AIDS and Social Reality in the 80s: A Phenomenological Analysis

By

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Abstract

This thesis examines the AIDS crisis in the 80s. Its specific aim is to explore the ideological mechanisms in the background of the dominant discourses, and at the same time, to point out that how these discourses affected gay men as subjects, and as members of a group. At first, I provide the phenomenological framework of a heteronormative ideology with specific regard to how one should think about such an ideology in terms of consciousness, social vision, and subject-formation. Then, I examine how the dominant AIDS discourses (medical, media) were engendered on the previously discussed ideological basis, and so how AIDS could be defined by the mainstream media as the „gay plague" or „gay disease". In this section, I put specific emphasis on the differences between „we" („general population") and „they" (people living with AIDS – PWAs), as it was implied by the dominant discourse. Finally, I examine how PWAs experience as „us-object" could result in gay shame, and how this shame was overcome. In this section, I argue that both conservative gay („unreflected"), and activist gay („reflected") answers to the dominant discourses can be interpreted as attempts to get back the temporarily lost gay agency.

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Introduction

The social reality of the AIDS crisis in the 80s was a frightening phenomenon then, and is a crucial reference point now where new ideas about class, race, gender and sex can be anchored to. My intention here is, although, not necessarily to create new ideas on the basis of the crisis and what happened afterwards, but to provide an in-depth analysis about the power-relations behind the dominant discourses. What I was interested in, and so what gives the basis of this thesis, is that what those elements of the dominant discourses were that allowed to apprehend people living with AIDS (PWAs) as the victims of the "gay plague". The key of answering this question seems to be embedded in the power-structured relations between "we" and "they" which relations, as I will argue, highly influenced social perception, and as a result, social reality.

Indeed, it seems that the distinction between "we" and "they", the social perception, and the social reality are tightly interrelated (one influences the other, and the other way around), and so all are engendered, and/or maintained in a dynamic process. Connectedly, after reconstructing the logic and effects of the dominant discourses, from a phenomenological point of view, I also attempt to demonstrate how it is possible to transcend these dominant discourses (therefore, to dominantly re-interpret the framework within which they were produced), through "*reflection"*.

In this thesis, after all, I analyze power-relations as they were embedded in the dominant western (US, Great-Britain) AIDS discourses, in the 80s. More precisely, I want to demonstrate the powerful working of the *heteronormative social perception*; a working which, as I argue, only can be understand – and so its consequences defeated – from a "reflected" position. The aim of this thesis is twofold: while I analyze a crucial period in the history of the twentieth century sexuality, I also want to demonstrate the important elements of the working of heteronormative ideology. Through interrogating how the "I", the "we", and

the "they" were constructed dynamically and interrelatedly throughout the AIDS crisis, I also want to provide more general viewpoints that are merged into a certain (phenomenological) critical framework. Through highlighting how the ideological elements of the dominant AIDS discourses were engendered, therefore, I hope to get a clearer understanding in terms of the working of heteronormative ideology, in more general.

As it is clear by now, my starting point will be the *dominant discourse*; a discourse that is influenced by the *dominant* ideology (in this case, heteronormativity). Although the discourses about AIDS were diverse – and so they criticized the dominant discourse from several aspects, such as class, race, or gender –, here I only deal with their references to sexuality.Since, of course, due to the interrelatedness of the diversity of the discourses it is impossible to deal only with one – even if that is the dominant one – I need to carry out a more abstract analysis in which one certain (heteronormative) logic plays the leading role. This abstraction is important because, at the end of my thesis, I use the dominant discourses and its consequences (most notably, the gay shame) as starting points, in relation to which alternative discourses could be engendered. Therefore, the main argument for the abstraction is the assumption that alternative discourses can be best understood from their relation to the dominant discourses (since the dominant discourses are known by all the individuals of a society, heteronormative discourses create the taken-for-granted basis of the individuals' social-sexual existence). At the end of my thesis, I also give accounts about alternative discourses (produced by gay men) as critical or uncritical reactions to the dominant discourses.

Why Phenomenology?

I decided to use a phenomenological perspective in my thesis because I am convinced that phenomenology, here as an approach between sociology and psychology, can best highlight

the crucial and interrelated relation between ideology, discourse, *and body* ("including" the self). I take the social realm as inhibited by individual bodies that perceive the social realm in this way or that which perception is shaped by discourses and with which perceptions discourses can be shaped. Here, therefore, I apply phenomenology – as an analytical tool to study the levels of consciousness (that is always a consciousness *of* something) – in order to describe *how* and *why* the content and perspective of the dominant discourses can be seen as taken-for-granted for the individuals, how individuals' perception is influenced by these discourses, and how change can be gained via reflected perception.

Let me quote here Joan Scott's insightful thoughts about the problem of the (marginalized) experience in writing (alternative) histories. She claims that the most significant problem with such explorations is that

> (q)uestions about the constructed nature of experience, about how subjects are constituted as different in the first place, about how one's vision is structured-about language (or discourse) and history-are left aside. The evidence of experience then becomes evidence for the fact of difference, rather than a way of exploring how difference is established, how it operates, how and in what ways it constitutes subjects who see and act in the world. (…) [T]he project of making experience visible precludes critical examination of the workings of the ideological system itself, its categories of representation (homosexual/heterosexual, man/woman, black/white as fixed immutable identities), its premises about what these categories mean and how they operate, and of its notions of subjects, origin, and cause (1991:777-778).

The aim of my analysis is just to explore "how difference is established", how the ideological system, and the "categories of representation" operate in the social realm, and how all of this influences the vision and apprehension of subjectivities. Phenomenology will serve here, as it was claimed by its establisher, Husserl, as an examination of the *foundations*.

Although the culturally critical analyses about the dominant AIDS discourses in the 80s recognized the huge role of representation and discourse in the shaping of social reality, in that current situation, understandably, there were a bigger emphasis on how to point out geographically (cultural analysis) and how to handle socially (cultural activism) the given situation. Activism, activist art, as Crimp pointed out rightfully, and as the famous works of ACT UP proved it in practice, *had* the potential to save lives (1988) and so it was connected to bodies, too. Similarly, critical cultural analysis served an increased awareness of what exactly was happening, how abstraction and facts are, in some sense, the same. What I offer in my thesis, however, is a system of phenomenological considerations which involve an attempt tounderstand the working of heteronormative ideology; an understanding of how ideology shaped individuals' social vision at the time of the AIDS crisis. The subject and its "look" – as a viewpoint in the world – plays a leading role in this thesis, from the beginning.

Finally, it is important to mention, and phenomenological thinking also requires me to do so, that I can only implement this analysis due to the existing texts on the topic, other critical texts that I have read, and the years I spent in higher education. All of these were that provided me a reflected viewpoint in terms of heteronormative ideology. Since I was not present at the time of the analyzed crisis, it is important to be aware that my knowledge about it is based on secondary sources from among which I selected out those that I considered as crucial in terms of what I want to focus on. These are critical sources, therefore, they embody certain aspects that has been able to make a strong effect on me.

I. The Phenomenological Working of Heteronormative Ideology

The aim of this chapter is to provide a phenomenological framework in which my later analysis fit. The role of this framework is to highlight how heteronormative ideology works, and how its working relates to individuals. At first, I intend to examine how heteronormative ideology can be described in phenomenological terms, mostly referring to the different levels of consciousness, first construed by Husserl. Secondly, I attempt to give a basis on which the ideological social vision can be apprehended. Finally, I want to construe how the social-sexual self is constructed through the ideological social vision. In this last subchapter, therefore, I introduce the crucial working of ideological social vision as it plays a leading role in thesubject-formation, and in individuals' relations with other individuals and with themselves. In terms of the following chapters, this chapter is to help to apprehend the ideological mechanisms in the background of the dominant AIDS discourses; more precisely, how the ideologically influenced social vision of the dominant medical and media discourses leaded to the construction of AIDS as a "gay disease". Moreover, through the content of this chapter one will be able to see the significance of social vision in terms of subject-formation, too; that will be crucial for the later understanding of the "we/they" distinction mirrored by the dominant discourse.

Heteronormative Ideology and the Natural Attitude

For Husserl, when he established the framework of phenomenology, natural attitude was one of the key concepts. In his work, natural attitude refers to a certain process of "knowing" of the world in which anything that appears as a(n)(new) object is (unconsciously) interpreted within the sphere of the *familiar* (Husserl 1969: 16). Natural attitude does not allow us to see,

or, in more general terms, perceive objects *as they are* but rather as they are *related to* and embedded in our already known world. If I see, for instance, a lipstick on the table, according to the natural attitude, I will not perceive its properties as they are, only its properties as they are related to its function I know. I will see it as a lipstick in use (in my mind), not as an object. Its characteristics I apprehend will, likely, differ from the characteristics apprehended by a two-year-old. While I will probably see it as a tool to color my lips, the child may see it as a tool to paint on the wall. What is common, though, in our apprehension is that neither of us sees it as an object but as an object that has its characteristics in our world.

Even if at first glance I cannot see what kind of object I am "facing", I will find its place within my familiar world: it will be an object which I like or hate, or which leaves me indifferent. As Ahmed puts it: "[i]n a way, we learn what home means, or how we occupy space at home and as home, when we leave home" (2006: 9). It means, therefore, that even if there are hitherto unknown objects to know, my process of knowing them will be influenced by my prior knowledge about the world; indeed, I will want to understand the place of that certain, hitherto unknown object within my world in order to give it a meaning. Putting it simply, "perceiving an object involves a way of apprehending that object" (Ahmed 2006:27).

This process of knowing of objects influenced by our natural attitude is not only valid for tangible objects but also other, more abstract phenomena. Mainstream ideology, as a general way of looking at things, is unperceivable in the natural attitude. One can also say that ideology is hidden just *by* the natural attitude. The way it is hidden can be best understood by Husserl's differentiation between the "'*straightforwardly' executed* grasping perceiving, remembering, predicating, valuing, purposing, etc., from the *reflections* by means of which alone, as grasping acts belonging to a new level, the straightforward acts become accessible to us" (Husserl 1995 [1913]: 33). This differentiation presupposes that we recognize the *intentionality* of our consciousness – that it is always a consciousness *of* something (ibid).

Therefore, we distinguish the levels of the "something"; whether, for example, it is a consciousness of a lipstick ("straightforward") or of my perception about the lipstick (reflected). If we perceive a social phenomenon or individuals within the sphere of the social "straightforwardly" it means that we will not be able to realize the ideology which represents them *in this way or that*. Ideology, after all, is hidden from us due to its familiarity. It provides us a familiar place of interpretation, without our awareness of that it is provided. We perceive, in the natural attitude, social phenomena and individuals in the sphere of the social in certain ways (that excludes other ways of perception) which are widely seen as the only ways social phenomena can be perceived. As we will see later, this taken-for-granted direction of social perception was the main reason why AIDS was apprehended as the "gay plague".

When I say *"heteronormative ideology"* I refer to something which is hidden from the everyday (not reflected) gaze, and so, though it interprets the meaning of every emerging sexual object, due to the hiddenness of the act of interpretation, one will take the pre-interpreted objects as if they could not been interpreted otherwise. By *heteronormative logic*, on the other hand, I understand a logic that is used by actual people (in an un-reflected way) and so that continuously *maintains* heteronormative ideology in practice. It designates a path which is familiar, „[s]o we walk on the path as it is before us, but it is only before us as an effect by being walked upon. (…) Lines are both created by being followed and are followed by being created" (Ahmed 2006:16). As a result, "the body gets directed in some ways more than others" (Ahmed 2006:15) due to tradition; tradition as a social space of the familiar.

If the body – as a sexual body – faces some (pre-made) directions, it also means that it does not face some other directions. Sexual-subjectivity will be shaped according to the direction the body is facing: this direction defines what is before us – what is "in line" –, what is behind us, what is next to us etc. So the direction we perceive the social reality from influences what

we know or how we think about the social reality. If, for example, one is heterosexual and one believes that heterosexuality is the only proper sexuality, one will apprehend the whole social-sexual system accordingly: (s)he will perceive a hierarchical social-sexual system within which her/his sexuality is on the top.

Moreover, heteronormative logic does not only work as something that maintains – with Ahmed's words – the "familiar path", therefore, the directions we are perceiving the social reality from, but also something that determines what we will focus on and so what will be in the background from among the things we are facing. For instance, if I face a human being in a neutral situation (let us say, I suddenly see her/him appearing in the street), there could be several characteristics which I could focus on, none of my focuses on a body is apodictic – absolute indubitable[1]. Nevertheless, according to the heteronormative logic, I will focus on "its" sex – that is, according to the same logic, straightforwardly mediated by gender –, and in the natural attitude, this focus will be taken-for-granted[2]. Therefore, if we interrogate the reality of a society from a social-sexual viewpoint, and if heterosexuality designates the sphere(s)[3] of the "normal" within that society, we have to consider heteronormative ideology as the organizing principle of that culture[4].

[1]The fact that we *can* imagine that our focus is on different characteristics of a body, but we *cannot* imagine that any of them would be indubitable, and still, one of them *is*, according to the natural attitude, taken-for granted, signs that there is ideology in the background (for the meaning of "apodicticity" in phenomenology, see Husserl 1995 [1913]:15).

[2]Of course, there are more specific situations where other ideologies or prejudices designate my focus on a body. For example, racial ideologies direct my focus on somebody's skin color.

[3]It is possibleto use plural here because by heteronormativity it is worthwhile to understand an extended ideology which includes different spheres such as gender, sexuality, lifestyle, family.

[4] The question of race could be approached similarly.

About the Ideologically Influenced Social Vision

In how one perceives one's own body and others' bodies (as sexed objects) within the social reality, has an essential role in shaping the all-time social context. At the end of the nineteenth – at the beginning of the twentieth century, the heteronormative way of perception of bodies became stabilized. I write "stabilized" because one should not think about the nineteenth century as a period when sexual ideology essentially changed (Foucault 1990:57); rather, due to a scientific paradigm change, ideology – again, as a way of looking at things – became more focused, embodied (due to categories and definitions), and so more tangible (in terms of how the re-interpreted bodies appeared in the social reality). Linnaean scientific tradition, especially the presumption that "all of nature can be accommodated within a taxonomy" (Foucault 1973:126) – and so "things" have to be named and described (Foucault 1973:132-133) –, and scientific interest in sexuality intertwined at the time, and as a result, an order of sexual categories has come into existence; an order which designated and still designates the acceptable and possible ways of conceiving sexuality (Rubin 1984:275-287). I write here, therefore, about what Foucault calls "a medicine of sex" (Foucault 1990:54). Namely, he differentiates a "biology of reproduction" from a "medicine of sex", and claims that

> [f]rom one to the other, there was no real exchange, no reciprocal structuration; the role of the first with respect to the second was scarcely more than as a distant and quite fictitious guarantee: a blanket guarantee under cover of which moral obstacles, economic or political options, and traditional fears could be recast in a scientific-sounding vocabulary (Foucault 1990:54-55).

Putting it very simply, Foucault suggests here that despite the fact that the "medicine of sex" used "neutral" scientific language, it served ideological aims – even if implicitly. This new

"medicine of sex", therefore, resulted in the above mentioned new characteristics of heteronormative ideology (focused, embodied, and so more tangible):

> The transformation of sex into discourse (…), the dissemination and reinforcement of heterogeneous sexualities (…) are linked together with the help of the central element of a confession that compels individuals to articulate their sexual peculiarity (…) (ibid 61).

Social-sexual subjects and objects received a new background that influenced how they were perceived in the social reality, and also that how they perceived themselves (mirrored by confession). This new background provided a new field of interpretation in terms of sexual-self and sexual objects; as a result, new ways in which one could relate to these new social objects were also engendered. If one wants to understand the interrelated connections between the space of the social, and bodies (or groups of bodies) that exist within it, apprehending the social vision must have an elementary role.

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological description about an understanding of "how vision can be brought into being from somewhere without being enclosed in its perspective" (1998 [1962]: 67) may be helpful here.[5]Merleau-Ponty's account – as I interpret it in order to understand social phenomena – can be seen as similar to the notion of "situated knowledge" (Haraway1988;) as long as it acknowledges that there is no such thing as universal perspective, and so that a viewpoint is always embodied (always a viewpoint of some body). However, it also deals with how it is possible to create or perceive *whole* objects despite this "situatedness". Therefore, unlike the concept of "situated knowledge", this account can help

[5]Merleau-Ponty's example is the next-door house which he sees from a certain angle. The problem is that the house would be seen differently from other perspectives („from the right bank of the Seine, or from the inside, or again from an aeroplane"), and the house *itself* would be none of these appearances. Instead of Leibniz's suggestion that, putting it simply, the house *itself* is „seen from nowhere", Merleau-Ponty gives us an understanding about how it is possible to acknowledge the situatedness of our view, and still prove that we are able to apprehend objects in their complexity.

me not to highlight how perceiving something from a heteronormative aspect is indeed not universal *but* rather that how perceiving something from a certain angle can result in the (imagined) perception of a whole (since this second point is more important in terms of explaining the working of heteronormative ideology). For me, here, the point will not be that heteronormative aspect claims itself to be neutral and objective (as it was criticized before by many) but how this generally acknowledged "neutrality" is engendered, and how it creates whole social objects. According to Merleau-Ponty,

> [i]n normal vision (…) I direct my gaze upon a sector of the landscape, which comes to life and is disclosed, while the other objects recede into the periphery and become dormant, while, however, not ceasing to be there. Now, with them, I have at my disposal their horizons, in which there is implied, as a marginal view, the object on which my eyes at present fall. The horizon, then, is what guarantees the identity of the object through-out the exploration; it is the correlative of the impending power which my gaze retains over the objects which it has just surveyed, and which it already has over the fresh details which is about to discover. (Merleau-Ponty 1998 [1962]: 68)

We have here, therefore, three essential elements of knowing of the world through vision: at first, we know that if we focus on an object, its environment will be perceived more obscurely, will be perceived as its background (we are not conscious of the background); second, it is due to the background – and the different horizons existed within it – that we can apprehend the object our focus is on (what we are conscious of); and third, the (unconscious) recognition of these different horizons makes it possible to us to apprehend the object as a whole – and not only as a certain perspective of it.

This description is extraordinarily helpful, therefore, because if one claims that mainstream ideology determines, or at least influences the direction from which we are facing an object, and that what our focus is on, one can say that most of the objects will be perceived from the same (ideological) direction and so will be known according to this angle of vision. Despite it is true, the individual that perceives ideologically does not apprehend this way of perception as only a "perceiving something from a *certain* direction". Rather, there are unconscious elements in the process of perceiving that make it possible for the individual to think that (s)he perceives something from a neutral viewpoint that lets her/him to apprehend the whole object. In the social apprehension of an object, all-time social discourses play the leading role; discourses that are about some focused parts of the faced objects but which give them a whole social body.

Speaking in terms of social objects, if I see a human body, its social-sexual context – namely, the totality of all the sexual discourses – will be its background. A background the basis of which is provided by heteronormative ideology; a background which we are not conscious of but which, at the same time, shapes the body[6] which we are conscious of. If I see a body in the sphere of the social, I will perceive it, according to the natural attitude, as my world (the social context in which I exist) "allows" me to perceive. Ideology as something shapes my world and, thus, that what my focus is on, consequently, also shapes the background around the object in my focus (importantly, in vision, the background is the negative of the form in my focus). The borders of the focused objects are also borders of the background. Background and focused object, therefore, are interrelated; the form of the one affects the form of the other. If, let us say, the mainstream social discourse on bodies changes one will perceive the bodies from a different angle; and changing bodies themselves can change social discourses. It is possible to transcend the perspective of the dominant ideology only by

[6] Importantly, shaping the social body can seriously affect actual bodies as one will be able to see it later.

reflection; so when one does not perceive the social reality "straightforwardly" but in a reflected way. For example, all the discourses about heteronormativity mirror a reflected thinking about ideology, so they attempt to transcend it.

According to this, perceiving social-sexual bodies in a heteronormative culture, from a heteronormative perspective, means that different bodies in different settings (before different backgrounds) are all imagined according to, and derived from a heteronormative train of thoughts. As Ahmed notes in her analysis on Freudian psychoanalysis: "[i]f the 'straight line' is the 'right turn', then it might operate as a psychoanalytical wish rather than what is 'discovered' as a truth within the reading" (2006: 76). This "psychoanalytical wish" is a heteronormative wish built on the logic which imagines and explains everything "out of line" as "perversion", as a "wrong turn". Consequently, every wrong turn will be considered with regards to the "straight line" – that is heterosexuality. Therefore, even if Freud does not necessarily think that heterosexuality is "natural" (since he apprehend it as an "achievement" [Ahmed 2006: 78-79]), he maintains that it is normal by explaining every not-heterosexual act as something that derived from the heterosexual, as something that "perverted" from the "straight line".

Ahmed' account here can be read not only as a writing that is strictly about Freud's methodology: one can also extend her observations in terms of how we should imagine heteronormative thought throughout mainstream society. According to this, it is not even important whether people consciously think that heterosexuality is natural or not; it is enough that they (consciously or not) normalize it and so every object that appears in their social field of vision will be interpreted "heteronormatively". As we will see it in the following chapter, this is exactly what happened in terms of AIDS as a hitherto unknown social (and health) phenomena: a heteronormative aspect from which the phenomenon was begun to be interrogated, with its specific focus on homosexual object choice, made it possible to define

AIDS as "the gay plague". In the following sub-chapter I examine how social objects appear in the field of the vision, and how their recognition as subjects (by me) will construct my social-sexual-self.

Social-sexual Subjects and Objects in the Heteronormative System

The hitherto described context is the one in which I want to construe the final point of this chapter, namely, how social-sexual subjects/social-sexual selves are constructed in a heteronormative system, and how they are related to social objects and (other) Others. What I have already written about were the working of heteronormative ideology (from the viewpoint of intentionality), and its influence on our social perception. I want to demonstrate here, therefore, how our ideologically influenced social perception has a leading role in the construction of the social-sexual subjects. I intend to use Sartre's phenomenological description about how "the look" takes part in the continued process of being a social being in order to see how the others' (socially-ideologically situated) gaze engenders and shapes me as a social object.

First of all, on the basis of Sartre's writing, we have to distinguish between when we perceive an object and when we perceive a subject. If my consciousness is a consciousness of an object ("a temporal-spatial 'thing'" [Sartre 1996 1948:278]) it will mean that, in my world (the world is perceived *by me*), its

> "relation with other objects would be of the purely additive type; this means that I could have [it] disappear without the relations of the other objects around [it] being perceptibly *changed*. In short, no new relation would appear *through it* between those things in

> my universe: grouped and synthesized *from my point of view* into instrumental complexes, they would *from [its]* disintegrate into multiplicities of indifferent relations" (ibid 278).

Perceiving something as a subject ("man"), on the other hand, "is not to apprehend an additive relation between the chair and [her]; it is to register an organization without distance of the things in my universe around that privileged object. (…) [I]nstead of a grouping *toward me* of the objects, there is now an orientation *which flees from me"* (278).

These account already suggests that perceiving a "thing" as a (wo)man/person means a certain degree of re-organization in my world. It is important, however, that I still perceive the other (wo)man as an object. Even if the objects of my world are re-organized around the Other, if I see her/him as an object, I am not going to be part of the re-organized result: I will perceive the Other as somebody does something with regards to some things. If I think or say that the certain other person is a feminist (provided I can bring here such an example in which a social context is already presupposed), I only give an account about her/his connection to the social reality without I would be part of it. I do know, or at least presuppose, that she/he perceives the social world through "feminist lenses", therefore, from a specific, reflected aspect, I perceive her/him and the objects of her/his presupposed consciousness as a closed circuit which I am not part of (at this stage I am an outsider in terms of her/his world). Therefore, although naming the distinction between perceiving object-objects and (wo)man-objects is elementary, namely it is the first step in the process of realizing I am not the only center of the world, the world is not only for me, and it can be structured and apprehended differently from my apprehension, it is still not *the* relation which is so crucial in terms of my subject-formation (ibid 278-279).

The relation that I am looking for and which will be the most important in terms of the personal effects of the working of heteronormative ideology is defined by Sartre in the next page:

> "if the Other-as-object is defined in connection with the world as the object which *sees* what I see, then my fundamental connection with the Other-as-object must be able to be referred back to my permanent possibility of *being seen* by the Other. It is in and through the revelation of my being-as-object for the Other that I must be able to apprehend the presence of his being-as-subject. (…) I have observed that I can not be an object for an object.(…) If the Other is on principle the *one who looks at me,* then we must be able to explain the meaning of the Other's look. (…) Of course what most often manifests a look is the convergence of two ocular globes in my direction. But the look will be given just as well on occasion when there is a rustling of branches, or the sound of a footstep followed by silence, or the slight opening of a shutter, or a light movement of a curtain" (280-281). Importantly, further: "(…) to perceive is to *look at,* and to apprehend a look is not to apprehend a look-as-object in the world (unless the look is not directed upon us); it is to be conscious of *being looked at*. The look which the *eyes* manifest, no matter what kind of eyes they are is a pure reference to myself" (ibid 282).

What we have here, first of all, is that "I" as an ego (for myself) only exist in the world through apprehending Other's look/gaze. Paradoxically, the Other's somewhat objectivizing look gives me the reflection about myself *as a person* which is always a being-in-the-world. If I am not looked at, or do not feel looked at when I do something my acts remain un-reflected

(or as Husserl puts it "straightforwardly executed") so I as a subject in the world will be absent, my consciousness will be a consciousness of what I am aiming with my acts and not what I am doing/how I am acting *as a person* who is visible for the Other. Therefore, when I act somehow (in the world), I will be conscious of my*self* – that *I am* the one who is acting somehow/doing something – only if I reflect on my act that ispossible only *through* the Other's look (in this case I will see myself as a perceivable object in the world)[7]. The Other's look, after all, is a constitutive element in terms of my own self.

For better understanding, it seems worthwhile to consider here Marcel Mauss' thoughts on body techniques (1979) [1934]. Mauss' text can be useful here, first of all, because the describability of "body techniques" is based on their visibility for Others, second of all, because with Mauss' accounts it is possible to demonstrate how the self-constructing process of being/feeling looked at continuously works in a more complex (compared to Sartre's accounts) social setting, and finally because Mauss' cultural aspect brings me back to the path of the analysis about the working of heteronormative ideology.

A certain body technique means something which is not a "natural way" of being of the body, something acquired. Moreover, as Mauss puts it, "there is perhaps no 'natural way' for the adult" (102). Body techniques change (or can change) with the precession of age, they varies culturally, depend on tradition (education), somebody's position in a certain culture. "These habits do not vary just with individuals and their imitations; they vary especially between societies, educations, properties and fashions, prestiges" (101).Writing about body techniques means a reflected writing about being-in-the-world and more precisely, being in a social

[7] Considering my previous example with the feminist, by now, one can easily understand why feminism as a specific and reflected way to looking at social things can be crucial in terms of social changes. Being looked at by feminists influences the subjects (perceiving themselves as social objects) social acts, how they act with their body. A feminist's look can engender shame in a subject who feel her/himself as apprehended as a misogynist (of course, whether the misogynist object feel shame as a subject or not, in a such a case, depends on the specific contexts but I really think that *engendering sel-reflection* is the biggest potential of feminist and other social movements).

environment. It is reflected because it recognizes and states that even our most elementary acts which are performed with our bodies, like walking, are dependent on different social factors rather than developed "naturally" (so body techniques can be perceived only from a meta-level).

Mauss recognizes, even if there is no emphasis on this point from this specific perspective, that the way how I use my body *before others* gives information about me-as-an-object. Indeed, it seems that the account about body techniques as the description of a reflected perception of human bodies in the social sphere is a valuable account in terms of how the condition of being-looked-at determines, or at least influences our everyday life. Different body techniques are all about appearance which, of course, we are not conscious of, or at least not at every moment. We act somehow because we have learnt to act in a certain way and often, we act "straightforwardly" (not in a reflected way) because the certain way of acting seems and feels natural. However, this feeling can disappear all at once; the cause of the breaking point, similarly to the cause of the "natural feeling", will be the Other's look. Once we are conscious of our body techniques, therefore, we are conscious of ourselves as objects *through* the Other's look. Let us see, through an example, how it works precisely.

We are taught when we are children that skipping in the street, instead of walking, is not a proper way of getting somewhere. We are, therefore, usually walking on the street (interesting to observe that even if someone is running or jogging, a lot of people are staring at her/him; the jogger will attract the looks) which we feel a natural way of getting somewhere. We also feel that those who look at us apprehend a "proper"/"normal"(wo)man-object; but as soon as we would travel to another culture where the general way to get somewhere is skipping, we suddenly would feel embarrassed because our (wo)man-object appearance in the eyes of others would be weird, or even ridiculous (or, if we think about Mauss' understanding of body techniques, we even could appear as, let us say, evil, or divine).

What is certain, after all, is that the way how I use my body at every moment is the way of how I occupy my place in the eyes of Others. There are moments in which I am more conscious of my way of acting; moments when I feel looked at by other Other(s) (those Others that are different from me and that apprehend me as different from them from some momentary relevant aspect). At these moments I feel more like an object, I feel more exposed, I am very much conscious of myself as object (as I appear to others).

Concerning heteronormativity as the ideology of the mainstream, the process of actual learning of how to act as a girl or a boy, or how to select a proper sexual object, seems to be a merely natural, but at least a normal process. As a result, again, "the body gets directed in some ways more than others" (Ahmed 2006:15) without the recognition that it is directed by ideology. As I have attempted to point out at the beginning of the chapter, heteronormative ideology as a dominant way of looking at things provides the familiar framework in which social individuals "straightforwardly" (in an un-reflected way) interpret both already known and hitherto unknown objects. Furthermore, we have seen that nevertheless social perception comes from a certain aspect it does not cumber us to apprehend the social object as a whole; heteronormative ideology supplies one with a certain logic, a certain pre-determined train of thoughts with the help of which one is able to explain or interpret any social objects via derivative method; a method derived from the heteronormative framework.

As it is following from all of this, in a dominant, heteronormative culture I will be looked at through unreflected heteronormative lenses, in terms of my sex, gender, and sexuality (which includes a certain kind of lifestyle, as well). Whatever my sexual orientation will be, the mainstream social discourses about that orientation will exist according to the dominant, unreflected, derivative, heteronormative logic. The "general" Other will be heterosexual so if I am not heterosexual (whatever it should mean exactly) I feel more exposed, looked at more intensively, therefore, I am more conscious of myself in terms of my sexuality than this

"general" Other. The "general" Other is at home in the heterosexual framework, she/he can feel comfortable even if feels being looked at. All the mainstream discourses and aspects are favorable for her/him in order not to be apprehended by Others as an abnormal social object. Since *appearance* is a decisive element in the construction of our self (as long as we accept Sartre's thoughts on it), in terms of being perceived as a social object, it does not matter whether we are consciously choose being heterosexual or take it for granted; the point is that one, if one passes as heterosexual, will be perceived as a proper social object and will be apprehended as member of the "general" Others; a generality which defend them from being exposed.

In the next chapter I argue that early HIV/AIDS discourse apprehended "gay men" as "homosexuals": "gayness" (and everything it implies from a heteronormative viewpoint) became the centre of a normative, medicalized discourse. With this motion, the general discourses took away agency from gay men. For "them" (gay men), it meant an extraordinary exposedness for the look of heterosexual Others, consequently, they became more conscious of themselves as "homosexual-gay men" from a heteronormative aspect: as they appeared to the heterosexual other.

II. The Phenomenologycal Mapping of Early HIV/AIDS Discourses

In this chapter I attempt to interrogate the phenomenological implications of how early AIDS discourses changed the meaning of "gayness" from a hitherto social-activist lifestyle to a pathologized passive object. At first, I need to contextualize how we should understand the "general population" in the context of the AIDS crisis. Then, I need to demonstrate how the dominant discourse on AIDS could relegate the politically active gay man to the level of a passive homosexual object. After all, I will be able to establish how we should understand the we/they distinction in the context of the AIDS crisis (from a sexual viewpoint). I argue that mainstream political, media, and even medical discourses mediated a metaphorical understanding of the PWA[8] where PWA was gay but where gayness itself was medicalized and essentialized. I highlight how this problematic understanding changed and reorganized the field of social vision and how it increased gay men' exposedness for the look of the "general population", and as a result, how the dominant discourse generated gay shame.

[8]The concept of the PWA Person (living) with AIDS is an alternative description of "AIDS victim", and "AIDS patient". Since the concept of victim „implies defeat", and the concept of patient „implies passivity, helplessness, and the dependence on the care of others", The Advisory Committee of People with AIDS (later: National Association of People with AIDS), in 1983, claimed for a more proper description (the result is Person/People living with AIDS – PWA). See: Grover: "AIDS: Keywords" in: *AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism* (ed. Douglas Crimp), MIT Press, 1988. pp. 17-30.

The “general population”, and the “We-subject”

The dominant discourse on AIDS constructed a peculiar division between “we” and “they” that could generate an effect on gay men (shame – see “Chaper III”).In order to be able to apprehend and reconstruct the probable gay experiences caused by the *dominant* AIDS discourses, it seems worthwhile to go one step further, with the help of the phenomenological description of the “we”. The first question should be who are included in "we" and from whose perspective. Then, how the (heterosexual) “general population” is a "we", how gay men can be seen as "we" and how PWAs are "we"?

Grover, in “AIDS: Keywords”, writes about the significance of the phrase “general population” with regards to the AIDS crisis. She writes that, it is easy to identify with what “general population” means unless one happens to be a PWA. Thus, the relevance of the phrase “general population” is to give a negative definition of the PWA:

> [t]he asexuality, the vagueness of the term stands in opposition to the descriptive terms applied to most PWAs – homosexuals, gay men, junkies, IV drug users. According to the term’s users – the media, public health officials, politicians – “the general population” is virtuously going about its business, which is not pleasure-seeking (as drugs and gay life are uniformly imagined), so AIDS hits its members as ab assault from diseased hedonists upon hard-working innocents (Grover 1988:23).

What does it mean in terms of our phenomenological understanding (that is necessary so later we see the bodily consequence of the dominant discourse, that is gay shame). According to Sartre, "[t]he 'we' includes a plurality of subjectivities which recognize one another as

subjectivities. Nevertheless, this recognition is not the object of an explicit thesis; what is explicitly posited is a common action or the object of a common perception" (Sartre 1996 [1948]:435). From this preliminary account one gets a similar understanding of "we" to what Young understands by group identity so that "a social group (…) is not defined primarily by a set of shared attributes, but by the sense of identity that people have" (Young 1989:259). However, as Sartre goes further: "[t]he 'we' is experienced by a particular consciousness; it is not neccesary that all the patrons at the cafe[9] should be conscious of being 'we' in order for me to experience myself engaged in a 'we' with them" (ibid 436).

Indeed, this account can help us to apprehend the notion of the heterosexual "general population", especially, that on what degree the "general population" can be seen as "we". In Sartre's example, the "we" is bounded by its physical place (the cafe). What bounds, then, the "general population"? It seems to me that the "general population" can be interpreted always only through the given context: in the context of heteronormativity and the AIDS crisis, the "general population" is implicitly defined by dominant social discourses. According to this, the "general population" will be bounded by an idealizing process (Grover also suggests such a process): the "general population" will be the *ideal audience* of the dominant AIDS-representations; the imagined "general population", for example, neither realizes that these dominant representations objectify the PWA, nor that they are highly homophobic. Despite, therefore, that the "general population", as such, nowhere really existed, it was harmfully used by the dominant discourses as an implicit "we". Since mainstream media and political messages suggested a "we" who were the idealized, heterosexual, middle-class, educated (and hard-working) spectator of the spectacle of the AIDS crisis, everyone who did not identify

9Sartre's example for apprehending myself as a member of the "we" is a cafe where consumers suddenly perceive some incident occurs in the street; due to becoming a spectator of the events (supposedly together with other consumers) is what makes it possible for me to be engaged in a "we".

oneself otherwise, or who is not per se a not-member of the "general population" (such as the PWA), became a member of the "general population".

One knows it also from Parker and Kosofsky-Sedgwick that, for example, how possible and harmful an implicit suggestion of "we" can be in terms of (social) exclusion (1995:1-18). The authors, in their writing, examine and point out how John L. Austin's speech act theory can be interpreted through the lenses of more recent theories, most specifically, from a deconstructionist viewpoint. Austin, in *How to Do Things with Words?*claims that a statement does not always give us information about the world – consequently, is not always a true or false statement – but it can actually change the world. With these utterances, therefore, I "do not *say* something but *do* something" (Austin 1962:12). In "Lecture II" (12-24) he examines that under what circumstances a performative utterance can be affective ("happy"). In his system, convention and "proper context" have a leading role so a speech act can be "happy". By now it seems that the conditions that were required by Austin are much more complex then he described them. Relatedly, as Parker and Kosofsky-Sedgwick put it:

> Austin's rather bland invocation of 'the proper context' (…) has opened, under pressure of recent theory, onto a populous and contested scene in which the role of silent or implied witnesses, for example, or the quality and structuration of the bonds that unite auditors or link them to speakers, bears as much explanatory weight as do the particular speech acts od supposed individual speech agents (7).

For us, here, the most important word will be the "witness" so we can understand the logic of how the phrase "general population" works. As the authors highlight later in the text, in terms of prototypical performatives (such as the "I do" in the wedding ceremony), the problem of "witness" should be treated more extensively then Austin suggested it: instead of thinking

about witnesses as present bodies and persons, Parker and Kosofsky-Sedgwick claims that "[i]t is the constitution of a community of witness that makes the marriage; the silence of witness (…) that permits it; the bare, negative, potent but undiscretionary speech act of our physical presence (…)" (10). Heteronormative traditions – since heterosexuality is apprehended as "the normal", taken-for-granted sexuality – re-emphasize heteronormativity by supposing that everybody perceives the ceremony from the same position, from the same direction. Mainstream AIDS discourses, similarly, re-emphasized heteronormative power-relations by supposing a "general population" that interpret the AIDS crisis from the same, homophobic angle. What I offered previously, therefore, is that the "general population" could be understood in terms of silent witnesses: they let the mainstream, homophobic discourses about AIDS maintained, through their silence.

Perceiving something/somebody from a "we" perspective (where I, therefore, presuppose that others perceive the same thing in the same way) gives the perceiver, especially in certain situations, empowerment because it gives me the feeling I am not alone in the world. The following discussed implications of the power-made category of the "homosexual" would suggest that "we" – the "general population" – are heterosexuals who perceive "them" as "homosexuals", and therefore, "our" consciousness of "them" will be based on "their" difference from "us". If, on the basis of Young, "they" – the homosexual PWAs – recognize that they are perceived as "they", "they" also become a certain kind of "we" which we can see by the implications of "gay" identity. In this "we" relation, therefore, I do not apprehend others in my group as others that apprehend me as an object-Other, and I do not apprehend them as object-Others, either[10]. "We" are all subjects who apprehend "they" as objects. It seems to be logical on the basis of which one can apprehend HIV/AIDS discourse.

[10]This is the main difference between what Sartre suggests in terms of interpersonal vs. intergroup relations. In intergroup relations, the "we" and the "they" groups become similar to the individuals.

When Bersani writes about political answers to AIDS, particularly, the obsession with testing instead of curing and preventing the spread of the virus (2010a: 6-7) he claims that the only "rational" aim of testing can be quarantining those that are tested positive so testing could establish the firm basis of discrimination. Although Bersani mentions concrete names and institutions, at one place he writes that:

> "At the very least, such things as the Justice Department's near recommendation that people with AIDS be thrown out of their jobs suggest that if Edwin Meese would not hold a gun to the head of a man with AIDS, he might not find the murder of a gay man with AIDS (or without AIDS?) intolerable or unbearable. And this is precisely what can be said of millions of fine Germans who never participated in the murder of Jews (and of homosexuals), but who *failed to find the idea of the holocaust unbearable.* That was the more than sufficient measure of their collaboration, the message they sent to their Führer even before the holocaust began but when the *idea* of it was around, was, as it were, being tested for acceptability during the '30s by less violent but nonetheless virulent manifestations of anti-Semitism, just as our leaders, by relegating the protection of people infected with HIV to local authorities, are telling those authorities that anything goes, that the federal government does not find the idea of camps—or perhaps worse—intolerable" (ibid).

This account, on the one hand, names political leaders, institutions, and acts in connection to approaching the epidemic, but, on the other, it also mentions (as a comparison) "millions of fine Germans" who not only did not do anything against holocaust but who, with doing

nothing, encouraged it. I think this account can highlight the fact, then, that the "we" of the "general population" is a non-self-identified, passive we-subject the members of which are "silent or implied witnesses" (Parker and KosofskyDesgwick 1995:7). As long as someone does not say that "Do not do it on my account" (ibid 9) – that would be an *explicit* rejection of the value system of the "general population – she/he will be part of the passive we-subject (therefore, passivity here is itself an act)."I" as an "implied witness" might do not have agency, first and foremost, because I am unreflected. I only can step out of this circle by reflection. The passivity of the "general population" as a "we-subject" (therefore that who acted unreflectedly) highly influenced the way in which gay men experienced the crisis.

The Homophobic Reality of the AIDS Crisis

"It is hazardous indeed to seek a single logic underlying AIDS discourse or policy decisions" (Patton 1990:1). Indeed, Patton in her book deals with different kinds of power-structures that include and are located at different levels of the social and/or individual spheres and that use different metaphorical understandings in terms of HIV/AIDS epidemic. Without attempting to claim that her statement is untrue, I deal here only one specific aspect of mainstream AIDS discourses: the discourse that undermined gay agency and so relegated politically active gay men to the level of passive objects, spectacles (Crimp 2002c). I examine how the working of heteronormative ideology can be recognized and interpreted in the working of dominant AIDS discourses with specific regards to how it constructed new social-sexual objects and subjects.

In this analysis, the distinction between "we" and "they", with specific regard to what was discussed in the previous subchapter, has a leading role. Although many of the critical scholars/activists who dealt with AIDS discourse emphasized this distinction (implicitly or

explicitly [Treichler 1988; Gilman 1988; Bersani 2010b; Watney 1988]), I would like to interrogate this division from another viewpoint. I do not only consider discursive (Treichler 1988), psychological elements (Bersani 2010b), and (bio)power-relations (Watney 1988) suggested by them, but also how these elements effected the social perception, perceptions about "I", "we", and "they" in the social sphere, and so how the changes can be described on a more dynamic, intergroup basis; therefore, how the discourses effects individuals within the power-made passive group of homosexual PWAs.

I am aware of the fact that I am only able to do this analysis because those mentioned authors who were so engaged with the problematic, indeed, harmful representation of AIDS at that time, set up their own valuable analyses about the crisis. Understandably, in a fearful, life-threatening atmosphere it was not easy, if possible at all, to contemplate the situation through philosophically critical lenses, especially if "facts" which could solve the tension between the "general population" and PWAs were not readily available (Crimp 1988ab:237-238), rather challenged by the general discourse and misrepresented by the media (Bersani. These critical voices are that allow me the reconstruction of individual and group experiences. The reason why I give specific significance to these experiences is that the process of analyzing them highlights *how* social changes as changes between socially perceivable *groups* have an *effect on individuals* within the social groups. It is necessary for us so later (see "Chapter III") we will be able to understand how the effects on individuals within the social groups can eventuate an active reorganization, indeed a subversion of dominant power-relations. I, therefore, interrogate here the *interrelated* relations between social groups ("we" and "they"), individual experiences, and discourse. Because I operate here with heteronormativity, I offer, first of all, a framework which can provide me the proper tools for my analysis. The basis of this framework is the schematic differentiation between the category of "homosexuality" as it was established by "scientific-like" discourse, and self-made gay identity.

As Watney mentions it, in terms of the over-emphasized (by the dominant media) connection between AIDS and (homo)sexuality: "[t]he felt 'problem' of sexual diversity is not established and imposed externally by the state, but rather internally, by the categorical imperatives of the modern organization of sexuality" (Watney 1988:75). My starting point is, after all, the already mentioned sexual category-system born around the middle of the nineteenth century which was created from a rather heteronormative viewpoint – claimed as scientifically neutral. As it is, it could/can hardly support non-heteronormative ideas: the designated paths for thinking have been circulating, throughout the twentieth century, among the categories of "normal-natural" heterosexuals and the abnormal sexual others.

It means that all of the questions formulated within this allegedly neutral system will operate with the power-made categories and structures produced by the system; consequently, the answers will be articulated accordingly, so answers will be, in some degree, pre-determined. Because this "scientific-sexual" system is allegedly neutral, and it indeed seems neutral in the natural attitude ("Chapter I"), most of the answers and new definitions regarding sexuality will not pay attention to whether the categories within this dominant system, or the system itself are problematic or not; that is why answers will maintain the basic structure of the system. As Foucault puts it more elaborately when he gives a critic about the working of the "medicine of sex" (see also "Chapter I"):

> [i]t is as if a fundamental resistance blocked the development of rationally formed discourse concerning human sex, its correlations, and its effects. A disparity of this sort would indicate that the aim of such a discourse was not to state the truth but to prevent its very emergence (Foucault 1990 [1978]:55).

Already the construction of this scientific-sexual system, the "medicine of sex" – which has had a great impression on general thinking, too – re-emphasized the categories of "we" (the normal) and "they" (the abnormal) within the field of sexuality. The specific homo/hetero distinction (where hetero is the normal and homo is perverted), although, as Katz claims, was still not established socially at the very beginning of the twentieth century. Furthermore, heterosexuality and homosexuality, at that time still both signed perversion: the terms meant an exaggerated appetite toward sexual pleasures that was opposed to the norm of procreation (Katz 2007 [1995]: 86-87). Katz, therefore, notices a general differentiation between when sex is apprehended as the means of procreation, and when it is seen as a tool to satisfy one's lust (cf. Foucault 1990 [1978]:54-55).

He claims that heterosexuality gained its socially "normal" status by the widespread works of Sigmund Freud and Havelock Ellis, from around 1910 (Katz 2007 [1995]: 87-88). These authors were to "liberate" sexuality so they promoted sexuality as a necessary tool to satisfy lust, and they also considered *hetero*sexuality "as a simple, precise, natural word for the sex-love of the sexes" (ibid 88). It is important to see that while Katz points out that the social significance of the term "heterosexual" was gained at the beginning of the twentieth century, it does not mean that the basis of what we call today heteronormative ideology (e.g. the sanctity of the nuclear family) was not already present in the middle of the nineteenth century as an unperceived principle of the production of the scientific-sexual system (i.e. a certain ideology does not necessarily need a name in order to work).

Although during the twentieth century there were attempts to interpret, criticize, or even deconstruct the dominant, rather taken-for-granted categories and structures of thinking about sexuality (Weeks 2010:5), early HIV/AIDS discourse re-emphasized just the allegedly neutral, normal, pre-created categories by suggesting, that the society faces a "gay disease", therefore, a disease of those who failed to fulfill heterosexual imperatives (especially

monogamy and heterosexual object choice). Why was this interpretation of AIDS so pervasive? How could it maintain its monopole position in the dominant media in spite of the strengthening voices of queer activism?

Similarly to Watney's previously quoted thought, according to which he differentiates between "external" and "internal" heterosexism, Jeff Nunokawa offers us an explanation about why the mainstream media delineates gay people as "deathbed victims" (Nunokawa 1991:312). His explanation stands on the basis of the differentiation between a "virulent or embarrassed distaste for homosexual functions" (ibid:319), and a "softer homophobia" (ibid). He argues that despite the strengthening queer voices, queer activist movements that demanded attention and agency for gay men as active parts of the AIDS crisis (and the society), mainstream media kept representing gay men as passive and helpless victims "because the dominant media has *always* pictured gay people as 'deathbed victims'" (312).

He specifically writes about how, throughout the twentieth century, a certain form of "soft homophobia" is barely perceivably present in the literary representations of gay men. He points out that due to this almost unperceivable homophobia, the depiction of gay men is equated with those people whose fate is to dye young. Though he does not mention reproduction among the causes, and we also know from Katz and Foucault that reproduction has to be treated separately from sex-for-lust, it still seems a plausible interpretation that this representation of gay men was a result of the heteronormative imperative of reproduction. According to a heteronormative logic, it is possible to say that since an adult man has to reproduce himself, those who are unable to do so because of their sexual object choice, will dye early. Homosexuality, in this sense, would be a hedonist, infantile behavior. One could say, after all, that Nunokawa's interpretation about the possible causes of PWAs' homophobic representations can explain the reality that was generated by the dominant*media* discourses; therefore, by discourses where taken-for-granted commonplaces are not rare.

However, we have to extend Nunokawa's explanation if we consider that the phrase "gay plague" was not only a term used by media discourses; on the contrary, it was first established by medical discourse. The name "GRID" (Gay Related Immune Deficiency), for example, was used by some medical professionals and researchers from 1982 (Epstein 1996:50) to name, and so interpret the hitherto neglected[11], and so insufficiently defined health-phenomenon. Even if Patton argues that since gay men were perceived as "healthy" (before they came down with pneumonia) "despite having a variety of treatable sexually transmitted diseases" we can recognize "the acceptance and positive valuation of gay men and their sexuality in the urban settings" (1990:28), we should be careful here. Despite that it could be true in some cases, we have to take into account other accounts which explicitly claim that medical reactions to, and interpretations of the epidemic were dangerously homophobic also in the early years (Bersani 2010:3, 5; Epstein 1996:45-46; Treichler 1988).

Epstein gives us hints about the observable homophobia when he writes about the first two "AIDS"[12]-reports published by the CDC[13], in 1981. The first report highlighted "the fact that these patients were all homosexual" (quoted in Epstein 1996:46), and the second established a tight connection between the *Pneumocystis carinii*pneumonia (PCP) outbreak and "some aspect of a homosexual lifestyle", or "sexual contact" (ibid). Taking these reports into account, "Dr. Lawrence Altman, medical reporter for the *New York Times*, wrote a short article about the cases of cancer in homosexuals" (ibid) that was very similar to the later mainstream media representations on AIDS; namely, it emphasized the patients' homosexual object choice and their promiscuous lifestyle (ibid). Therefore, even if at the very first

[11]AIDS, of course, was not a new health phenomenon, it was not occurred at first in the '80s. Before that, IV drug users already had showed the „symptoms", however, as they were in a bad health condition in general, the phenomenon was not detected as a specific one. The death of several middle-class (gay) men – and few women – who showed similar „symptoms"/diseases before their deaths (most notably HIV-related pneumonia) was the cause why the phenomenon started to be investigated (Patton 1990:27)..

[12]At that time, AIDS as such was still undefined.

[13] Centers for Disease Control

"moment" doctors and "experts" were quite understanding in terms of non-heterosexual sexuality, after an indeed short time, a critical-sexual lifestyle, the movement of a social consciousness was seen, or at least strongly suggested, as *the cause* of AIDS. As it was, a fragment of the social realm (gay men as a socially active group) was interpreted by the dominant discourses as the cause of a bodily realm (AIDS as a bodily health phenomenon).

After all, we can re-establish the statement – standing now on a more detailed basis – that one of the most crucial features of the mainstream HIV/AIDS discourses in the 80's was that it explained a health crisis by essentializing "gayness" as an embodiment of promiscuity and "homosexual" object choice, and then used the essentialized "gay" figure as the describing object of the PWAs. Therefore, the dominant discourse about AIDS made the "self-made" category of "gay" infiltrated into the heteronormative, dominant framework of twentieth century sexuality where heterosexuals are normal, and homosexuals are not. When discourses referred to AIDS as "gay plague" or "gay disease" they wanted to explain the frightening health crisis by using a metaphorical understanding; this metaphorical understanding, therefore, was constituted by a describing object (gay relegated to the level of homosexual objects) and a describable object (PWA). As a result, these discourses re-affirmed a heteronormative logic, re-pathologized homosexuality, and pathologized gay lifestyle – as something which was composed by the symptoms of homosexuality as an abnormal sexual object-choice *and* promiscuity as an abnormal social-sexual behavior.

After all, the pathologized "gay men" became the symptom and cause[14] of AIDS. Furthermore, the "personal truth" character of homosexuality, in contrast to heterosexuality,

[14]The idea of the "patient zero" – articulated in the book *And the Band Played On: Politics, People, and the AIDS Epidemic* by Randy Shilts (1987) – provided answers to two urgent inquiry: "where the disease is come from"; and "who is responsible for its spread". The „patient zero" was identified as an „extremely promiscuous", gay, French-Canadian airline steward. This answer could be salutary for two reason: it gave US general population an insurance that US is only a victim of French-Canadian promiscuity, and that the reason of the

was re-emphasized and so heterosexuality was re-revealed not only as a personal, but again, as a community-based truth, indeed, as a necessity. As Treichler notices, the "appeal of thinking of AIDS as a 'gay disease' is that it protects not only the sexual practices of heterosexuality but also its ideological superiority" (Treichler 1987: 49). More specifically, but with a similar meaning, Watney writes that "homosexuality, understood by AIDS commentary as the 'cause' of AIDS, is always available as a coercive and menacing category to entrench the institutions of family life and to prop up the profoundly unstable identities those institutions generate"(Watney 1988:75).

One of the reasons why it is important to notice the objectification of "gay men" (by the dominant discourse, through the look of the imagined, idealized "general population") is that this is in a tight connection with the fact that just the same gay men who were, indeed, badly affected by the virus, were handled by the mainstream media and also by political actions as outsiders: the *dominant* discussion was *about* "gay men" as *the* potential victims of AIDS (e.g. Nunokawa 1991:312), but *without* their participation. Their existence was only used as an explanatory fact, a metaphor of why the horrible disease had come into existence.

The exposedness, the spectacle-nature of the PWA as essentialized and pathologized "gay" seems, indeed, to be an organizing principle in how AIDS crisis was interpreted in the public sphere, especially by mainstream media discourses (Watney 1988). We can understand the general problems with PWA-representation via Crimp's critical comments about an exhibition: he writes that

> We believe that the representation of people with AIDS affects not only how viewers will perceive PWAs outside the museums, but, ultimately, crucial issues of AIDS funding, legislation, and education. In portraying

epidemic was a gay – not heterosexual – person. Thus, both the national identity and the dominant sexual discourse remained undamaged.

> PWAs as people to be pitied or feared, as people alone and lonely, we believe that this show perpetuates general misconceptions about AIDS without addressing the realities of those of us living every day with this crisis as PWAs and people who love PWAs (Crimp 2002:86).

Crimp's account highlights two crucial elements of the general PWA-representations: first, that they have an effect on social perception, on how people in everyday situations apprehend PWAs, and that these representations generally objectify PWAs via depicting them hopeless, and so without agency. If PWAs and gay men were, therefore, merged because of the omnipresent meanings of "gay plague" and "gay disease", we can understand now better the process of how gay men were relegated to the level of passive, objectified "homosexual". As Crimp summarizes the representational crisis simply, "the portrait of the person with AIDS had become something of a genre".

Briefly summarizing, AIDS was "created"[15] as a "fatal disease" which affected "*those*" (not including "*us*") who are sexually indecent. People living with AIDS (PWAs) were, in this sense, spectacles due to their affectedness and its (alleged) implications about their homosexual promiscuity. They were, although, represented as "they", through the lenses of the idealized "general population" they could hardly perceive themselves as an active "we" – since they were emasculated as a group – rather only as members of an "Us-object". Therefore, every person living with AIDS – when AIDS is discussed as "gay plague" – was exposed to the heterosexual, normativizing gaze of the "general population".

[15] See: Cindy Patton: *Inventing AIDS*, New York, Routledge, 1990.

Being an "Us-object"

In this final subchapter I focus on the phenomenological understanding of the pathologized PWA. This part embodies the shift from the viewpoint of the dominant discourse and the "general population" to the viewpointof the PWAs, and the alternative discourses. Therefore, now I attempt to describe what it means that PWAs did not feel themselves as members of the "general population", and that they did feel themselves as members of an objectified group.

The phenomenon when I feel being a member of a community that is looked at by "them" (here which "them" is the idealized "general population"), Sartre describes as an "us-object" experience. "The 'Us' here refers to an experience of *being-objects-in-common"* (436). It is very much similar to the situation what we have already seen in the previous chapter in terms of subject-formation; namely, when I apprehend the Other's look while (s)he looks at me, when I feel an object through the other's look, and so I apprehend myself as I am in the world through the other's look. Here the "general population" will be the "they", the "other", and as a consequence, their look will be constitutive in terms of how PWAs apprehend themselves in the social sphere.

I (as an imagined PWA) can perceive "they" (the "they-subject"/the imagined "general population" that are looking at me) as a community which community is established *through* my alienation. Unlike the intersubjective situation of the "Other" and "I", here I am double-alienated: not only that I am an object for the Other but I am part of a community which is, as a whole, an object for "them"; consequently, I am not only judged by the Other on the basis of *my* acts but, but also the acts of the *whole* object-us. I do not have individual characteristics in "their" eyes, I am equated with all of those who are objectified by "them" on the same basis.

PWAs were apprehended by the forums of the "general population" as outsider as those who did not fit into what "general population" means. When the dominant media referred to AIDS as the "gay plague", it suggested that PWAs are gay men; additionally, gay men were imagined according to stereotypical imaginations. All of this gave the feeling of an alienated social outsider to PWAs.

Although having an "us-object" experience, in certain situation can be very similar to the experience of my self through the Other's look (there, too, I am objectified), here I also would like to draw some attention to the differences between the two. The difference can be best grasped via my interrogation of the heteronormative ideology in "Chapter I". According to this, when PWAs apprehended themselves *as a group*, via the look of the idealized "general population", we have to take into account that the imagined "general population" means here those who successfully fulfill the main heteronormative imperatives and so who apprehend gayness as deviance from the norm. By the proliferation of homophobic AIDS discourses heteronormative aspect became re-emphasized: it would not make sense, as Watney claims, to examine the dominant discourses of the AIDS crisis as a discrete phenomenon, a "moral panic", since these kind of reactions are completely fit into the already ongoing (heteronormative) discourses (Watney 1988:75). PWAs, therefore, could apprehend themselves as "us-object" not on the basis of some random characteristics, let us say, that all of them had six fingers on one hand. The recognition of themselves as "us-object" happened on an (heteronormative) ideological basis: they apprehended themselves according to the dominant discourse; a discourse that mirrored a certain (heteronormative) angle of vision, and a certain focus on the observed objects (their sexuality).

The experience of being part of an Us-object took away empowerment from gay men, and relegated them to the level of the "homosexual" object. At this level, gay men as an oppressed group found its unity "in the knowledge which the oppressing [group] has of it, and the

appearance among the oppressed of [group]consciousness corresponds to the assumption in shame of an Us-object" (Sartre 443). It means that thanks to the dominant discourse about AIDS, gay men could apprehend themselves according to the heteronormative approach which suggested that their sexual behavior was the cause of AIDS. Since the dominant discourse equated PWAs with gay men, and similarly equated gay men with their sexual behavior, homosexual PWAs could apprehend *themselves* (as individuals within the "us-object") as the cause of AIDS. Therefore, their *bodily existence* was equated with the bodily existence of a virus.

It corresponds, therefore, with what natural attitude is and, connectedly, how mainstream ideology works. As I attempted to demonstrate it, heteronormative ideology is unperceivable in the natural attitude due to its familiarity. When a new and fearful health crisis occurred, and it turned out that the majority of patients were "homosexual", it seemed "natural" to define homosexuality (and promiscuity) as the likely root of the problem[16]. Ideology that influences where we are facing to and what our focus is on provided the logic according to which AIDS was referred to as "gay disease". If a PWA appeared in the field of the social vision of the "general population" (as it often happened due to tabloid media representations [Gever 1988:109]), the "general population" apprehended him as "homosexual", completely similar to other "homosexuals", therefore, they apprehended him as a member of a sexually deviant group. It can be represented the most geographically if we think about the huge surprise, even shock which was triggered by the famous and "hetero-masculine" Rock Hudson's death (Treichler 1988:43). Richard Meyer analyzes how Hudson was represented by mainstream media before and after his recognition as AIDS patient. His interpretation about one of the

[16]Even if there were other risk factors present, for example, in case of a homosexual IV-drog user. "Thenature of AIDS was in part an artifact of the way in which the data was collected and reported" (ie. those people with AIDS who were both gay men *and* IV drug users [in 1985, 10 percent of the AIDS sufferers] were automatically categorized into the homosexual/bisexual men category) (Treichler 1988:44).

cover of *People* magazine just highlights how interrelated AIDS and "gayness" were through the lenses of the dominant discourse: "the Hudson cover features a contemporary image into which we are meant to read the visual evidence of AIDS. Image and text together signify that the 'other life of Rock Hudson,' his until-now covert sexuality, has produced this, his ailing and 'other' body" (Meyer 1991:278). The situation, therefore, seemed to be that while "gayness" (as a socially conscious lifestyle) became the cause of AIDS (as a serious health phenomenon), AIDS became a sign of "gayness"/sexual perversion (this is what the phrase "gay plague" suggests).

It can highlight the strong connection between social reality and bodily reality: AIDS patients' fear of becoming visible as AIDS patient (considering here, for example, Kaposi's sarcoma), and so "becoming visibly gay" "who" with his lifestyle caused a serious crisis and also jeopardized the health of the innocent "general population". After all, becoming "visibly gay", at that time, meant being a member of an extraordinarily risky, deviant, and "infectious" community through the look and understanding of the "general population" (namely, being an "us-object"). PWAs were apprehended by the "general population" only together with all the other members, as a whole. The way how the "general population" looked at AIDS was influenced by its prior knowledge: AIDS patient as a hitherto unknown object had to be defined that was possible only in terms of previous knowledge; a previous knowledge that was engendered by the logic of heteronormative ideology.

III. Gay Shame, Moralizing, and Activism: Who Looks at Who?

In this chapter, I argue that due to the homophobic AIDS discourse, and so the objectification of gay men, gay shame was engendered. I examine two possible ways of getting over gay shame in order gay men could get back their temporarily lost agency. In order to get over the shame, one could occupy either a conservative and moralizing position, or an activist one. At first, I give an analysis about shame as a consequence of heteronormative AIDS discourses. Then, I take into account and analyze the two possible solutions of the tension caused by shame. I argue that taking a conservative and moralizing position is a gay "turning away"(as a possible response to shame), and the other, activist position is a "looking back", or a "breaking into an unashamed stare", also a transcending the heteronormative framework of the mainstream discourses. I emphasize that both of these answers were to get over the position of the "us-object". By the end of this chapter one will be able to comprehend the AIDS crisis in the 80s from a phenomenological viewpoint, and so to see how "the look", as something connects bodies to society, is in the center of power relations, and how the levels of the consciousness have a particular role in the shaping social reality. I attempt, therefore, to reach here my stated aim, and so to demonstrate that how the social realm is the result of a dynamic process between I and others and "we" and "they"; a process the center of which is "the look", and the different levels of consciousness.

The exposedness, the spectacle-nature (Watney 1988; Crimp 2002c) of the PWA as essentialized and pathologized "gay" seems to be an organizing principle in the process of how AIDS crisis was interpreted in the public sphere (see "Chapter II"), especially by dominant (media) discourses. I argue here, therefore, that both the look of the nowhere existing but still omnipresent heterosexual "general population" (see "Chapter II"), and

heteronormative social perception need to be given specific significance in my further analysis in order to gain knowledge about specifically gay experiences as certain kind of bodily consequences (in terms of shame) of the metaphorical discourse. As we have already seen, the public discussion about AIDS as a "gay disease" continuously used a metaphorical understanding in which "gay" existed as the describing object of the PWA. As a result, the way of how gay men were socially perceived significantly changed, and importantly, the general social perception necessarily included gay men' own perception about themselves, at least, in the un-reflected state of the natural attitude (see "Chapter I").

In the following, I examine how it is possible to understand two, basically different gay answers to the mainstream, homophobic AIDS discourses (namely, the activist [e.g. ACT UP] and the moralizing [Crimp 2002a; Takemoto 2003:88] answers) from the same basis. After what was discussed in the previous chapter(s), it feels intuitively right to think that gay men who were seriously objectified and alienated through homophobic public discourses, felt shame. With interrogating more in detail the experience and root causes of shame, one will be able to reach the next step not only in terms of understanding the both individually and socially harmful consequences of mainstream AIDS discourses but also, at a broader level, the working of ideology and "the look". These dynamic interpersonal and inter-group processes, crucially, *includeindividual experiences*.

Gay Shame

Due to my phenomenological perspective, Ahmed's cultural emotion theory seems to provide the perfect basis for how to begin dealing with shame. Her approach includes (in the same time, at the same level) both the individual's body and the social/cultural sphere (2004). She schematically differentiates between two mainstream bodies of texts dealing with emotions: at first, she gives an account about how psychological approach think that emotions are *mine*

and I can *express* them ("inside out" approach), then she describes the "outside in" (sociological) approach that is, as she suggests, the opposite of the psychological: "For Durkheim emotion is not what comes from the individual body, but is what hold or binds the social body together" (Collins 1990:27, quoted by Ahmed 2004:9).

Ahmed claims that these two approaches differ only in their direction but their logic of explanation is very similar: "both assume the objectivity of the very distinction between inside and outside, the individual and the social, and the 'me' and the 'we'" (ibid 9). Rejecting both of the mentioned interpretations of emotions, she creates her own interpretational framework, and so for her

> emotions are not simply something 'I' or 'we' have. Rather, it is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and others, that surfaces or boundaries are made: the 'I' and the 'we' are shaped by, and even take the shape of, contact with others. (...) [I] suggest that emotions are crucial to the very constitution of the psychic and the social objects, a process which suggests that the 'objectivity' of the psychic and the social is an effect rather than a cause (ibid 10).

Ahmed's framework, indeed, seems to be in complete accordance with the approach of my analysis, thus far. Accordingly, if we focus on the working of heteronormative ideology, we suppose that subjects, in the natural attitude, will act and feel according to what a heteronormative logic will suggest. It will be possible to feel otherwise only through reflection; only through a consciousness of the direction from which one apprehends social objects. Heteronormative ideology as something influences what we are conscious of (where we are facing to and what our focus is on – see "Chapter I") also influences how we feel in terms of the object we are conscious of.

As Ahmed suggests, these feelings can shape (and maintain) social, cultural borders between "I" and other(s), and "we" and other(s). Shame seems to be crucial in terms of how gay people could apprehend themselves in the middle of the AIDS crisis *through* the lenses of the mainstream media representations of the PWA; perspectives which embodied the heterosexual other's look. In the following, I examine, with a specific focus on the AIDS crisis, how shame is related to the individual and to the level of community. Of course, these two levels cannot be sharply separated from each other, as Ahmed also suggests, rather they only embodied different, *interrelated* approaches, as we will see.

At the most basic level, shame is an indeed ambivalent emotion that is, on the one hand, highly socially engendered, and on the other, the most connected to the self. It causes a *consciousness of the self.* This is the basis standing on which we can understand Sartre's thoughts on shame, namely, that "I am ashamed of what I *am.* Shame, therefore, realizes an intimate relation of myself to myself" (Sartre 2006:245), and that "I am ashamed of myself *as I appear* to the Other" (ibid: 246). In shame, therefore, we are conscious of ourselves and, crucially, the background of our perception is suggested by the other's look[17] which, therefore, engenders and strengthens my shame. The other's look is what gives the shape of myself for myself: in order to be ashamed, I always need to know how (from which direction) my appearance (as I appear to the other) does not fit into the framework of social expectations which are actually embodied (for me) by the other's look. Therefore, according to Sartre's account, I apprehend the other as somebody who expects me to act according to certain norms and if I do not act according to them, I will feel ashamed[18]. Or as Ahmed writes, "[c]ertainly, when I feel shame, I have done something that I feel is bad" (Ahmed 2004:103).

[17]Let us remember here to the account in the first chapter based on Merleau-Ponty' thoughts about vision.
[18]See also the accounts on Mauss, in "Chapter I" .

Silvan S. Tomkins, the formal establisher of the affect theory, writes, similarly to Sartre, that "[i]n contrast to all other affects, shame is an experience of the self by the self. At that moment when the self feels ashamed, it is felt as a sickness within the self. Shame is the most reflexive of affects in that the phenomenological distinction between the subject and object of shame is lost" (Tomkins 2008:359). Tomkins, furthermore, puts an emphasis also on the connections between shame, "continuing interest and enjoyment", and “familiarity”:

> [w]e are inclined to favor the theory that shame is an innate auxiliary affect and a specific inhibitor of continuing interest and enjoyment. Like disgust, it operates ordinarily only after interest or enjoyment has been activated, and inhibits one or the other or both. The innate activator of shame is the incomplete reduction of interest or joy. Hence any barrier to further exploration which partially reduces interest or the smile of enjoyment will activate the lowering of the head and eyes in shame and reduce further exploration or self-exposure powered by excitement or joy. Such a barrier might be because one is suddenly looked at by one who is strange, or because one wishes to look at or commune with another person but suddenly cannot because he is strange, or one expected him to be familiar but he suddenly appears unfamiliar, or one started to smile but found one was smiling at a stranger. Once shame has been activated, the original excitement or joy may be increased again and inhibit the shame or the shame may further inhibit and reduce excitement or joy. Thus a shy child may suddenly break into an unashamed stare, or he may turn away completely from the stranger who evokes shyness (ibid 353-354).

Let me summarize and illustrate what we have thus far (in terms of shame), and how it fits into what we have had already before. It seems, on the one hand, that shame is a reflection of the self *through* the other's look. In the first chapter, on the basis of Sartre, I write that it is possible to be aware of ourselves only through the other's look. What occurs in shame as an additional element – compared to the basic recognition of myself through the other's look – is an acknowledgement that I (as an object for the other) have done something "bad". Since I apprehend myself only through the other's look, if the other presumably apprehend me as a "wrong" object, as an object who did something "bad", I will apprehend myself in terms of this wrong act. I myself will be my wrong act (as I am mirrored by the other). On the other hand, it is also important that, according to Tomkins, shame always occurs as an interrupted interest and/or enjoyment; an interruption engendered by a strange other; by somebody whom I am interested (indeed, as we will see later, an idealized other in) – this is why shame is an "*incomplete* reduction of interest or joy".

I would suggest here that it is worthwhile to call enjoyment explicitly as self-enjoyment. Self-enjoyment would be my unconscious (unconscious of myself) existence in the world. It would be a state in which I am not conscious of my *self* but only of what gives me pleasure, or of the (enjoyable) aims of my acts. For example, if I am attracted to a person, in the state of self-enjoyment, I will not be conscious of my attraction – that I am the one who attracts to somebody – only of my "selected" object. But what happens, if some other's look brings me to the state of consciousness of my self, namely, that *Iam* the one who is attracted to my "selected" object? In this case, through the other's look, I will apprehend myself within a whole system of social-sexual imperatives. If this is a heteronormative system, my consciousness of myself will be focused on my sex and gender *in relation* to the sex and gender of my "selected" object. If, let us say, our sex and gender is the same, then this

"selected" object becomes a "prohibited" object. If the other's look on me detects that I desire a "prohibited" object, (s)he will apprehend me according to my improper desire, and consequently, I will apprehend myself as an equation with my improper desire. *If* I accept the other's social-sexual system as a norm (therefore, if I idealize the other's viewpoint), I will be ashamed. Before the other looks at me[19], therefore, I am not aware of all the heteronormative imperatives, only of that I am attracted to somebody. The look is what engenders my feeling of shame.

The strongly heteronormative elements of the dominant AIDS discourse rearranged the social background of "gay man" as a socially critical figure; gay men were not seen anymore in front of the political background of sexual rights, or critical lifestyle but the background of a frightening disease; a background which was set up, again, in accordance with heteronormative ideology (see "Chapter I"; Nunokawa 1991). Gay men were perceived, from the viewpoint of the mainstream discourse, as a dangerous group of sexual deviants (their sexual "sickness" was seen as the cause of their bodily sickness – AIDS). AIDS discourses overwrote all of the social horizons with the help of which one could apprehend gay men as a culturally and politically active group, and instead, represented new, strictly power-made horizons, according to which gay men were passive victims. When gay men were seen as the "promiscuous", "homosexual" causes of the horrible epidemic (e.g. Shilts 1987), their promiscuity and same-sex sexual object choice was equal with their socially existing self (as it was mediated by the only possible way; via being-seen-by-the-other – see "Chapter I"). Gay man as both the potential AIDS victim, and the cause of AIDS – as it was emphasized by the mainstream discourse (see Chapter II) – was expected to be ashamed: all the mainstream discourses mirrored those certain (imagined) other's look that embodied heterosexism, and the whole heteronormative system.

[19]Although, since heteronormative norms are internalized from early childhood, one does not necessary need an actual other to feel shame, it is enough to imagine the other who will be the embodiment of general norms.

Gay shame, if it was engendered, was a reflection on the newly established borders in the social sphere: the homosexual "AIDS victim" was in the center of others' interest but, at the same time, he could not take part in the process of his own dominant social representation; he kept being seen to be a pure (passive) object for the nowhere existing but still omnipresent (see Chapter II) "general population"'s heteronormative gaze, in spite of all the latter activism (Crimp 2002b:; Nunokawa 1991). As one can infer it from Tomkins' account, there were practically two possible outcome of gay shame caused by homophobic AIDS discourses: gay men either could "turn away completely from the stranger" or could "break into an unashamed stare".

It seems proper now to turn to some of Douglas Crimp's writings since he was both engaged with critical analytical writing about the AIDS crisis, and activism for ameliorating the situation. The two possible gay answers to the "shameful" situation engendered by mainstream discourse can be captured properly through Crimp's article, "Mourning and Militancy" (2002b). In this writing he opposes mourning to militancy within the specific context of the AIDS crisis. The (melancholic) mourning is something that withdraws us from our everyday life, but after a while it ceases. As Crimp quotes from Freud: "[t]his struggle can be so intense that a turning away from reality ensues, the object being clung to through the medium of a hallucinatory wish-psychosis. The normal outcome is that deference for reality gains the day" (quoted in Crimp 2002b:134). Crimp quotes this because he wants to highlight the specificity of mourning with regards to the people that live with AIDS, or infected by the HIV-virus, or to those that had somebody died because of AIDS-related complications.

Crimp notices, on the one hand, that the highly homophobic context of the AIDS crisis often made it very hard to mourn openly and honestly. Through one of Simon Watney's story about a funeral, he gives us an illustrative example about a usual funeral as the symbolic space for mourning (ibid 135). The atmosphere of the funerals, as Watney and Crimp demonstrate,

usually just fit into the framework due to which many of gay men died; a framework within which being a PWA means being sinful and dispensable. In spite of the huge number of gay men who died partly because of the homophobic and hypocritical answers to the crisis, the atmosphere of the funerals maintained just the same hypocrisy: there were not a single word about AIDS, since dying of AIDS-related complications was demanded to be something to conceal. As a result of this homophobic atmosphere, gay men usually found themselves in a paradoxical situation: they were there to mourn somebody's death with whom they had probably the tightest relationship, and still, they had to conceal the *depth* of their pain because of the heterosexist hypocrisy. It might be felt, indeed, as a reticence; a reticence of the nature of the relationship with the lost friend, or lover; a reticence of themselves. This compulsory concealment could resulted in anger which can be read, actually, as a demand for gay men's lost agency.

> The violence we encounter is relentless, the violence of silence and omission almost as impossible to endure as the violence of unleashed hatred and outright murder. Because this violence also desecrates the memories of our dead, we rise in anger to vindicate them. For many of us, mourning *becomes* militancy (ibid 135).

Why is this problem of the ambivalent mourning important in the context of the already discussed shame? Because it seems to suggest the same ambivalent situation: a choice, indeed, whether one acknowledges the dominant system in order to be a "normal" object in the dominant other's eyes, or questions the dominant other's viewpoint in order to highlight that the dominant value-system is not a neutral-normal one.

Earlier in this chapter, I dealt with the process via which shame is engendered and the context in which shame can occur. Here, after Crimp's account, I would like to emphasize two crucial

elements in the occurrence of shame: at first, that when one feels shame, one acknowledges the badness of the act which was committed, and second, that shame comes into existence through the other's look. These elements must be especially carefully considered in the context of the AIDS crisis. We have to ask, then, that what the "bad" act is that one has to acknowledge, and that who the "other" is.

The "badness" in being an "AIDS victim" is, as we have already seen it in "Chapter II", to be promiscuous and homosexual. For sure, as I also attempted to point out, the accusation that being promiscuous and homosexual are "bad" only can be understood through heteronormative lenses where the sanctity of monogamy and heterosexual object choice (in the name of the "family" – as it is claimed by heterosexist voices [Watney 1988]) are more important than anything else. The "other", who has to witness the bad act so one feel shame, needs to be apprehended in similar terms: (s)he – the "other" – has to be imagined as a member of the heterosexual "general population" so one feels shame due to "gay acts". As we have already seen, the "general population" is, however, nowhere really existing, it is the imagined audience of the homophobic AIDS discourses. However, as we have also seen, the "general population" is, curiously, still present everywhere, according to the logic of Parker and Kosofsky-Sedgwick's "implied witnesses" (see Chapter II). It is the social individual's imagination, first of all, that makes the "general population" to be present everywhere. After all, it seems that gay shame that could occur due to dominant AIDS discourses was a shame before an imagined, "ideal" other.

Ahmed writes that shame can occur due to an "identification with the other". (Shame requires identification because, as we know, I need to apprehend myself through the other's look.) Consequently, she writes that

> [m]y failure before this other hence is profoundly a failure of myself to myself. In shame, I expose to myself that I am a failure through the gaze of an ideal other. (…) The 'ideal self' does not necessarily have certain characteristics; the 'content' of the ideal is in some sense empty. (…) Such an 'ideal' is what sticks subjects together (coherence) (…). Through love, an ideal self is produced as a self that belongs to a community; the ideal is a proximate "we". If we feel shame, *we feel shame because we have failed to approximate 'an ideal' that has been given to us through the practices of love* (Ahmed 2004:106).

The ideal other in a heteronormative society is, first and foremost, heterosexual. That the content of the ideal can be seen as empty can refer to the opened, not definable quality of the context. In this sense, the "ideal other", similarly to the "general population", although nowhere really exists, it is still present everywhere. One can understand in a more comprehensive way what Ahmed means here by the role of love, with the help of her more clarified thoughts on love. The point is, in terms of Ahmed understanding of love, that "love" can replace "hatred": she deals with certain right-wing fascist groups and recognizes that these earlier defined as "hate groups" became newly defined as "love groups" (Ahmed 2004:122-123). They do not emphasize anymore their hatred towards ethnic minorities but their love of the nation; the nation which is threatened by the minorities. The language of love, therefore, can serve as an extremely dangerous, hidden language of hatred.

In terms of the AIDS crisis it means that homophobic discussion is not an explicit hatred towards homosexuals but an explicit love of the values which are embodied, let us say, in the heterosexual family. According to this, the love of children, the love of "family life" etc. is connected to heterosexuality. What threatens this beautiful, ideal (hence nowhere existing)

image of life that is full of love, is homosexuality. Therefore, according to the heteronormative natural attitude (see "Chapter I"), loving the heterosexual family is equated with hating the homosexuals.

Therefore, gay men, in the context of AIDS crisis, were required to feel shame. Their shame would mean here the acknowledgement of heteronormative values, and so that their gay existence is bad. This shame could be engendered through the eyes of a heterosexual, idealized other that other was nowhere existed, but at the same time, everywhere present as it was suggested by the dominant discourses; the idealized other was the audience of these discourses, was the "general population". In the following, I attempt to demonstrate two completely different reactions to the situation of gay men generated by the dominant discourses, which reactions, however, targeted the same aim, namely, to get back gay agency.

Gay Answers to the Crisis: Conservatism vs. Activism

Douglas Crimp's account about taking conservative, moralizing, and melancholic turns as gay answers to AIDS (Crimp 2002a; Takemoto 2003:88) can verify the presumption that gay men felt ashamed. Those who took the moralizing position (instead of gay activism) wanted to be apprehended not as an "us-object" (see Chapter II) but as gay men who belong to the idealized "general population", too. As a perfect embodiment of these kinds of gay answers, Crimp mentions the HIV positive, gay, *New York Times* journalist Andrew Sullivan who, in his cover story "When Plagues End: Notes on the Twilight of an Epidemic" (1996), writes that

> Before AIDS, gay life – rightly or wrongly – was identified freedom from responsibility, rather than with its opposite. Gay liberation was

> most commonly understood as liberation from the constraints of traditional norms, almost a dispensation that permitted homosexuals the absence of responsibility in turn for an acquiescence in second-class citizenship. This was the Faustian bargain of the pre-AIDS closet: straights gave homosexuals a certain amount of freedom; in return, homosexuals gave away their self-respect. But with AIDS, responsibility became a central, imposing feature of gay life. (…) People who thought they didn't care for one another found that they could. Relationships that had no social support were found to be as strong as any heterosexual marriage. Men who had long since got used to throwing their own life away were confronted with the possibility that they actually did care about themselves (…) (Cited in Crimp 2002a: 6).

Sullivan here gives an image of pre-AIDS gay man which embraces the harshest heteronormative stereotypes about gay men and their lifestyle. What Sullivan suggests here is that pre-AIDS gay lifestyle is irresponsible, that pre-AIDS gay men were second class citizens, and that gay men – as the AIDS crisis highlighted – are able to act as "normal" citizens. What Sullivan does not suggest is that AIDS was not caused by gay promiscuity, and that the so called responsible life, in terms of sexuality, is only a heteronormative demand. Indeed, it seems that he looks at AIDS as in certain sense salutary because, at the end, it promoted the image of homosexuals as responsible, first-class citizens. It is, of course, a question whether this image of responsible homosexuals was acknowledged by heterosexuals at that time, or not, but it is certain that his aim with this writing was to draw attention to this possible image. Sullivan's homosexual "answer" to the AIDS crisis, was, therefore, a

conservative one; he acknowledged the badness of pre-AIDS gay lifestyle because he interpreted it through heteronormative lenses.

We, of course, cannot think that there were no conservative homosexual voices before the AIDS crisis. However, during and after the epidemic, their relevance and meaning was completely different. It seems that during and after the crisis gay men had to get over the state of shame, either by questioning if they really had a cause to feel shame, or by acknowledging their failure (as Sullivan did, in the name of a whole community), and trying to convince the "general population" that they have learnt the lesson. Taking moralizing turn, or maintaining one's conservative position was, therefore, one of the ways of getting over of the problem of shame.

"Turning away" would mean here the opposite of a "coming out": when Sullivan puts emphasis on his shared values – belief in the "traditional norms" – with the heterosexual public, he „turns away" as a gay men from the exposing look of the heterosexual other. This „turning away" entirely, as Tomkins puts it, is one of the possible outcomes of the felt shame. This is the case when the ashamed person „turn[s] away completely from the stranger who evokes shyness" (Tomkins 2008:354). Sullivan, indeed, emphasizes those things that make it most possible to apprehend him as a member of the "we-subject" (instead of an „us-object"). He becomes a member of the „we-subject" in the sense that he objectifies further the „irresponsible gay men", and alienates the pre-AIDS, infantile gay community from him, and also from other gay men, as a historical community which had to be exceeded. He, therefore, implicitly claims that exceeding „gayness" was only a question of time, indeed, that it was a necessity so gay men could become fisrt-class citizens. Thus, we can read Sullivan's article as an attempt to get his temporarily lost agency back.

If Sullivan's article is a representative in terms of „turning away entirely", ACT UP (the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) is an example of the „break into an unashamed stare" (Tomkins 2008:354). The work of ACT UP, unlike the conservative answers, was a *critical* reaction to get back agency. They radically rejected the interpretation of AIDS as a "gay disease" or as the "gay plague" and rather focused on the fact that AIDS is a health phenomeon which causes people's deaths. They emphasized the fact that "[t]he PWA is a human being whose health has deteriorated not simply due to a virus but due to government inaction, the ineccassibility of affordable health care, and institutionalized neglect in the forms of heterosexism, racism, and sexism" (Crimp 2002b:87). They articulated that thinking that HIV-virus can be spread only within a certain community is non-sense, and at the same time, that it is sinful to think that its spread within the gay community is fine.

We have seen how Crimp writes about the ambivalent feeling of mourning amond gay men, in the middle of the AIDS crisis. As he suggests, "[f]or many of us, mourning *becomes* militancy" (ibid 135). In terms of shame, it means that for activist gay men the idealness of the „ideal other" – the other that was to engender shame in gay men – was challenged. Since the idealness of the heteronormative other is taken-for-granted in the natural attitude (see Chapter I), the members of ACT UP answered to the crisis in a reflected way: they questioned the very basis of the whole dominant interpretation of AIDS via focusing only on the pure, non-ideological facts. They were aware with the taken-for-granted working of ideology (e.g. Nunokawa 1991), and so could reflect upon it. In the following, I analyze one of the project of ACT UP in order to be able to point out its relevant elements in terms of shame, and so also in terms of the power-relations were established by the dominant AIDS discourse.

Crimp, in „AIDS: Cultural Analysis / Cultural Activism" (1988) examines the problem of art as it is related to the AIDS crisis. In spite of the usual interpretation of art as, at the best, a commodity that can be used for fundraising (5), Crimp claims that art actually can save lives. With this statement, he already claims for agency for the PWA who is not a passive victim (referred by the phrase „AIDS victim") that can be saved only by „the experts". According to this rejected image of PWA as a victim, the PWA's only virtues are patience and approval. What the work of ACT UP claims for is exactly the opposit of patience and approval, it is, therefore, to actively challenge the system that requires patience. The project that is offered by Crimp as a positive example of art as a culturally critical practice is the *Let the Record Show*.... Since the whole project is described by Crimp in detail (7-12), here I only highlights the symbolically crucial element; that is crucial in terms of my analysis.

The *Let the Record Show*... project included

> six life-size, silhouetted photographs of 'AIDS criminals' in separate, boxed-in spaces, and below each one the words by which he or she may be judged by history, cast – literally – in concrete. As the light goes on in each of these separate boxed spaces, we can see the face and read the words:
>
> The logical outcome of testing is a quarantine of those infected.
>
> – Jesse Helms, US Senator
>
> It is patriotic to have the AIDS test and be negative.
>
> – Cory Servaas, Presidental AIDS Commission

> We used to hate faggots on an emotional basis. Now we have a good reason.
>
> – anonymus surgeon

> AIDS is God's judgment of a society that does not live by His rules.
>
> – Jerry Falwell, televangelist

> Everyone detected with AIDS should be tattooed in the upper forearm, to protect common needle users, and on the buttocks to prevent the victimization of other homosexuals.
>
> – William F. Buckley, columnist

> And finally, there is a blank slab of concrete, above which is the silhouetted photograph of President Reagan. We look up from this blank slab and see, once again, the neon sign: SILENCE=DEATH (Crimp 1988a:7-8).

After all, we can see that this part of the project pilloried the principles (most notably the hatred towards PWAs) of the dominant AIDS discourse. So what we have here, is literally a „break into an unashamed stare". The project demonstrated that gay men could look back, and so that they had their own viewpoint (that is only a characteristic of subjects); a viewpoint from which the peculiar elements of the dominant discourses were not only not taken-for-granted, but unforgivably wrong. With this project, the members of ACT UP demonstrated themselves (and also others) as members of a „we-subject", although, unlike Sullivan, they created another, a new „we-subject" as opposed to the imagined, idealized, dominant one.

Therefore they made it clear, on the one hand, that they do not want to belong to the idealized, heterosexual „we-subject", and on the other, that they reject to be an "us-object". The project as a demonstrative viewpoint of a „we-subject" repudiated that PWAs as a group can be interpreted as „us-object" via implicitly highlighting that HIV can infect anybody. Furthermore, the *Let the Record Show...* was subversive in terms of the whole dominant system of power-relations because it – through looking back to people that articulated representative sentences in terms of the dominant discourses – reversed the „we-subject" and „us-object" relations suggested by the dominant discourses. In the newly established power-relations PWAs were the "we-subject" that demanded the accountability of people in powerful positions.

Expanding our focus, queer activism became to be strong from around the middle of the 80s (the first protest of ACT UP was organized in March 1987, on Wall Street [Bordowitz 1988:184]). However, it seems that the fact that PWAs necessarily apprehended themselves through the dominant media representations could not be abolished. As Bordowitz puts it: „[r]egardless of intention, I think the collective[20], at times, recapitulated the homophobia (...). I think we experienced our own AIDS-related homophobia. But there is no such thing as a thought crime" (1988:190). Indeed, it seems that the peculiar social reality produced and maintained by the dominant discourse, and the self-determining intentions of queer people resulted in

> a historically specific discursive formation. For the sake of countering prevalent assumptions, such as 'AIDS is a gay disease,' many activists will deny that their sexual orientation is associated with their AIDS activism. This is counterbalanced by others who stress the problems

[20]Testing the Limits Collective (the author)

> the epidemic has posed for far certain gay people for such an extent that they exclude recognition of the problems for anyone else.

As this account also underpins one of my previous assumptions, the alternative discourses can be best understood in the light of an understanding of the dominant discourse. While the dominant discourse was not „reflected", was not able to explicate its logic which it was built on, alternative discourses, as the mentioned accounts also suggest, had to be very well aware of what, how, when, why, and to whom they communicate. The „general population" was only one of the target groups, although it was clear that their viewpoint was especially considered for fear of unintentionally re-emphasizing homophobic messages. All of this suggest for us, that being socially reflected, and initiating alternative discourses always means a deeper understanding of the dominant social realm than that of those who use and apprehend the dominant discourses unreflectedly - as something taken-for-granted.

In this chapter, I interrogated the process in which gay men were expected to feel shame. I highlighted that through the look of the dominant, nowhere existing but still omnipresent, idealized, heteronormative "general population" (suggested by dominant discourses), gay men could feel shame because they were represented as the promiscuous, „homosexual" causes of AIDS. Finally, I demonstrated two examples of how it was possible to get over the feeling of shame. At first, I gave an account about conservative, moralizing gay answers which were aiming to get a membership in the dominant „we-subject". Then, I presented an ACT UP project from which it became understandable how it was possible to reject PWAs position as a membership in an „us-object", and demonstrating a new „we-subject". This new „we-subject" was established on the basis of actively looking back to those that embodied the harmful AIDS discourses. As a result, ACT UP did not only challenged the position of the PWAs as

passive victims of AIDS and the dominant discourses, but also claimed that the framework, within which the dominant discourses was produced, is itself problematic and challengeable.

Conclusion

In this thesis I attempted to provide a phenomenological analysis of the western AIDS crisis in the 80s. I argued that one can best understand the mechanisms behind the dominant discourse via the phenomenological working of heteronormative ideology. Therefore, at first I examined how such an ideology can be described in terms of consciousness, social vision, and subject-formation.

I found that heteronormative ideology is unperceivable in the Husserlian natural attitude, due to its familiarity. Connectedly, our social perception, the direction from we are facing social objects, and that what our focus is on, though shaped by heteronormative ideology, the mechanism of shaping remains unperceivable. Therefore, the fact that one faces somebody from a heteronormative aspect, and that one's focus will be on sex, gender, and sexuality is not indisputable; however, in the natural attitude it still seems so.

This was the starting point of my second chapter. There, I examined that how this taken-for-granted social vision could resulted in the creation of a "gay disease". I interrogated the problem of "general population", the dominant discourse, and PWAs as "us-object". I found that in terms of the dominant AIDS discourse, the phrase "general population" can refer to the idealized, actually nowhere existing, still socially present image of the "normal", hard-working, middle-class heterosexuals. Next, in terms of the dominant discourse, I found that the implications of the discourse relegated gay men to the level of the objectified homosexual. Finally, I pointed out that one can rightfully think, if we take the homophobic element of the dominant discourse into account, that PWAs had an "us-object" experience. It means that they apprehended themselves through the lenses of the "general population". Since that approach

(suggested by the dominant discourse) apprehended them as homosexual objects that are the cause of AIDS, gay shame could occur.

In my final chapter, accordingly, I interrogated the feeling of shame, and that how it can be overcome. As affect theory suggested, the shyness caused by shame either resulted in a complete "turning away" from the spectator, or in a "break out in an unashamed stare". In accordance with these, I established two categories of gay answers: at first, the conservative, moralizing answer, and then, the activist answer. The representatives of the former, turns away from their gayness – as it was mirrored by the dominant discourse (irresponsible, infantile, hedonist, promiscuous). They emphasized the "lesson" of the AIDS crisis in relation to gay men, so they re-emphasized the main elements of the mainstream, homophobic discourse. Unlike the moralizing answers, the activist answers to the dominant discourse emphasized its wrong approach; consequently, they also criticized and, indeed, challenged the framework from within the dominant discourse could be engendered. They could get back their temporarily lost agency via establishing their own system, with an own viewpoint – activist gay men looked back at the "general population".

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