



Locating hatred: On the materiality of emotions



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ABSTRACT

How do we locate hatred in the social fabric of human life? Where is it, and how do we detect it? Recent scholarly engagements with emotions have provided (at least) two rather separate kinds of answer to such questions. One, largely espoused by philosophers and psychologists, has sought to conceptualize emotions as complex conglomerates of cognitive processes, bodily sensations and dispositions to act, experienced by an individual human subject. Another path, more affiliated with anthropology and STS, has been occupied with transcending the boundaries of the personal body-mind as the limit of affects and emotions, locating them also beyond the individual: in spaces, atmospheres, objects – dispersed, across and in between. In this article, I explore what can be gained from a constructive dialogue between these different agendas when trying to make sense of the location of hate. The article suggests that we can use the more detailed outlines of the textures of specific emotions, found in the philosophy of emotions, as a basis for thinking about hate as an assemblage of particular narratives, evaluations, actions, and bodily configurations that can be distributed across different kinds of materiality. These considerations will be anchored in analytical reflections on hatred and its potential spatial and material manifestations in the context of the German Nazi state.

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1. Where is the hate?

Hatred is an enduring organization of aggressive impulses ... a stubborn structure in the mental-emotional life of the individual

(Allport (1979 (1954))).

... hate does not reside in a given subject or object. Hate is economic; it circulates between signifiers in relationships of difference and displacement

(Ahmed, 2001).

This article is about hate.¹ More specifically, I want to grapple with the question of the location of hatred; where is it, where does it reside, how does it materialize? As the two quotes above indicate, such questions have received rather different answers depending, not least, on one's disciplinary approach to emotions. Recent scholarly engagements with emotions have pursued rather separate paths regarding the question of location. One, largely espoused by philosophers and psychologists, has sought to conceptualize

emotions as complex conglomerates of components such as bodily arousals, cognitive processes and dispositions to act, experienced by an individual human subject. Other paths, typically more affiliated with anthropology, cultural studies and STS, have been occupied with transcending the boundaries of the personal body-mind as the limit of affects and emotions, locating them also beyond the individual: in spaces, atmospheres, objects – dispersed, across and in between. In this article, I want to explore what can be gained from a constructive dialogue between these different agendas when attempting to answer the question of the location of emotions more generally, and hate in particular.

Why ponder the location of hatred? I suppose the questions that intrigue us as scholars often emerge from a confrontation with something that cannot easily be understood or explained with the tools and concepts available. My reflections on the location of hatred in the social fabric of human life have, first and foremost, grown out of my engagement with Zygmunt Bauman's famous claim about the marginal role of hate in the organization and effectuation of the Holocaust – an engagement that has wavered between agreement and bewilderment. In his now classic book, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989), Bauman makes the case that this state-organized mass murder was not primarily made possible by the strength of emotions among a general public, allegedly acting out of hatred towards the Jews. The mass murder was, from the very start, an outcome of scientifically-sustained projects of

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political utopianism based on social and racial engineering, technological development and effective bureaucracy. Mass annihilation on this scale could not rely on something as precarious and unpredictable as emotions; it had to be organized and routinized. The flaw underpinning this was a lack of concern, not hatred. Bauman thereby represents an ongoing challenge to those who cite hatred as the driving force behind genocidal violence. It is, I believe, a convincing and yet puzzling claim. Convincing because Bauman makes it possible to understand the role played by millions of ordinary Germans in the mass killings: the bureaucrat busy fulfilling his duties rather than engaged in ideological hatred; the soldier performing his tasks without any deeper understanding of Nazi ideology; engineers and doctors first and foremost dedicated to their own research agendas; and, not least, the many people who were simply incapable of thinking (to borrow the succinct formulation from Hannah Arendt), refused to look more deeply into the events that were unfolding around them. If we adhere to one of the more frequent conceptualizations of emotions as basically that which makes us experience something as *relevant* to us (Ben-Ze'ev, 2000; Goldie, 2000), then Bauman is probably right: to many, what appeared relevant was something other than a strong hatred towards Jews. Bauman's consequent focus on the social production of unconcern, not least through material and institutional mediations, has thus contributed greatly to our understanding of the awkward role of morals in modern bureaucracy (a topic dating back, at least, to Weber).

And yet there is something about Bauman's claim regarding the absence of hatred that seems puzzling. If we rely for a moment on something as unscientific as immediate intuition then such intuition might tell us – or at least it tells me – that the brutal segregation and annihilation of whole categories of people must somewhere, somehow, involve a strong antipathy towards those people. If the word 'hate' has any bearing at all then it has to appear somewhere in this racist and genocidal equation. To be fair, Bauman would probably not deny this, as he is not univocal on the presence of hatred. Holocaust, he also notes, "was an ultimate expression of the genocidal tendency present in race and ethnic hatred" (Bauman, 2002: 1). What remains, however, is that this is not the prime lesson to be learned. The prime lesson has to do with all the rest: the social architecture of the Nazi state, the bureaucracy, the science of race and eugenics, the technological developments – all materialized in the laws, the ghettos, the transportation lists, the camps and the gas chambers. And all regardless of the passionate hatred of people. People. The locus of passions. But emotions are more than passion, and people are more than what lies beneath the surface of the skin. Does hatred merely vanish from our eyes because its materialization changes? This is the question that I want to pursue in the following.

I will start my examination by providing the contours of a working conception of emotions generally and hatred more specifically, within philosophical 'person-centred' approaches to emotions. I will pay particular attention to the work of Peter Goldie, Aaron Ben-Ze'ev and Thomas Brudholm, who have all focused on refining the composition as well as the ethical aspects of emotions, based on a conceptualization of emotions that foregrounds beliefs, evaluations and motivations as important aspects, alongside bodily affectedness. I will then reflect on some grounds for making claims about emotions being something other or more than these person-centred conceptions allow for, linking specifically to the idea of material delegation in the work of John Law. I will consider how we can use the detailed philosophical clarification of the composition of emotions to formulate a more precise account of the location of hate within the social fabric, suggesting an approach to hatred as an assemblage of components that can be distributed across different forms and materials, human as well as non-human. After this tour, I

return to Bauman's argument regarding the role of hate in the Holocaust order to consider what it might look like then.

2. Situating the question: emotions outside

Let me first briefly situate my interest in the location of emotions in relation to some current strands of scholarship because, obviously, there is a long tradition of discussing the emergence and cultivation of emotions as something beyond the individual body-mind. At the risk of oversimplification, I think we can detect a kind of two-step (at least) development of such a tradition. Firstly, there are scholars who, in different ways, have sought to 'de-privatize' the emotional aspects of human life by pointing towards the way in which emotional experience is organized, cultivated and initiated through discursive practices, techniques of governance, education and upbringing (for example Foucault, 1971; Stearns and Stearns, 1985; Abu-Lughod and Lutz, 1990 to name but a few. See also Scheer, 2012, 2014). A general point repeated in such work is that appropriate interpretations, displays and experiences of emotions are neither pre-social nor naturally given. Rather, emotions are closely intertwined with social norms and shared meanings and, as such, they are (also) something that we learn and do as part of our socialization into our respective community – a point shared by many scholars in the philosophy of emotions (for example Goldie and Brudholm). Such approaches basically maintain the experience of some body as a constituting part, if not *the* constituting part, of emotions, but they have initiated a fruitful critique of the notion of emotions as something private and authentic by highlighting emotions as culturally-embedded and socially-patterned.

Secondly, we have seen a huge and growing number of studies into affect which provide an even more elaborate vocabulary for 'going beyond' the individual, shifting the focus more profoundly from the "psyche to the situation", as Frederik Tygstrup (2012: 196) nicely summarizes the paradigmatic split in the research field.² What we find in much literature on affect is not only a movement from the individual body-mind to the social cultivation of subjective experiences as the locus of investigation but a more radical dissolution of the distinction between subject and surroundings that opens up the possibility of analysing affect as something that reaches across bodies, objects and spaces.³ We also find a heightened affirmation of the contingent and often muddled unfolding of arousals: i) that do not presuppose intentionality,⁴ ii) that are largely seen as a movement of bodies prior to any symbolization and signifying ordering set in⁵; and iii) that do not fit neatly into categories of specific emotions (anger there, hatred there, fear there). What we are left with are bodies, spaces, objects and actions that can take part in affective arousals; however, the unfolding of the actual situation and the experience of affect is never irrevocably fixed but tends to be precarious, unstable and unpredictable (Ahmed, 2010).

² By now, it seems possible to detect the contours of a more or less canonical body of literature on affect and/or emotions informed by this affective approach, obviously including writings such as Massumi, 2002, Ahmed, 2001, 2004, 2010, Thrift, 2004, 2008, Connolly, 2002, Brennan, 2004; see also Ticineto et al., 2007 or Seigsworth and Greigg, 2010 for overview.

³ Obviously, the reference to affect does not necessarily imply an interest in non-human agents, as Margaret Wetherell's compelling discussion of current studies in affect testifies (2012). There does, however, seem to be a certain flavour for post-humanism in some part of the scholarship on affect.

⁴ See, for example, the debate in Critical Inquiry (2011) between Ruth Leys and William Connolly on this particular issue.

⁵ This has, not least, been the aim of Thrift's emphasis on non-representational theory (2004) and Massumi's concern with the half-second delay (2002: 28–39).

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