

A THEORETICAL CONTEXT FOR SHAME

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Shame, till now the 'Cinderella of the unpleasant emotions' (Rycroft, 1968), deserves a central role in psychoanalytic theory alongside anxiety and guilt. An examination of the literature together with clinical and theoretical studies of my own has led me to define shame (the concept) as the signal, affective and cognitive, that a move from 'self-narcissism' to 'object-narcissism' is imminent (Kinston, 1980, 1982). The details of the shame experience and the penumbra of related experiences (e.g. inferiority, failure, guilt, aggression) will be described in the course of a brief critical review of the literature. These experiences will be shown to lock into the concept as defined above; further implications, phenomenological and theoretical, will be examined by using the associated theory of narcissism.

A full consistent account of shame must not only link the many clinical psychoanalytic observations, but also much written by others. Psychoanalysts have noted such features of shame as its links with self-exposure and fear of rejection, its connexions with sexuality and its absence in perversion, its relation to blushing and wishes to hide and the phenomenon of shame propensity. Other crucial features of shame are emphasized by non-psychoanalytic authors and these should either be understood within a psychoanalytic model or be purposefully and coherently excluded. For example, the Bible viewed the acceptance of shame as the ultimate in commitment; Shakespeare referred to shame far more often than to guilt and associated it with truth and honour rather than with inferiority or wrong doing; Nietzsche linked shame to loss of individuality and volition.

As will be evident in the literature review to follow, psychoanalytic authors have mainly ignored the need to bring order to apparently disparate clinical and non-clinical observations. Only Lichtenstein (1963) has attempted to assimilate the work of writers outside psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysts have tended to use the

term 'shame' much as it appears in their clinical material and have often confusingly linked it to another term, as in 'shame and guilt' or 'shame and inferiority feelings'.

Shame has perspectives, on the one hand so intensely personal and on the other so broadly social, that it has proved elusive for theoreticians focused on mental mechanisms. This double perspective is less clear in English which has one word for shame, than in languages such as German and French which have two words. 'Shame' does have two antonymic forms in English which correspond to the two meanings and it is possibly an example of the antithetical meaning of primary words (Freud, 1910).

The origins of the word 'shame' are obscure but scholars believe it derives from the Teutonic root (*s*)*kem* meaning 'to cover oneself' (Oxford English Dictionary). The two meanings which have come down to us are as follows:

Shame-unashamed (German: *Scham*, French: *Pudeur*) refers to modesty, chastity, shyness, bashfulness. In Biblical usage it refers to genitals. The emphasis in this meaning is on inner personal experience.

Shame-shameless (German: *Schande*; French: *Honte*) refers to disgrace, scandal, criminality (cf. deeds of shame). The emphasis in this meaning is on social customs and standards.

When Freud spoke of shame as being an important force stemming the sexual drives, he used *Scham*. There are no references to *Schande* in the index of the '*Gesammelte Werke*'. However in his belief that the preservation of culture and civilized society depended mainly on hypocrisy (rather than guilt or moral standards) he was talking about *Schande* (Freud, 1915).

Aidos, the Greek Goddess of Shame, denoted both sexual shame and the genitals, and as she was the source of dignity, decency and good manners, shame was linked with reverence, respect and piety. Her companion was Dike (Justice, Natural Law) or Nemesis (Due Enactment). Hesiod prophesied that Aidos and Dike/

Nemesis would abandon mankind due to its wickedness and that after this still worse would follow (Kerenyi, 1980).

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Shame, the concept and the experience, has been handled and understood in a variety of ways. These will be summarized by theme and then the crucial features of each view and their inter-relations will be elaborated.

Summary of themes

1. Shame is ignored or only mentioned in passing (Reich, 1960; Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973; Kernberg, 1975; Winnicott, 1965; Segal, 1973).

2. Shame is located in a social nexus (Freud, 1896).

3. Shame is regarded as indistinguishable, for practical purposes, from guilt (Hartmann & Loewenstein, 1962).

4. Shame is viewed as similar to guilt and dependent on ego-superego relations (Piers & Singer, 1953; Sandler et al., 1963; Jacobson, 1964).

5. Shame is a component of a sexual instinct or defence against it (Freud, 1905; Abraham, 1913; Fenichel, 1946; Jacobson, 1964; Levin, 1967; Kohut, 1971).

6. Shame is associated with identity, narcissism and the sense of self (Erikson, 1950, 1968; Lichtenstein, 1963, 1964).

The above summary is a crude guide to the conflicting ideas and postulates in the literature. The discussion which follows builds on it, aiming to be pertinent to my theme rather than an exhaustive account.

Critique

The absence of shame from Laplanche & Pontalis' (1973) erudite work is some indication of the scant attention given to it by psychoanalysts in the past. Freud, though repeatedly emphasizing its importance, never focused his attention fully on shame. By claiming that self-reproach becomes shame when another person hears of it, Freud (1896) placed the experience at least partly outside the individual and

so may have made it difficult for subsequent authors to give it a place within the mind. The anthropologist Benedict (1946), for example, is following Freud when she describes guilt as an experience of internalized criticism and shame as a reaction to criticism from the outside. Piers & Singer (1953) point out that in some people the opposite is true, i.e. guilt requires an outsider, and not shame. In any case, emphasis on the apparent source of disapproval as the determining factor confuses phenomenology with depth structure and ignores what we know of projection, mirroring, externalization and identification.

Hartmann & Loewenstein (1962) asserted that shame was so similar to guilt, both in scientific and common usage, that the two terms could be considered together. This remarkable view by learned workers in the face of clinical, developmental and theoretical evidence to the contrary ought to be illuminating. As will be argued, it may be that shame cannot be fully comprehended within the model of the mind which they were so carefully refining. My aim will be to show that it fits naturally and distinctively within the object-relations model which developed with the personalization of psychoanalytic technique in the last quarter-century (Fairbairn, 1952; Winnicott, 1965).

Nevertheless a belief in the similarity between shame and guilt preoccupied psychoanalysts and led them to postulate the dependence of shame, like guilt, on ego-superego relations. The ego-ideal was the locus of ideal self-images and ideal parental introjects, and shame appeared when the individual perceived himself as having failed to live up to his own ideal standards as established in the ego-ideal (Sandler et al., 1963). The strongest advocacy of this ego-superego model was that of Piers & Singer (1953). Their scheme related shame to the ego-ideal and guilt to the superego; shame was based on fear of contempt and fear of abandonment. Such a sharp distinction of ego-ideal and superego is not theoretically satisfactory (Sandler, 1960; Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973); and is not generally supported by clinical evidence. Lichtenstein (1963) undermined Piers & Singer's argument further by revealing their implicit assumption that there is a ground-plan for ideal maturation—an ideal which is arbitrary and not related to the way people actually live their lives.

Kohut (1971), one of the more careful clinical observers of narcissistic phenomena, argued that ego/ego-ideal tensions are not necessary for shame. He pointed out that many shame-prone people do not possess strong ideals: instead, he noted, most are exhibitionistic and driven by ambition. The ideal self-images which correspond to ambition are connected with ego goals and so it might be more meaningful to speak of intrasystemic (ego) conflicts between these ideal self-images and the apparent self noted by introspection and observation. This was the view of Jacobson (1964). Unfortunately, it compounded confusion by leading her to use shame synonymously with narcissistic injury or defeat. She also claimed that narcissistic defeat produced a 'sense or feeling of inferiority'. This is best regarded as an ego-superego tension (Freud, 1933, pp. 65 and 141; Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973; Alexander, 1938). Jacobson's conjunction of shame and inferiority is not apt: the two experiences are easily distinguishable and frequently observed apart. Most importantly, there are sensitive persons who experience shame when things go well. Feldman (1962) pointed out that any attention, whether it brings glory or debasement, can induce shame.

An important line of thinking has considered shame as an id-ego or id-superego phenomenon. Freud (1894, 1905, 1926) repeatedly linked shame with disgust and morality as basic constitutional forces opposing expression of the sexual drive. Abraham (1913) emphasized shame as a defence against scopophilia—essentially the wish to see the genitals of the parents. Fenichel (1946) described shame as a defence against exhibitionism and differentiated 'signal shame' (analogous to signal anxiety) from 'panic-like shame' (analogous to automatic anxiety). Kohut (1971) claimed that subliminal shame signals existed between superego and ego, while 'painful shame' occurred due to the id 'flooding the ego with unneutralized exhibitionism'. This latter phenomenon was related to the presence of the unconscious grandiose self in the id. Jacobson (1964) also claimed that shame was a defensive reaction which appeared whenever infantile narcissistic drives, libidinal or aggressive, were in the centre of the clinical picture. Recent writers (Levin, 1967; Lowenfeld, 1976) have essentially adopted this instinctual view, but to account for the apparent responsiveness of shame to cultural

norms have connected it with object relations. For example, shame is assigned a role in regulating the degree of personal contact and in ensuring protection against rejection. These descriptions move perilously close to the social interaction phenomenology mentioned earlier.

Two important studies cast doubt on this last approach by claiming that shame exists *before* repression of the exhibitionistic drives by cultural influences (Grinker, 1955; Spiegel, 1966); Broucek (1982), summarizing current work on narcissistic disturbance, firmly rejects the view of shame as a reaction formation and claims that it is a form of basic displeasure.

The observations and argument so far lead to certain conclusions:

- (a) Despite some claims to the contrary, shame is a well-defined and possibly primitive experience which exists in its own right and with complex phenomenology.
- (b) Despite numerous attempts to define the shame concept in terms of instincts and to fit it in the structural model, shame does not seem to belong there.
- (c) Most authors have failed to encompass the phenomenology of the shame experience, as described by their colleagues, within their shame concept.

Phenomenology

The final approach, which will be developed and elaborated more rigorously in the next section of the paper, focuses on the detailed content of the shame experience. In the literature, the authors' theme is a concern with the person's separateness and idea of who he is. Otto Rank (1968) was an early writer who suggested that shame was 'an emotional reaction to the realization of difference, of separation (between people)'. However the detailed development of this insight has only come in recent decades.

Erikson (1950) named his second psychosocial phase 'autonomy versus shame and doubt' and referred to the crucial conflicts as 'will to be oneself versus self-doubt' and 'self certainty versus self-consciousness'. He saw shame as deriving from helplessness and loss of self-control and connected it with being seen and the impulse to hide. He wrote 'the obligation to achieve an identity ... is apt to arouse a painful overall

ashamedness ... over being visible all around to all-knowing adults'. He carefully and explicitly avoided the usual confusions by labelling the third phase 'initiative versus guilt' and the fourth phase 'industry versus inferiority'.

Lynd (1958), though not a psychoanalyst, offered a careful and comprehensive description of shame that makes a simple equation with awareness of short-coming, wrong-doing or exhibitionism difficult to accept. The sense of exposure in shame is of 'sensitive, intimate, vulnerable aspects of the self' and it is primarily exposure to one's own eyes—hence involving the discovery of identity and uniqueness. She noted an element of unexpectedness, a feeling of inappropriateness or incongruity and related this to the discrepancy between what is felt from within and what is apparent from without. Shame is accompanied by confusion (more generally recognized by psychoanalysts in association with blushing) and in her existential analysis this is explained as a loss of identity which one thought one had. She highlighted the threat to trust in oneself and the world and instanced the child's shame when an adult treats casually or indifferently an event which is highly significant to the child. She also observed that shame is portrayed in literature as not just agonizing and painful but also revelatory and rapturous. Finally she referred to the involvement of the whole self in the act of shame. Unlike the guilty act for which one can make confession, expiation, penance or reparation, the shameful act requires an alteration of the person. The person thinks 'I cannot have done this. But I have done it, and I cannot undo it because this is I'. Shame is provoked by experiences which question our preconceptions about ourselves and compel us to see ourselves and society; it is a necessity for personal growth.

Lynd does not deal with the clinical psychopathological phenomena with which any metapsychological account must concern itself; but her description, even as briefly put as above, is not naive or superficial.

Lewis (1963) suggested that shame functioned as a protection against the loss of self-boundaries and helped to maintain the sense of separate identity. In a later work (1971), she provided a 'commonsense' (p. 92) phenomenology of shame, particularly in contrast to guilt. Amongst other things she noted that the experience of shame is

directly about the *self* and its negative evaluation and gives rise to 'identity imagery', whereas in guilt, the self is negatively evaluated with respect to some activity and is not itself the focus of the experience.

Lichtenstein (1963, 1964) drew on Lynd (1958), Erikson (1950) and Feldman (1962) to postulate that a person lives in a constant tension between identity maintenance and the temptation to abandon his identity as human altogether. He termed this latter phenomenon 'metamorphosis' and he claimed that people oscillated between identity and metamorphosis. Shame is associated with a breakthrough of yearnings to yield to the ever-present temptation to abandon human identity. He followed Freud (1921) in arguing that the relinquishment of a developmental acquisition may be perceived as a celebration and triumph and so explained the rapturous quality of shame.

Despite the erudition, subtlety and fertility of Lichtenstein's writing, and evidence supporting his view, he has had little clinical or theoretical impact. Jacobson (1964) asserted that Lichtenstein's idea that 'man is forever threatened with loss of breakdown of his identity' (1961) was not borne out by clinical observation. I have argued the reverse elsewhere in a study of the concept of identity (Kinston, unpublished). Social life provides much evidence to suggest that people have a potential to abandon even the pretence of individuality or autonomy and in certain circumstances (e.g. within political or bureaucratic structures) may experience themselves as mechanical and in that state treat others in an inhuman way.

The account of shame that follows is essentially in agreement with Lichtenstein and will, I hope, ensure that his ideas are given further attention.

THE NATURE OF SHAME

Theoretical base

Almost all the workers referred to in the previous section implicitly or explicitly locate the experience of shame within the field of narcissism. If this is accepted, an adequate theory of narcissism will be necessary for its understanding. In pursuit of such a theory, I have argued for

distinguishing the concepts of self-narcissism and object-narcissism (Kinston, 1980, 1982). It is noteworthy that the writers who focus on object-narcissism (Rosenfeld, Kernberg) barely mention shame while those who concentrate on self-narcissism (Jacobson, Sandler, Kohut) usually highlight it. I emphasized that both self-narcissism and object-narcissism are clinically applicable to every patient (Kinston, 1980); and have developed the close developmental and clinical connexions between self/object relations, object-narcissism and self-narcissism (Kinston, 1982).

To recapitulate briefly: Narcissistic disturbance originates as the child moves to individuate in the face of parental attempts to maintain symbiosis. The parent, unconsciously responding to his own needs, does not meet the child's autonomous and spontaneous gesture. From the parent's point of view, the child's gesture is wrong, even unfeeling, and not what the child-in-the-parent wants or expects. In parental psychic reality, the parent is being failed by the child. The child, by not acting as an extension of the parent, produces pain, depression and resentment in the parent. This scenario may get further overlaid by coercive or other reactions of the parent or various responses from the child. Fundamentally, in the intersubjective reality, the child is all wrong. This is the origin for the child of a negative valuation of his core self-images, and for the later adult manifestations of self-narcissism pathology. The child learns that fitting into the symbiosis, being what the parent wants, is rewarded by parental love, pleasure and approval, even though this requires self-destruction (i.e. destruction of his own experience). These fusion states are the precursor of adult manifestations of object-narcissism. Contact with the environment thus becomes a reaction to an impingement or a deliberate production rather than a spontaneous gesture. Hence activity has no root in personal impulse and no possibility of building a usable sense of self and contributing to self-esteem. Instead, it becomes the precursor of omnipotence and mindless destruction.

Activity which generates the desired parental response can be mechanical and highly efficient, but it is essentially unfeeling and inhuman. It is inhuman because it avoids the crucial issues of: who am I? What do I want? What do I think?

The answers to these questions will be unique, a manifestation of self-narcissism. By definition, mechanical responsiveness is essentially repetitive and stereotyped. The child learns to attain a form of satisfaction, fused with the parent's sense of well-being, without conflicts and needs: the state of object-narcissism. Because of the child's inherent uniqueness, it finds itself moving between individuation and self-assertion on the one hand and symbiosis enforced or encouraged by the parent on the other. This oscillation parallels Lichtenstein's description of the moves between identity and metamorphosis.

A place for shame

The clinical observations described in the literature fit in nicely with the view that shame appears in the state of self-narcissism associated with the urge to move to object-narcissism.

In his description of shame, Erikson (1968, p. 111) writes:

there is a limit to a child's and an adult's individual endurance in the face of demands which force him to consider himself, his body, his needs, and his wishes as evil and dirty, and to believe in the infallibility of those who pass such judgement. Occasionally, he may turn from things around, become secretly oblivious to the opinion of others, and consider as evil only the fact that they exist.

He crucially places shame within the phenomenon of negative valuation, and links it to the problem of evil. Obliviousness to others is a manifestation of object-narcissism and is seen as a response to the type of parent-child interaction described in the previous section.

Shame is the signal experience that the individual, faced with painful self-awareness (similar to 'identity' in Lichtenstein's terminology) and still with the capacity to relate meaningfully to another, wishes to abandon this and to adopt a state of mind which is essentially evil, that is to say, characterized by a denial of all that is human: need, dependency, conflicts, meaning, imperfection. This inhuman, unfeeling state is 'metamorphosis' in Lichtenstein's terminology.

Once the person has moved to object-narcissism, the experience of shame recedes. The destructiveness of this state, characterized as mindless or ruthless, often gets described as

shameless. The move to object-narcissism is expedient and reflects a cynical triumph over the pain and effort involved in the commitment to truth. This manifests variously in a later psychoanalysis but most simply as an unwillingness to know what occurred in childhood or to re-experience it in the transference. The violation of the infant's psychic reality by parental projective identification for parental narcissistic purposes takes a terrible toll on the inner life of the child and on social behaviour. Self-containment becomes difficult and activities in adult life which recreate the negative valuation of the self are labelled disgraceful, scandalous and criminal.

Given an infancy where the parents responded positively to spontaneity and self-assertive struggles, a person feels in the main 'unashamed', i.e. self-awareness is not overly painful and there is relatively little urge to fusion and object-narcissism. Self-exposure is then associated with a sense of modesty, humility and reticence because of an awareness, at a tolerable level, of sensitivity and vulnerability. A perspective of one's significance and place in the order of things develops and precludes pretentiousness.

In this view, an analysand does not, as Lowenfeld (1976) and Levin (1971) suggest, work through shame to the point of being unashamed. The alleviation of shame is related partly to direct interpretive activity but more to the encouragement, inherent in analytic technique, of the person's unique roots. If the analysand commences shameless, he must be brought to experience shame; then, as his core self-images lose some of their intense negative valuation under the influence of the analytic experience, and to the degree that they do so, he will be less troubled by shame. As the possibility of returning to a solution of human problems by returning to object narcissism does not disappear, shame will remain. Feldman (1962) usefully notes that although shame is felt as an affect at a primitive level of development, in maturity it is experienced more as a guiding incorruptible principle.

Shame propensity and narcissistic vulnerability are related but distinct notions. All shame-prone individuals are narcissistically vulnerable but the

reverse is not true. This is because many narcissistically vulnerable people lock themselves into a defensive invulnerability. They do this by becoming more or less committed to a shame-free (shameless) state of object-narcissism. This group includes both ostensible failures (psychopaths, perverts) and highly successful persons who are withdrawn or chaotic in their private lives.¹

By contrast, the shame-prone person is on the brink of behaving in an unfeeling or inhuman way. For longer or shorter periods he is aware of himself, but with an awareness loaded with negative connotations. He longs for the easy escape into object-narcissism and not uncommonly gives into this longing. Another option used to deny or overcome a feeling of non-existence or the negative valuation of the self is to obtain frequent, and often public, acclamation and admiration. These are the individuals particularly singled out by Kohut.

Is there an 'unconscious sense of shame'?

Emotions have some human action as part of their definition: for guilt it is the need for punishment, for anxiety it is the urge to run away. These action components provide a fantasied relief for the experience and may be acted upon in various ways. If only the action is observed, psychoanalysts speak of an 'unconscious' experience. The action component of shame is the wish to hide. This may be expressed in a more obvious fantasy form such as a wish to sink into the ground. In this action, both aspects of narcissism are evident: withdrawal and protection of the self are self-narcissistic; becoming part of the ground (mother) is object-narcissistic.

Self/object relations at the shameful moment are often invested with faecal qualities. This is partly related to the concurrent developmental phase associated with individuation-separation, but also perhaps because faeces are the first thing about the infant which is responded to systematically and persistently with disgust and rejection. Images of negative valuation are linked with dirt and filth and the self/object relations are described as sordid and squalid. The extent of

¹This offers a possible solution to the puzzle in classical theory (Freud, 1905) as to how shame can be overridden in perversions. Freud handled the difficulty

by staying within the structural model and introducing the concept of splitting the ego.

repulsiveness may be linked to the degree of sadism in the relationship

During analysis, patients with narcissistic disturbance are often 'not there'. Their associative and dream material commonly reveals that they are hiding and attempting to relate by either putting up a facade or sending a delegate to speak for and about themselves. Direct relating is felt to be messy or sordid and unacceptable and when it occurs shame is felt. One could regard the 'need to hide' as expressing the unconscious sense of shame. It is an extremely common phenomenon both in analysis and without where it manifests as reclusive or secretive behaviour.

Freud's longest discourse on shame is in 'The interpretation of dreams' (1900, pp. 242-8) in which he examines dreams characterized by the conjunction of nakedness, shame and the wish to hide. Such dreams epitomize the shame experience by including its three components: the precipitating event (nakedness—exposure), the affect (shame) and the action (hiding). Although he links such dreams to the desire to exhibit, he quotes at length a literary reference to Homer which is remarkably pertinent to our theme.

If you are wandering about in a foreign land, far from your home and from all that you hold dear, if you have seen and heard many things, have known sorrow and care, and are wretched and forlorn, then without fail you will dream one night that you are coming near to your home; you will see it gleaming and shining in fairest colours, and the sweetest, dearest and most beloved forms will move towards you. Then suddenly you will become aware that you are in rags, naked and dusty. You will be seized with a nameless shame and dread, you will seek to find covering and to hide yourself, and you will awake bathed in sweat. This, so long as men breathe, is the dream of the unhappy wanderer.

If we take the story as a whole then we may add to Freud's interpretation. The unhappy wanderer is the rejected miserable child who has to face the world alone. His dream is not a wish-fulfilment spoiled by the emergence of instinctual strivings, but one 'beyond the pleasure principle', i.e. a repetition of a traumatic event. The exposed vulnerable child desires his parents (their positive valuation glows) and suddenly finds himself (including his instinctual wishes) not valued. In that state of awareness he experiences shame. The unhappy wanderer lives out an unconscious sense of shame.

Individuation and volition

The price of individuation is shame. Andreas-Salome puts this poetically: 'Now the profoundly racking illness—the primal hurt of all of us—had ended its long course, the uncomprehending self-abasement of becoming an individual' (1921, p. 5). Because shame is located at this developmental and adult dynamic focus, it has an important connexion with volition.

The child's dilemma, as described above, is either to gain approval, love and pleasure by submitting passively to interaction which denies its own existence or to reject the parental object-narcissism and assert individuality and autonomy, both at the cost of a negative response from the parent and with the responsibility for producing pain and depression in the parent. Turning from an autonomous existence, abandoning choice and losing volition are existential crises based on being a thing for the other.

Nietzsche wrote: 'Shame occurs where man feels that he is nothing but a tool in the hands of a will infinitely greater than is his own within his separate individuality'. Hermann (1943), in a perceptive psychoanalytic essay, wrote that 'man is capable of being shamed by anything that shows him to be enslaved by laws and necessities impervious to his own will'. These insights receive some confirmation from Broucek (1979) who reviewed experimental studies which revealed the existence of an acute distress state associated with the infant's inability to influence, predict or comprehend an event when he expected to be able to do so. Broucek concluded that this distress was the experience of shame.

Human functioning in health is characterized by decision (judgement), choice and a sense of free-will: all manifestations of self-narcissism. The object-narcissism counterpart is activity which is reactive, confused, mechanical, or automatic. The classic defence of inhumanity is that of Eichmann, namely 'acting under orders'. Erikson (1968) wrote: 'A sense of self-control without loss of self-esteem is the ontogenetic source of a sense of *free-will*. From an unavoidable sense of loss of self-control and of parental overcontrol comes a lasting propensity for *doubt* and *shame*'. When the child allows itself to function as an extension of a parent, it has lost self-control and has abandoned itself to the parent. Parental over-

control is most compulsive and coercive when parental narcissism is at stake, in contrast to overcontrol related to habit or ignorance. Parents who bring their child to a psychiatrist refer to this struggle for control in identity terms: 'It's him or me'.

Guilt and failure

How did shame get mixed up with notions like short-coming or wrong-doing? One explanation might be that experience is complex and, because painful experience is reacted to and defended against in many ways, there is a wealth of psychological data which allow ordering in a number of ways. It is possible that the inability of the structural and topographical models to accept the concept of shame naturally, made it easier for analysts to conjoin shame to concepts like guilt or inferiority which did fit the models well. The destructiveness of object-narcissism does, of course, commonly lead to experiences of guilt or failure so shame experiences do have temporal links to these experiences.

The developmental perspective may again be helpful. In the narcissistic child-parent relation, every assertive step of the child which proclaims 'I am separate . . . I am different' results in parental pain, depression and resentment. These intersubjective meanings of individuation have two prominent characteristics. First, self-assertion is an attack on the parent and the consequent loss of love, approval and well-being is experienced as punishment. Second, the (child-in-the) parent is being failed by the child. These meanings are not specific to a particular act but colour the child's total existence. The individual in later life is said to be riddled with guilt or feelings of failure. Pier's understanding of shame as 'the anxiety aroused by failure to live up to internalised parental ideals under the unconscious threat of abandonment' (Piers & Singer, 1953) can be reformulated as follows. Shame is associated with the urge to live up to parental expectations which disregard or violate a unique personal identity; but which offer a sense of closeness, love or approval.

It is worth noting that every child goes through this type of experience and has to face these issues during development and the process of socialization. The universal impact of parental narcissism on infant narcissism is too large a subject to be covered here. We may however

touch on the transition from intimate relations to social relations in the disturbed family. When narcissistic impact goes wrong within the intimacy of family life, problems often do not appear until this environment is left for the wider social environment. In such a family, independent existence and awareness of the parental behaviour and its intersubjective meaning (self-narcissism and self/object relating) are unpleasurable and unwished-for in the context of readily available relief and ease through fitting in (object-narcissism). As a result, shame is often felt and experienced as an additional source of suffering. In later life, however, this form of object-narcissism is frequently realized to be undesirable and shame may then become a valuable ally of the person's efforts to maintain self/object relations. In this way shame appears not so much as a guardian against instinctual undesirables but rather as a device to ensure the use of instinctual drives in the service of reality, relating and core values.

Guilt-shame cycles have been noted by a number of authors (Alexander, 1938; Erikson, 1968; Piers & Singer, 1953; Ward, 1972; Stierlin, 1977) who explain them as follows. An instinctual impulse arises and leads to guilt and inhibition; passivity and inaction generate feelings of inferiority and shame; these evoke acting out which in turn leads to guilt.

Guilt-shame cycles are explained differently in the current theory in the light of developmental considerations. Narcissistic phenomena are about the option of moving backwards and forwards between self-narcissism (with self/object relating) and object-narcissism. Moves in the direction of self- to object-narcissism are associated with shame, while moves in the other direction result in an awareness of the destruction produced whilst in the object-narcissistic state and consequent guilt. This only increases the urge to move back to object-narcissism. The cycle is liable to be instigated in any personally important activity as the individual must then make decisions which 'commit himself' and this activates a narcissistic state of mind.

Exposure, knowledge, rejection, exhibitionism, humiliation

Shame, it has been emphasized, is related to knowledge: self-knowledge and the knowledge of

psychic and external reality. Knowledge is rooted in visual metaphors such as 'insight' and 'imagination' and predominantly in visual experience. The conjunction of shame, knowledge and seeing is well-illustrated in the biblical story of creation. When Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of Knowledge, they knew they were naked, they knew shame, and they were expelled from Eden. This marked the beginning of the human race. Similarly, individuation, commencing from knowledge of separateness and consciousness of one's humanity, means the loss of blissful responsibility-free states of fusion and the appearance of shame. The myth clarifies the problem of who is seeing or knowing whom: it is the person seeing and knowing himself.

This conclusion deserves some further consideration. The 'social behaviour' theory of shame in which being seen, criticized or rejected by another person is the central focus was earlier described as superficial. The psychoanalytic method would require any social scenario to be considered as a recreation of an infantile fantasy or transaction. For example, the 'other person' in later life could therefore be either the mother acting as a mirror for the child, or a part of the ego or superego. Lynd, who is not a psychoanalyst, believed that the shame exposure was primarily to one's own eyes and she related it to self-knowledge and self-awareness.

It is a recurrent observation that man's capacity for self-knowledge and self-observation is not great (Freud, 1917; Eliot, 1936) but the psychoanalytic method bases itself on the fact that it can be developed and reinforced by mirroring. Lynd (1958) wrote 'When you look at yourself in the mirror, someone stares at you who is not you and yet it is—this is the form of exposure in the shame experience'.

Nietzsche described the futility of revenge on the witness in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*: the ugliest man has murdered God who saw everything; but if the superman, the perfect being, is unattainable, then there is no point killing God, better to have killed shame; only shame is not another but he, himself. Shame-prone individuals

are liable to self-consciousness which is some form of internal scanning; and possibly also relates to an awareness that self-images can enter into someone else's mind during externalizations. Self-awareness is not an ego or ego-ideal scanning phenomenon but is the active presence of self-images, related to early experience, in unconscious, preconscious and conscious mental life.

It is insufficient and confusing to say that shame is produced by exposure to others who have negative reactions or who can be imagined to have such reactions (Levin, 1967). Rejection does surround the disturbed narcissistic parent-child interactions but it is a complex phenomenon made up of a variety of parental rejections, self rejections, talion fears and defences (Kinston, 1982). In adult life, the experience of shame when a move towards someone is rejected (or during the move when fear of rejection is a fantasy) is related to the urge to move to object-narcissism so as to banish feelings and conflicts, to deny one's own basic characteristics, and to fit in rather than to maintain full awareness of the interpersonal tensions.

Similarly the exhibitionistic instinct may be important in shame-laden experiences but to define shame in its terms seems most incomplete. The phenomenon of adult exhibitionistic activity is not solely instinctual but a complex, mainly defensive, activity. For example, it attracts attention and admiration or criticism which deals with the self's non-existence or negative valuation; it externalizes self-images so that others see and know rather than oneself; it may have a repetition-compulsion quality related to the coercion of the child to show something for the benefit of the parents; and it may be a counter-reaction to the wish to hide.

If the individual, prior to the exposure, was avoiding self-awareness through grandiosity (self-inflation) or object-narcissism, then he will experience humiliation, literally he will be humbled.²

Shame, love and sexuality

The narcissistic pleasure of parents in their children can be very great indeed and during

² Psychoanalytic writers have made something of a game distinguishing shame and humiliation. For example, Spiegel (1966) regarded shame as public and humiliation as private; and Stamm (1978) claimed humiliation was due to an unjustified attack while shame was linked to a loss of love.

The two terms are often used synonymously, though I have noted a tendency for humiliation to seem more appropriate when there is more sadism in the personality. Other terms sometimes used synonymously by patients include embarrassment, personal discomfort, and inner tension.

fusion the child shares in this in an especially intense way. Shame therefore becomes connected with self-abandonment, rapture, ecstasy and sexuality. Even in adulthood, sexuality is associated with experiences of fusion and contains an element of treating the other as a thing. In view of this and the bodily intimacy and exposure, sexuality can never be totally divested of shame. Stendhal (1822) wrote 'Modesty (i.e. shame) is the mother of love' (quoted in Lowenfeld, 1976). Intimacy and sexuality can only be rendered shame-free by dehumanization which results in perversion and pornography.

The assertion that positive feelings release shame (Levin, 1978) is not generally true and misses the point that *any* form of self/object relating is a substrate for shame. Affection leads to shame when the child discovers that his parents will only accept a particular form of affection: the child must love the parent the way the parent wants to be loved and in return the parent will do the same for the child. In this battle, the child may surrender or may choose to fight on; certainly the defeat is so personal that surrender will not lead to safety but rather to further encroachments on to his own existence and self-valuation. Hostility can thus come to have ego-strengthening functions (Fried, 1956).

Shame and aggression

Shame is often talked about as if it causes aggression (Levin, 1978; Stierlin, 1977) and the phenomena of object-narcissism. Movement between states of object-narcissism and self-narcissism does result in characteristic instinctual releases, aggressive and libidinal (Kinston, 1982), but shame, rather than being the cause of these releases, is an independent phenomenon. Perhaps a re-interpretation of an example of Stierlin's (pp. 236-7) may further explicate the present viewpoint. Stierlin reports that the patient had attacked the analyst outside the session and came feeling guilty about this. He tried to justify the attacks by looking for faults in the analyst. This was interpreted and the patient cried. Stierlin then writes: 'Yet while he cried, he was overcome with shame. He called his crying a despicable show of weakness and blamed me for having triggered it. Out of his humiliated fury he attacked me again'.

My understanding of this would be as follows:

the patient experienced guilt over his attacks and tried to evade it as described. The interpretation of this led to a depressive response and awareness of responsibility. The patient is then faced with a choice. Either he looks at why he is attacking and hurting the other at the cost of guilt and a sense of weakness; or he blindly and inhumanly continues to attack and remain unaware of its origins. At this point of choice, in touch for a moment with the negatively-valued weakness, he experiences shame. He goes on to choose attack using his reaction of despising himself as a weapon and an attempt to restore his self-value. As well as shame, the patient was experiencing a sense of inferiority as evidenced by his initial search for faults in the analyst. This latter state is based on ego-superego tensions and Alexander (1938) has described its tendency to stimulate aggressive release.

Mechanisms for dealing with shame

A person may defend against painful guilt or allow himself to experience remorse and deep regret. The experience of guilt must still be dealt with and methods for this operate internally and have been institutionalized in religion, law and custom to enable their enactment. These include atonement, confession, penance, punishment, repentance, reparation, and forgiveness. Much has been written in the psychoanalytic literature about these.

Much less has been written on methods for dealing with painful shame states following self-exposure; indeed it is often asserted that they are few or ineffective (Lewis, 1971; Lowenfeld, 1976). A recent major compendium of defences has a full index column of references to guilt while shame is not mentioned at all (Laughlin, 1979). Shame, like any experience, may be defended against with the usual variety of mechanisms (Laughlin, 1979). In addition, completing the transition to object-narcissism will immediately extinguish shame. Lewis (1971) described one typical form: by-passing the affect and watching the self from the viewpoint of the other. Maintenance of a permanent state of object-narcissism will prevent the experience of ever moving to object-narcissism and hence results in the absence of shame: this is shamelessness. Being secure within self-narcissism and self-object relating also

results in an absence of shame: this is unashamedness.

The move to object-narcissism, it has been suggested, involves the subjection of the whole person (including his mental apparatus) and replacement of spontaneous directed awareness by stereotyped or ritualized activity. In childhood, self-expression produced parental pain so it is not surprising that methods for subduing such activity have been developed by the human mind and institutionalized in society. These methods include mortification, taking refuge, hypocrisy, dishonesty, incognizance and hiding.

Mortification originally simply meant the destruction of vitality and vigour. The experience following exposure is sometimes described this way and a popular expression for it is 'I could have died!' Mortification was a specific religious activity for subduing one's self and body by using self-denial and self-discipline, often with austere living and the infliction of pain and discomfort. In addition to the surface masochistic aspects, it is possible to conjecture the existence of an active recreation of childhood activity: the child controlling and subduing his own impulses in the face of parental coercive demands.

Religions have often advised withdrawal from life and the entering of a retreat. This may be solitary as in hermitages or in groups such as monasteries; and the retreat may be temporary or permanent. In group living, solitude is usually emphasized, even prized, and communication kept at a minimal level or predominantly ritualized. In modern life, arrangements to ensure privacy or certain types of holiday fulfil similar functions.

Social life requires that the individual submit to the group and restrain his unique and personal urges. Manner, custom and ritual assist the individual but to the degree that they are insufficient they are modulated with hypocrisy. Freud believed that social cohesion was more dependent on hypocrisy than guilt (Freud, 1915). However, the 'white lie' of social hypocrisy may be insufficient to maintain poise (Rangell, 1954) and self-protection, and it then shades into flagrant dishonesty. The threat of social exposure of personal actions is the power behind blackmail. This blackmail may be found at the psychological level as the cost in thought and action of covering up or fraudulently misrepresenting one's ex-

periences to oneself. Indeed the main emotional energies of some patients are expended directing a stream of lies and propaganda at themselves to prevent internal exposure.

A common protest of the narcissistically vulnerable patient in analysis is 'I don't want to know!' This 'incognizance' (Pressman, 1969) is distinguishable from 'denial'. It reflects a deliberate ostrich-like attitude of burying one's head in the sand, and saying, as in the child's game: 'I can't see you so you can't see me'. The person feels that admitting something will be overwhelming to him and takes the position 'even if I know something is there, if I don't say it is and if I act as if it's not, then I don't have to take it into account'. This mental mechanism may itself be subject to elaboration or secondary hiding manoeuvres.

Simply hiding, as described earlier, remains a final possibility for dealing with shame. These mechanisms are united by their reference to the whole person, not to any particular act. For example, one patient was ashamed to acknowledge that he lived in a rented flat which he explained in terms of status, but he also found that he wished to hide his age of 26 years, and the only explanation we could find for this was that it was *him* and he just did not want anybody to know. Hiding avoided a painful sense of discomfort, embarrassment and overall self-awareness. As has been frequently noted, shame and the wish to hide can be associated with the self-exposure of others with whom one is identified.

Other people may find it very difficult to hide. Communication with these in analysis may be just as difficult as with those who hide. One analysand said that whatever she said to me would be a lie: she meant by this both that she felt trapped in object-narcissism and that she could not communicate her wholeness (self-narcissism). When she did speak, her sentences were like crystals whose faces reflected innumerable meanings each illuminating an aspect of her whole self.

CONCLUSION

It has been argued in the course of this paper that shame is not experienced simply because of imperfection or wrong-doing or discrepancies between how one is and how one would like to be.

Such occurrences may lead, perhaps appropriately, to guilt, or a sense of failure, or awareness of inferiority, and associated psychic pain. The ego-ideal serves a useful purpose in such forms of mental functioning and if development has been satisfactory love and approval will not be withdrawn globally in response to any particular incident, and shame is not inevitable. Nor can shame be simply linked to instinctual expression. Rather, it is an unpleasurable experience associated with the maintenance of narcissistic equilibrium.

Although the superego/ego-ideal is the crucial *internal* regulator of the narcissistic equilibrium, it has to bow to the pressures of the *external* world and *external* activities to secure narcissistic balance. This has been noted with some dismay by psychoanalysts (Tartakoff, 1966). If accepted, the consequences are profound, because the external activity so often so easily and so naturally involves a child.

Every parent uses his position to extract narcissistic sustenance from his child (Freud, 1914, 1930). If this goes wrong, the child suffers unduly and may be emotionally impaired in later life. In the pathological case parental prohibitions, injunctions and values are primarily idiosyncratic personal power ploys and only secondarily educative. Such regulatory manoeuvres aimed at rescuing parental narcissism violate the rights of the developing child. This then becomes a matter beyond mere socialization and involves personal responsibility, truth, justice, fairness and the awareness of psychic reality. The child's response is 'to cover himself'. Which is the etymological root of 'shame'. His experiences are lost inside a maternal representation through projection and inside himself through withdrawal behind a protective covering. This extreme deviant pattern of parent-child interaction has been drawn on to assist us in locating shame within a theoretical model which does full justice to the phenomenology. Shame is intrinsic to human nature because, as stated above, part of healthy parenting includes the coercive socializing and narcissistic enjoyment of children. This paper takes us to the next steps in our exploration of narcissism: determining its relation to instinct theory, and examining the psychic aspects of social functioning.

The perspective offered here has been that the

'capacity for shame' is as crucial as the 'capacity for concern (guilt)'. Guilt has been usefully conceptualized using instinct theory and the structural model of the mind. It implies that we realize our aggression hurts others whom we care for or who have the power to punish in retaliation. Shame seems to belong to a theory of individuation and its phenomenology is most readily described with the language of object-relations. Shame implies that we realize we have the choice, the personal option, to act destructively or creatively.

SUMMARY

The psychoanalytic literature on shame is critically reviewed. A vagueness and incompleteness in formulations is noted which appears to be related to an adherence to the structural and topographical models. Shame is shown to have a clearly defined place in object-relations theory, in particular within the theory of narcissism as developed elsewhere by the author. It is the signal, affective and cognitive, that a move from 'self-narcissism' to 'object-narcissism' is about to occur. The phenomenology of the shame experience as emphasized by other workers is collated and shown to be capable of coherent and consistent integration within this model. Aspects of shame which have been previously neglected are discussed including the unconscious sense of shame and specific mechanisms for dealing with shame.

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TRANSLATIONS OF SUMMARY

Cette communication évoque de manière critique la littérature psychanalytique existante sur la honte et fait observer le caractère vague et incomplet des formulations qui semble devoir être du à leur référence aux modèles structuraux et topographiques. Elle montre que la honte a une place clairement définie dans la théorie de la relation d'objet et en particulier dans la théorie du narcissisme développée par l'auteur par ailleurs. Elle constitue le signal affectif et cognitif qu'est sur le point de s'opérer un mouvement de l'autonarcissisme vers le narcissisme d'objet. Cette communication recense la phénoménologie de l'expérience de la honte telle qu'elle a été soulignée par d'autres auteurs et montre qu'elle peut s'intégrer de manière cohérente et solide à l'intérieur de ce modèle. Des aspects de

la honte, négligés antérieurement y sont discutés y compris le sens inconscient de la honte et les mécanismes particuliers pour l'aborder.

Die psychoanalytische Literatur über die Scham wird kritisch untersucht. Dabei zeigt sich eine Unbestimmtheit und Unvollkommenheit in den Formulierungen, die mit dem Festhalten an den strukturellen und topographischen Modellen verbunden zu sein scheinen. Es wird aufgezeigt, dass die Scham einen klar bestimmten Platz in der Theorie der Objektbeziehungen hat, insbesondere innerhalb der Theorie des Narzissmus, wie sie vom Verfasser anderswo entwickelt worden ist. Die Scham ist das affektive und kognitive Signal dafür, dass sich ein Schritt vom 'Selbst-Narzissmus' zum 'Objekt-Narzissmus' ereignet. Die Phänomenologie des Schamerlebnisses, wie sie von anderen Autoren hervorgehoben wird, wird zusammengefasst, und es wird aufgezeigt, dass eine kohärente und konsistente Integration in diesem Modell möglich ist. Aspekte der Scham werden

diskutiert, die bis anhin vernachlässigt worden sind, einschliesslich unbewusster Schamgefühle und spezifischer Mechanismen zur Bewältigung von Schamgefühlen.

Hago una reseña crítica de los escritos psicoanalíticos en torno al tema de la vergüenza. La vaguedad e imprecisión de las formulaciones parece relacionada con una adherencia a modelos estructurales y topográficos. Muestro que la vergüenza tiene un lugar claramente definido en la teoría de las relaciones de objeto, en particular dentro de la teoría del narcisismo, según he expuesto en anteriores escritos. Es la señal de que va a haber un paso del auto-narcisismo al narcisismo del objeto. Recojo la fenomenología del sentimiento de vergüenza tal como lo explican otros autores y demuestro que sus explicaciones son coherentes y consistentes con el modelo que yo formulo. Trato aspectos de la vergüenza que se habían descuidado anteriormente, incluido el sentimiento inconsciente de vergüenza y los mecanismos específicos para enfrentarse a ella.

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