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Theorising human concerns: theorising emotion from an Archerian perspective (0045)

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There is now a considerable body of evidence which points to the ways in which higher education discursively privileges rationality over emotion (eg Beard et al 2007, Leathwood and Hey 2009). This short paper introduces some philosophical arguments about the inadequacies of a split between reason and emotion and proposes that the work of Margaret Archer provides a firmer foundation for thinking about emotion in higher education. This is important because, as the other papers in this symposium show, emotion permeates academic life and analysing the affective structure of higher education is fundamental to understanding how privilege and disadvantage are produced and reproduced.

The difficulty with the dominant Cartesian account of rationality is that it offers little insight into the basis of cognitive powers, their emergence and rootedness in our human capacities for thought and action. The critique of the thinness of philosophical accounts of rationality cut free from the body and emotions and was rehearsed in Lloyd's (1984) ground breaking book in the 1980s and has been a focus of subsequent analysis. Unsurprisingly much of this criticism has come from within feminism, as the trope of active male reason in contrast to passive female emotionality is one that feminists have repeatedly sought to deconstruct. The social elaboration of these dualities underpinned the nineteenth century's banishment of middle class women to the home (Ehrenreich & English 1979) and provided a narrative of the inferior colonial other (Ahmed 2004). Emotion was cut loose from rationality and was portrayed as its opposite, as a source of irrationality. Reason was not only granted supremacy but it also positioned 'man' outside the natural world (Soper 1986). As Archer argues:

The metaphysics of modernity thus adduced a model of instrumentality rational man who could attain his ends in the world by pure *logos*, a rationality working through the formal manipulation of linguistic symbols to generate truth. (Archer 2000, p. 23)

The de-centring of 'man' that marked the post-structuralist attack on the Enlightenment further compounded the problem by according primacy to the discursive cut free from materiality in 'textualist' versions of post-structuralism (Callinicos 1989, Clegg 2006).

In contrast Margaret situates her analysis of emotion based on the primacy of practice. In Archer's model, discursive knowledge is not cut loose from the bodily and practice. Rather, there is a relationship between embodied, practical and discursive knowledge which arise from our necessary relations with the natural, practical, and social orders. Emotions are:

..socially *constituted* properties which are emergent from the internal relationship between the subjects concerns and society's normativity (Archer 2000, p. 215).

Emotions are emergent as commentaries relating to physical well-being, performative achievement, and self-worth entailed by our triune environment (natural, practical, and discursive). Emotions shift from first order to second order as they become further articulated and elaborated through our internal conversations. This dialogue, according to Archer (2000), cannot be construed as being driven by either logos or pathos but instead both are intertwined. She argues that there are three significant moments: discernment, deliberation and dedication. Emotionality for Archer plays an important part in the vivid inner life of personhood and which come to define our identities as persons. Thus in Archer's account emotions are central to her understanding of human beings as strong evaluators and to her account of human agency. She argues analytically for:

*a developmental sequence which takes the individual from birth to maturity, when he or she has acquired the full range of personal powers (PEPs) – those of self, agent, actor, and particular person.* (Archer 2000, p. 295)

Emotion as analysed by Archer plays a central role in the development of personal and social identity through a process that takes place over time:

In a nutshell, ..the individual as presented here in his or her concrete singularity, has powers of ongoing reflexive monitoring of both self and society, which enables this subject to make *commitments* in a genuine act of solidarity. (Archer 2000, p. 295)

Archer's (2000, 2003) social realist account differs markedly from seeing emotions as somehow the opposite of, or outside, rationality. Logos and pathos are intertwined, not positioned as opposites. Moreover, central to this account is the emergence of distinctive personal powers which are not reducible to either structural emergent properties (SEPs) or cultural emergent properties (CEPs). People have their own emergent powers and thus agency and by analytically (not philosophically) distinguishing them from both CEPs and SEPs both change and stasis can be analysed over time.

It is worth considering how such a positive account of emotions and second-order emotionality might relate to the particular commitments of academics. Much work on academic identity indicates that for many academics the intellectual life is a central value (Clegg 2008a, Hey 2004). The intensity of these, and indeed other, commitments can be explained by the transvaluation of second order emotionality:

Because of our identification with our ultimate concerns, it is the import of our emotionality upon them that counts henceforth. Because this is our personal identity we articulate imports in the light of our commitments which define us, and this brings with it a transformation of emotional commentary. (Archer 2000, p. 242)

Thus although commitments to intellectual pursuits might appear to be about the purely ideational or rational it is difficult to sustain this separation since the strengths of these commitments comes from the second order emotional commentary. Our internal conversations are central to this process and the ability to reflexively make decisions based on our always fallible assessments of the conditions we find ourselves in. The intellectual commitments academics make are not the binary opposite of our emotions but intertwined with them. This should come as no surprise since first personal accounts by scientists and academics often reveal passionate and lifelong attachments to their discipline. The question that becomes interesting, therefore, is why the idea of emotion is so problematic in the micro-politics of academic life, and how and why the discursive erasure of emotions appears to be such a feature of the academy.