do in front of people he in fact recognises as equals, people whose opinions matter.

In other words: he who is not ashamed – it is important to add: in that impertinent way – can or will not imagine how others see him, how others perceive him and value him. He is lacking that external perspective which could teach him where his limitations lie. To this extent and in moral terms, shame can be a salutary emotion. Only he who has learnt to see with the eyes of others, as we have known since George H. Mead if not before, can embrace the expectations of others and gear his behaviour towards them.

Psychologically and philosophically, a broad consensus generally exists that shame only emerges on the basis of intersubjective and social relationships (Demmerling & Landwehr 2007, 223).<sup>5</sup> Sartre’s corresponding analysis in *Being and Nothingness* (1943) is the predominant and most famous philosophical contribution. In the years which he spent as a young lecturer in Jena, culminating in his *Phenomenology of the Spirit* (1807), Hegel was early to theorise on a battle between subjects for mutual recognition. Sartre referred to this theory and yet turned it on its head: by

recognising each other (as entities recognising each other), two subjects laid not (only) the foundations for true freedom, but also (and at the same time) for “unfreedom”. The moment I see that another subject sees me, I understand that the subject is doing with me what I am doing with it, or have previously done with it: this subject objectifies me in the same way I objectify it. In this very objectivity, however, a freedom is lost, namely the freedom to be different from one’s definition as an object. Sartre describes situations of shame as specific occasions dramatising this phenomenological-ontological situation of being noticed. In shame, the seeing look of the other person catches me out and plunges me into a plight from which I cannot escape. I am, so to speak, a naked fact, removed from my possibilities. To this extent, shame is not just a social and a moral, but also an ontological reaction, particularly for Sartre (Sartre 1976, 338ff.; Honneth 1988; Butler 2003).

John Rawls positions the phenomenon in a narrower, namely moral, yet still social, framework. He defines shame as “the emotion evoked by shocks to our self-respect”, and self-respect seems to him to be the “most important primary good”, for without self-respect “all desire and activity becomes empty and vain” and “we sink into apathy and cynicism” (Rawls 1999, 386 & 388). Shame is a feeling which lends expression to the isolating effect of injured self-respect, rendering it passive. The antisocial tendency is characteristic of this feeling. To this extent, shame is a necessary emotion in the negative sense, an emotion which necessarily has to be avoided if we do not wish – morally – to offend others in their self-respect; if we are interested – socially – in participating individuals; and if, finally, we are interested – politically – in participating fellow citizens. The emotion of shame is an obstacle to compassion (Nussbaum 2003, 342ff., Nussbaum 2004) and, in quite general terms, to being (together) with others. It isolates, even destroys our relationship to the world, we lower our eyes, avoid the gaze of others, indeed we want the ground to swallow us up, so to speak. In other words, we want to bury ourselves, to become invisible, to remove ourselves from all contact with others, which in turn has the negative effect of our being unable to communicate what was so shaming, being unable to share it with others (Cavell 1976, 286; Cyrulnik 2010). Shame is one of the most private and privatising of emotions.

### Cultural and Culture-critical Impertinence

The social and moral levels of meaning form the inevitable background to that level of meaning which is key to my representation: namely the cultural and culture-critical level. Here it becomes clear why impertinence has acquired such a conspicuous status in today's societal and concomitantly political self-conception. It becomes clear why impertinence has become an unavoidable *Modern* problem, why impertinence is *necessarily* part of Modernity.

By cultural level of meaning I do not primarily refer to the fact that culture often occurs in the plural when meant in a descriptive sense, i.e. as a way of life, yet always in the singular in the normative sense (for example in the exclamation: "This person has no culture!"). In the descriptive sense there are many cultures which are distinguished by their value convictions. And this is also true, of course, for attitudes towards shame: they differ depending on historical epoch and geographical region.<sup>6</sup> By cultural level of meaning, I refer far more to sociological and culture-historical circumstances, and the foremost theorist in this context is Georg Simmel.

Simmel is one of those theorists who in their sociological, philosophical and culture-critical studies describe Modernity as a highly ambivalent epoch. On the one hand, Modernity permits greater subjective freedom; on the other hand, it leads to a weakening of social ties. On the one hand, it permits the individual to unfold his or her individuality on the general basis of formal equality and the particular basis of urban anonymity; on the other hand, it makes this unfolding difficult precisely because all individuals can in principle unfold.

Like other theorists, Simmel addresses the contradiction between the two ideals of freedom and equality, named by the French Revolution in the same breath (alongside fraternity, or solidarity). According to Simmel, these two ideals have a certain analogy to two different forms of individualism, namely "qualitative" and "quantitative" individualism. The ideal of equality and a corresponding quantitative individualism crystallised gradually with Christianity (the idea of God having

created all men as equal), and especially with Protestantism, the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century and the ethical socialism of the nineteenth century. The ideal of freedom and corresponding qualitative individualism (at least in one sense) has its antecedents in Ancient Greece and aristocratic design. According to Simmel, it occurs exemplarily in the personalities represented by Shakespeare and Rembrandt, before finally developing to completion in Goethe and Romanticism, through to Nietzsche: the individual emerges in all its particularity, incomparability, exceptionality, and ingenuity. From Simmel's point of view, then, Modernity is that epoch in which striving for qualitative individualism becomes a universal problem on the basis of realised quantitative individualism. Once all people have become equal legally and democratically, in law and as voters, there emerges both a general inclination and a specific necessity to make distinctions. Modern realisation of the contradiction between quantitative and qualitative individualism is concentrated in the phenomenon of visualisation. In public one has to appear – in both senses of the word: to seem to be, and to step forward – as an individual.

Simmel is aware that the framework of a politically egalitarian society increases the differentiation effort required by the individual. And, within this framework, differentiation can only be achieved by the mass of individuals at the level of perception, in the Ancient Greek *aisthesis*, in other words at the level of aesthetic appearance. Modernity, which emerged from a battle for the fundamental rights of the individual, now instigates a battle for sophisticated recognition, fought primarily at an aesthetic-visual level. Only at this level, not at the level of politics and the law, can socially non-dangerous differentiation now again take place. To be sure, it can also take place at the level of economic success and social achievement, in the sense of political and economic liberalism, but a democratic-egalitarian society is endangered by each further gain in economic and social power. In contrast, the aesthetic-cultural level permits unlimited differentiation in the manner of self-representation. In his study "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (1903), still exemplary today, Simmel describes all the "extravagances of mannerism, caprice, and preciousness" paid homage to by the people of Modernity, the dialectic masterpiece being the "blasé" individual. According to Simmel, a person is blasé who feels the constant striving for difference and craving for distinction to be "insubstantial" –

only to distinguish himself from others by having precisely this attitude (Simmel 1995, 49-56, 121, 128).

Walter Benjamin gave this theory of Modernity a decidedly Marxist-political and film-aesthetic twist in his famous essay from the mid-1930s entitled “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”. Here Benjamin presents the theory that the aura surrounding works of art, their seeming uniqueness and unapproachability, falls away as soon as they can be mechanically reproduced. While the aura of art thrives on its “cult value”, its origins in magic and religious ritual, mechanical reproduction brings forth an art which has “exhibition value”. Art should not be totally unapproachable for human beings, but visible, eye to eye with its recipients (Benjamin 2003, 256). For Benjamin, the contemporary medium for this democratic to communistic levelling is film. With film, the relationship of the audience to the work changes from observational passivity to participative activity. According to Benjamin, anyone can “lay claim to being filmed”, in other words himself become an actor, even if it is only as an extra (Benjamin 2003, 262). This claim must, of course, be taken within the historical context of the 1920s, in which Benjamin, like many other intellectuals of the time, initially paints his own picture of the Soviet Union pugnaciously and expectantly. In particular, he focusses on the films at that time – again Soviet cinema, but also Fritz Lang and King Vidor – which portray the proletarian masses and their everyday heroes and heroines. But it is obvious that this theory of art and film is also prognostic in character. By establishing a culture of everyday aesthetics, of self-presentation, of self-exhibition, of self-portrayal, Modernity fulfils the political agenda of asserting both freedom and equality.

And where self-presentation is triumphal, impertinence is not far off. Display or exposure of the other is at the core of shaming; being displayed or exposed against one’s will is, vice versa, at the core of shame.<sup>7</sup> In contrast, voluntarily displaying oneself in an embarrassing,<sup>8</sup> shaming or socially awkward situation, consciously presenting oneself for others to look at, exhibiting oneself like a dummy in a shop window, means an inversion of shame and the mechanism of shaming. *One’s own display* becomes the *core of impertinence*, being moreover a display or exhibition

which takes place in front of an audience frequently despised by the self-exhibitor. But one has to add immediately that impertinence can have diverse, at least *two faces*: a more narcissistic or a liberating face, the latter, for example, if people voluntarily display themselves in the so-called *social media* as someone who does not fulfil the fashion and body norms of a society fixated on super-slim female models, or masculinity on the cover of a body-building magazine.

Nevertheless, from here it is only one step to scathing cultural criticism. In a society in which individuals en masse take pleasure in exhibiting themselves, this obsession must become paradoxical, the illusion of a mass of individualists. “In many people”, as Theodor W. Adorno expressed it, “it is already an impertinence to say ‘I’”. Adorno wrote this aphorism in his *Minima Moralia* in 1944 and repeated it during an argument with Rolf Hochhuth in the mid-1960s. He is provided with one example by American philistines or *babbitts* who think it is acceptable to evaluate a great work of art with the words: “I like it” (Adorno 1978, 50; 1992, 244).<sup>9</sup> A thoroughly banal statement, which effectively insults the work of art in all its conceptual inexhaustibility.

However we subject this impertinence culture to a critical and sociotheoretical evaluation, whether more negatively with Adorno or more positively with Benjamin and Simmel, it remains constitutively Modern. Against this background, the excessive desire for visualisation made possible by the digital media of our time, from video and YouTube to selfies and a productive pleasure in the interactivity of the Internet, can come as no surprise. It forms part of the specific, in Simmel’s sense, *bipolar individuality culture of Modernity*. Historical shifts can naturally be observed. Sociologists, for example, have been describing a double erosion of culture since the mid-twentieth century, starting as a “bourgeois” erosion in the nineteenth century, progressing through sociopolitical left-wing protest movements in combination with rock and pop music since the 1970s, and then undergoing a cultural proletarianisation or rather proletarianisation since the 1980s, ultimately unfolding before our collective eyes and ears in the soap operas, talk shows, casting shows, reality TV shows and event culture to be found on the private TV and radio channels (Bell 1976; Bella 1985; Schulze 1993; Maase 1997; Neumann-Braun

1999). And one of the features of the new prole culture is that it even speaks to intellectuals.

Impertinence is not just constitutively Modern, however. We can go a step further and claim it to be a democratic virtue. And this brings me to my final point.

### **Political-democratic Impertinence**

Rhetorical shaming strategies are well known to play a role in parliamentary and civil societal democracy. Some say we should be ashamed of a Minister who is first smugly triumphant and then cowardly evasive.<sup>10</sup> Policemen and women who use violence against peaceful protesters are shouted at: “You ought to be ashamed! You’re a disgrace!” In the broad public discussion, the tabloids and also increasingly the so-called social media fulfil the function of individually apportioning blame and shame. Then a *shitstorm* breaks, followed by a *hate speech*.<sup>11</sup> But wider sociopolitical campaigns also use the strategy of shaming: a film which shows men beating seals, those trusting creatures, and in particular “seal babies” – a cleverly selected expression – with blunt weapons; or another which shows dolphins, those intelligent and communicative creatures – and anyone who was a child in the 1960s or the 1990s will know the famous US-American television series and cinema films *Flipper* our “best friend” – getting caught up in tuna fish drag nets and dying; such films pillory the hunters, as well as the greed for profit and luxury which drives them. The awarding of *Fair Trade* certificates to numerous goods to date, from coffee to clothing, is a result of the same strategy.

If we shift our attention from the empirical to the normative level, Rawls and Nussbaum remind us that self-respect is a necessary condition for participating in social and political life, and that shame, the losing of self-respect, is therefore dangerous for democratic-participative forms of society, and for socially and morally relevant compassion altogether.

This danger exists not only at the individual, but also at the collective level.

Democracy needs citizens who are certainly able to feel ashamed, but who do not feel deeply ashamed of their traditions. There are occasions and reasons for feeling collectively ashamed. In more recent German history we are all too aware of this as “guilt and shame in the light of the crimes of National Socialism”. The latest reminder for the USA is disturbing pictures of humiliation and torture from Abu Ghuraib, the Baghdad military prison. But a community is just as unable to live with an excess preponderance of shame as an individual is to live with an excess preponderance of self-disrespect. We do not necessarily have to call individual and collective self-esteem “pride” and “national pride” (or “patriotism”). But Richard Rorty is right, in my opinion, when he says that national self-esteem or national pride is the same thing for a country as self-respect for an individual: “a necessary condition for self-improvement”, and that includes – with Aristotelian emphasis – that to a measured extent “pride outweighs shame” (Rorty 1999, 3) – and of course collective self-esteem is not restricted to the nation; it takes place in every big social or political group (like “class”, “feminism”, “Black Power”) that forms an identity.<sup>12</sup>

But what if we are confronted not with pride, the compensatory opposing pole to shame, but with impertinence and shamelessness, its sociomorally challenging antagonists?

First of all, here too we have to ascertain in a narrower political context that talk of an end to shame, of an increase in rude and uncivilised behaviour, is a reaction to increasing egalitarianism, and this is meant sociologically: namely to an increasing inclusion of social groups in the societal-representative whole who were previously excluded. The anxieties which find expression in this lamentation are especially directed at the lower social classes, to whom democratic rights have been extended in stages over the centuries. The basic tone of this lamentation is thus nostalgic: a yearning for a time in which shame guaranteed that life was ruled and regulated across all social differences, or so it is believed (Locke 2016, 5, 9, 11, 20).

From this critical perspective, impertinent behaviour is not just a cause for complaint, but rather a plea for caution regarding political standards and standardised

ways of thinking. The socially excluded often have no other option but to proceed using forms of protest which cut across boundaries and provoke, thus having a tendency to be impertinent. Non-violent campaigns of civil disobedience have been orchestrated since the 1960s as conscious symbolic violations of legal norms, symbolic because legally nobody is allowed to suffer physical harm or material damage as a result, but also because these violations make a point which is graphic and indicates a deeper import. In contrast, the slap in the face which in 1968 Beate Klarsfeld gave Georg Kiesinger, the then Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, was impertinent in every sense of the word (presumptuous, brash, rude, wanton, plucky, even violent). In 1984, the heckling by MP Joschka Fischer during a parliamentary debate was also impertinent: “With respect, Mr. President, you are an asshole!” More recently, the diatribe in verse form directed at Turkish autocratic President Erdogan by German satirist and TV presenter Jan Böhmermann was impertinent. These are all *demonstrative actions* in both senses of the word: actions intended to demonstrate (to show) something demonstratively (graphically, conspicuously). Impertinence, as this context once again makes clear, is a primarily social trait, and not, like shamelessness, a primarily moral one.

The impertinent citizen – and this includes likewise the shameless and unashamed citizen<sup>13</sup> – is, accordingly, an ambivalent figure. Democratically, he seems to be as necessary as he is dangerous. He presents himself on both the progressive and the conservative/reactionary side, in sophisticatedly provocative political actions and in yelled abuse against the establishment, in demonstrative demands and in demonstrative contesting of minority rights, in the courageous defence of civil society against autocrats, and in the vulgarity of political-cultural proles. Impertinence is a part of democracy like the citizen who has come of age politically, is able to speak for himself and who now demands admission to the halls of power.

## Notes

1] The expression *Wutbürger* was coined by the SPIEGEL-journalist Dirk Kubjuweit; on Donald Trump as a “Wutbürger” cf. Quoos 2016, Kohler 2017, Gramckow 2016; cf. in detail and with passionately expounded arguments on the rise of radical conservative populism in the USA: Frank 2004.

2] Cf. Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Götz von Berlichingen* (1773, Act 3): “Er aber, sag’s ihm, er kann mich im Arsch lecken!” The historical Götz von Berlichingen (around 1480-1562) was a knight of the Frankish Empire.

3] *Bullshit* stands, as do *bluff* and *fake*, in close proximity to falsification, imitation and swindle. In contrast to the liar, the *bullshitter* has no relationship to the truth and is thus far more dangerous. In terms of cultural history, this criticism is aimed at the influential discourse initially triggered by Nietzsche and then spreading under the name of poststructuralism and postmodernity. In political terms, the *bullshitter* was later to be successful in the rhetoric of the Trump Administration. With due consistency, James has now presented us with a follow-up book (2016). – Cf. also Sutton (2007). This book is directed against bullying at work. An “asshole” or *bully* (somebody who abuses his power and tyrannises others) or *jerk* (idiot, blockhead) can be recognised, according to Sutton, through two criteria: firstly, whether one feels depressed or suppressed, or in any case bad, after meeting the person, and secondly, whether the behaviour of this person is directed against colleagues with less power. Shaming people (colleagues) is one of the unpleasant characteristics of this person.

4] Sanders refers to the global rich list report by the aid organisation Oxfam from 2016/17.

5] Relevant to psychology is the research of Silvan Tomkin, among others, from the 1950s and 1960s, showing an essential connection between shame and “interest” in others (cf. Sedgwick & Frank 1995). Equally relevant since the 1990s is Kaufman 1992. – The question of the extent to which shame can be viewed as an inherent reaction is, in contrast, extremely controversial. Investigations involving blind sportsmen and women, including people blind from birth, show that they demonstrate reactions of shame when they do badly in a competition which are akin to those of their seeing peers (cf. Jacquet 2016, 39, with reference to research done by Jessica L. Tracy and David Matsumoto).

6] On the sensation of shame in Homer’s Ancient Greece, cf. Williams 1993 (esp. Ch. IV); Cairns 1992; on the shift in the sensation of shame in Western culture cf. Elias 1976, esp. 398 & 404; Elias purports that over the course of civilisation the willingness to experience shame has increased, and that people today are more likely to feel shame than in the Middle Ages. Shame, a form of anxiety (first in the context of the superiority of others, then in the context of a loss of love and respect by others), accordingly becomes stronger the more external constraints become self-constraints, and the greater mutual dependencies become. This is concomitant with the reduction in direct anxiety



regarding violence from others and the precise observation of others. - Within the European-North Atlantic societal form of our present day, shame can be observed predominantly in the socially out-classed and in women (cf. Neckel 1991; Probyn 2005); fitting here is a US American example: Brooks Bouson 2001; the highly competitive and success-oriented US society is conversely also an extremely “shame-based” society, in which there is even “shame about shame” (Kaufman 1992, 32). - From a culture-anthropological viewpoint, the theory is widespread that non-individualised cultures, like those of Japan and China, are more shame-based, whereas individualised cultures, such as those of Europe or North America, are based more on guilt (cf. Jacquet 2016, 11, with reference to Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead). Today the theory that the Asian culture knows no individualistic conception of the self is doubted, however, and it is also pointed out that there are different conceptions of persons in different cultures (cf. Lotter 2012, 17). Nevertheless, we must view the introduction of the conscience, in the sense of an individualised relationship of the subject to God, as a specifically Western European innovation which lends prominent significance to the feeling of guilt (cf. Lotter 2012, 70 & 112).

7] Here, once again, a reference to Sartre’s analysis is fitting; cf. also: “Exposure is the essence of shaming” (Jacquet 2016, 9). Semantically, exposure refers to physical nakedness. In the Christian culture it is connected with shame. When Adam and Eva gave in to the temptation to eat from the tree of knowledge, “Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realised they were naked”. (Gen. 3,7).

8] Compared to shame, embarrassment is a weaker emotion. It does not affect the whole person, but refers to a clearly definable mistake (somebody stumbles, or spills a cup of tea). In particular, the relationship to the audience is another because in the case of embarrassment the feeling of shame is mitigated by commenting gestures, in other words, by direct action: an apologetic or conceding smile, a rolling of the eyes, a raising of the eyebrows, a dramatic propelling of the arms, a theatrical biting of the fingers, etc. (cf. Demmerling & Landwehr 2007, 232; Jacquet 2016, 38).

9] The expression babbitt is taken from the 1922 novel of the same name by Sinclair Lewis, in which the author takes a satirical look at the conformism of the US-American middle classes at that time.

10] This was how the political scientist Christian Hacke (2011) spoke of the former German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle.

11] Whereas shame as a punishment does not feature in a state ruled by law. There are other examples to be found in the USA, however, and increasingly since the 1990s: shoplifters who have to wear a label branding them as such; people forced to put up a sign in their front garden announcing they have offended their neighbours; tax evaders who are outed on the Ministry of Finance website (cf. Jacquet 2016, 23; Locke 2016, 7).

12] The German translation (Stolz auf unser Land. Die amerikanische Linke und der Patriotismus) accentuates the terms “pride” (*Stolz*) and “patriotism” far more strongly than the American original; cf. in the current time also O’Toole 2017, written in the wake of the shameful circumstances which led to the fire in London’s Grenfell Tower: “Orwell always knew that English national pride had to start with a sense of shame – with anger at the ignominy of a society that treats some people’s lives as worthless simply because they do not have enough money to matter. (...) A nation that allows a Grenfell Tower to happen has lost the sense of shame without which there is no genuine national pride.”

13] In the terms of Jill Locke, the unashamed citizen, in contrast to the shameless one, acknowledges shame; s/he knows what it feels like to be ashamed, and s/he strives to overcome its negative effects, for example by becoming a queer activist (cf. 2016, 3 & 22-23).

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## Biography

### Josef Früchtl

Josef Früchtl (<http://home.medewerker.uva.nl/j.frucht>) is professor of philosophy with a focus on philosophy of art and culture (Critical Cultural Theory) at the University of Amsterdam (UvA). He is publishing in the field of aesthetics (with a focus on aesthetics and ethics as well as aesthetics and politics), Critical Theory, theory of Modernity, and philosophy of film. His recent publication is *Vertrauen in die Welt. Eine Philosophie des Films* (München: Fink 2013), translated as *Trust in the World. A Philosophy of Film* (New York & London: Routledge 2018).