DOI: 10.1111/ejop.12596

MARK SACKS LECTURE

European Journal of Philosophy WILEY

Shameful self-consciousness

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1 | INTRODUCTION

Shame can be occasioned in startlingly different ways. Here are two classic depictions—one in words, one in paint—that stand in contrast with each other. They also correspond, in a helpful way, to twin strands of philosophical theorizing about shame: as recognition of wrong done, and as innocent social exposure.

Consider, first, the case of Tolstoy's Rostov. Rostov, not a bad man, but naïve, foolish and vain, has lost a good deal of money gambling. He goes to his kindly father, who is suffering significant money troubles himself, and asks "in the most casual tone, which made him feel ashamed of himself … as if merely asking his father to let him have the carriage to drive to town" to ask his father to clear his debt for him.

> "Dear me!" said his father, who was in especially good humour. "I told you it would not be enough. How much?"
>
> "Very much," said Nicholas flushing, and with a stupid careless smile, for which he was long unable to forgive himself, "I have lost a little, I mean a good deal, a great deal – forty three thousand."

Rostov's father "reddens with an apoplectic flush" and falls on to the sofa. This, for a moment, occasions a desperate attempt at bravado from his son:

> "It can't be helped. It happens to everyone!" said the son, with a bold, free, and easy tone, while in his soul he regarded himself as a worthless scoundrel whose whole life could not atone for his crime. He longed to kiss his father's hands and kneel to beg his forgiveness, but said, in a careless and even rude voice, that it happens to everyone![1]

The old count immediately relents, and starts to leave the room to try his best to raise funds. The bold easy tone cracks, and Rostov grabs his father's hand, sobbing. Even if we do not think him a "worthless scoundrel", Rostov has

This essay is dedicated to Benjamin Sacks, and to Maya Sacks, without whom their mother would not have had the gumption to even think about honouring their father in this way.

Mark Sacks Annual Lecture 2018.

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behaved gullibly and selfishly, has hurt those he loves, and recognizes that he has done so. He is riven with shame, both at his original careless actions, at breaking his word to his father that he would be economical with funds already given to him, and now at his attempts to subvert the blameworthiness of them—through his "stupid careless smile", and his arrogant kick back "everyone does it" manoeuvrings. He longs for forgiveness and love as the only antidote.

Now consider the case of Rembrandt's depiction of the story of Susannah and the Elders. He—like many renaissance painters before him—is concerned with the moment that Susannah has learnt that she is being spied on bathing by two elders, and has been exposed naked to them against her will. The focus of the painting is *not* on the moment that they threaten to lie about her meeting a lover if she does not "lie with" them—one of the elders is still emerging from hiding—nor on the moment that she is later publicly falsely accused of infidelity by the elders. Her feeling of shame is at being the object of their lasciviousness and at being seen naked by them, and indeed being seen naked by the viewers of the painting—she looks directly at us. Rembrandt paints Susannah with the bodily stoop, and anxious look, of shame. However, at the moment painted, she has neither been accused of wrongdoing, nor has she done anything wrong.[2] Susannah is a woman of virtue who has done no wrong—she has been disrespected, her social standing tarnished, and her body exploited by the elders against her will. They feel no shame, and she does.

One way of seeing philosophical theorizing about shame is as coalescing around two strands of thinking that come from attending to examples of one kind, to the neglect of examples of the other. One strand, that we can call the *Adverse Self-evaluation Model*, comes from focussing on our first kind of example: we see Rostov suffering from an adverse self-evaluation. The second strand, that we can call the *Mere Exposure Model*, comes from focussing on the other kind: we see Susannah shamed by mere exposure. To characterize the philosophical literature on shame in terms of a choice or competition between these two models would be to mischaracterize it. Theorists who stress the centrality of an adverse self-evaluation often do not deny that shame can involve or be evoked by social exposure; and theorists who take shame as centrally a form of exposure to another do not deny that adverse self-evaluations are often involved or invoked.

Nevertheless, in understanding these very different kinds of case, the roles of the two ideas—adverse self-evaluation and social exposure, and the tensions between them (which we will get to) are central to getting the phenomenon of shame properly in view. Treating the models as if they are offered as alternatives will prove helpful in working things through. As I will characterize them, the two models offer competing central conditions for shame. According to the Adverse Self-evaluation Model, for someone to feel shame is, at its core, for them to construe themselves as having done, or being, the wrong thing according to their own morals, ethics or ideals, where the ethical goes beyond the moral, and where ideals can include aesthetic, practical and intellectual values. To simplify our discussion, we will construe adverse self-evaluations in terms of construals "as bad," and work with the following definition of "bad":

> X construes herself as bad $=_{df}$ X construes herself, first personally, as *having done something*, or as *being something*, that fails to meet the demands of X's own morals, ethics and ideals.

This allows us to state our two models thus:

> *Adverse Self-evaluation Model*: For X to feel shame, is for X to construe herself as having done, or being, something bad.

> *Mere Exposure Model*: For X to feel shame is for X to construe herself under the guise of being exposed to another, and to feel shame requires *only* such a construal as exposed to another, and no construal as bad.

Before going any further, let me emphasise that we should not set our project to be, nor assume that of our opponents is, one of finding necessary and/or sufficient conditions for feeling shame. On the account offered here, shame is a psychosocial phenomenon that corresponds to human capacities for self-consciousness which can be occasioned capriciously, aberrantly and pathologically. It is also continuous with a network of other forms of social self-consciousness. Our psychological ascriptive vocabulary might suggest sharp distinctions between embarrassment, feelings of humiliation, guilt, feelings of self-consciousness and shyness, but the use of it, and the psychological *matter* underlying appropriate ascriptions gives us no reason to think we will find sharp boundaries, or anything like necessary or sufficient conditions for each phenomenon. Moreover, our *concept* of shame, and ascriptions involving it, itself have their social uses—uses of regulation, of subordination, demanding recognition and recompense, normative theorizing—which affect the patterns of use.[3] My task, here, will be to try—as an exercise within the philosophy of mind—to consider what is at the core of the human capacity for shame, understood as an affective psychological phenomenon.

In this paper, I want to argue that the advocate of an Adverse Self-evaluation Model is right to think that there is a negative aspect of shame at the core of our notion of shame, over above that of *mere* exposure, but wrong to assume that that negative aspect should be understood only as self-construal as *bad*. On my understanding of shame, the Mere Exposure model is right to take social, or interpersonal, self-consciousness to be at the core of shame, but it fails to give us a story about the negative valance inherent to shame.

I want to make a case for seeing shame as an affective *form* of self-consciousness—in particular, an affective form of interpersonal self-consciousness—and to offer a structure for understanding such consciousness.[4] At the core of a feeling of shame is our consciousness of ourselves, as ourselves, with a consciousness that we are candidates for, or subjects of, the evaluative attention of another. Moreover, it is form of self-consciousness that has a particular negative social valence; in its central case, to feel shame is to be conscious of oneself as diminished by the social group of which one is a part, and so be diminished in social magnitude. We can call this the *Social Diminution Model* of shame.

To some extent it is a decision whether to call only consciousness of diminution shame, or whether to use shame to refer to consciousness of all changes in social magnitude—including increases. Heller (1982, p. 215) takes shame to be a feeling that *is* the "involvement of persons in the judgement of authorities on human conduct. In the case of shame, the authority is social custom ...represented by the 'eye of others'" and is an authority that "can approve as well as disapprove". She, thereby, includes the "highly pleasant feeling...when we are praised in public...the magnificent experience of happy embarrassment" as a feeling of shame. We would tend to call such a feeling only embarrassment or pride, but the point may not be a deep one. If we had positive evidence that the capacity to track negative social evaluations—disapprovals—and the capacity to track positive social evaluations—approvals—were the same, or symmetric, capacities then that might give us a reason for using one label to cover our consciousness of our changing social magnitudes. However, as far as I know we have no such evidence. Indeed, since the costs of misreading disapproval are likely, in general, to be higher than the costs of misreading approval, it is probable that we have distinct ways of deploying our attention towards negative, as opposed to positive, social evaluations. So, I will stick with calling only consciousness of diminution, shame.

I will come back to set out a framework for the Social Diminution Model in the final section of this paper but let me make a few things clear now.

By "social group of which one is a part" I mean the cluster of human beings that are part of one's life, and that one takes oneself, to be one of. It is natural to reach for ungrammatical phrases like "the us," or "the we" to try to capture the group and its relation to the subject of concern. Let me note three things straightaway about this use. One, my use of "social group" here is entirely different from that used in much social and political philosophy.[5] It is an entirely non-identity related notion: it is just the group of people that are bundled up with me in actual life, whether I like it, them, or not. They are "my others." Two, and relatedly, the social group of which I am a part needs not be a group I identify with, or share values with, or am "one of a kind" with—it is the group that constitutes the social and practical fabric of my every day. Three, it is an initial, and simplifying, move to suggest that a subject's shame is to be understood in relation to just one group—one "us"—"the" group that constitutes the social and practical fabric of my every day can grow, change, subdivide, be constituted by subgroups. What it takes for something to

be subgroup will be fuzzy, and will depend on the location, frequency and nature of the relations with which I interact with members of the group. And, importantly, the patterns of evaluations to which an individual is subject can be complex and divergent. A subject might be conscious of opposing, or in tension, evaluations relative to distinct individuals, and subgroups, within her current social group. As Heller points, out the way shame operates will vary depending on whether my social group is "small…stratified…predominantly closed" (Heller, 1982, p. 216). If a human subject is operating within complex social groups with distinct stratifications—and subject to change—the psychological machinations of their shame responses will be correspondingly complex. I will come back to the significance of these points.

Let me also expand a little on what is involved in being conscious of oneself as "socially diminished." One, it is a painful whole animal form of self-consciousness—taking the human animal as its object. It is a feeling—in fact like most feelings, including feelings of grief, joy, and anger—in relation to which any distinction between bodily feeling and mental feeling is unhelpful.[6] In shame, in its basic form, we do *not* get bodily feelings of, say, taking up too much space in the world with urges to retract and close in on ourselves, and *then* react mentally with anguish—we feel the animal we are as socially diminished, and part of doing that is to feel we are taking up too much space, to have the urge to hide, and to retract etc., or so I want to claim. Two, the form of self-consciousness involved needs to be understood in relation to corresponding acts or expressions—actual, feared, or imagined—of social disregard or diminution by others. The capacity for shame in human beings is an affective capacity with the function of detecting, anticipating, and responding to the social evaluations, of their co-specifics. In particular, it is a capacity the function of which is to enable the human animal to anticipate, track, and incorporate, negative changes in her social magnitude or standing. A shameful feeling of social diminution is a felt incorporation of a lowering of social standing relative to my social group. My having a capacity to track such devaluations also allows, of course, that shameful feelings of social diminution can occur when there is in fact no social diminution in actuality or prospect: the capacity can be exercised erroneously. Three, the feeling of social diminution can be an incorporation, or anticipation, without being an *identification* or, on some senses of the term, *internalisation*—of the actual or possible diminution in social magnitude signalled by the actual or possible negative evaluation of the other. Finally, although consciousness of social diminution is at the core of our capacity shame—on the view to be defended—the view allows for shame when we fear, expect, anticipate or otherwise alter our consciousness of ourselves under the guise of a diminishing evaluation by another. Indeed, for reflective, anxious, self-conscious animals such as humans, who are not bound to the present in their imaginations and reflections, fear, expectation, and anticipation of shame may be the more commonly occurring and useful exercise of the capacity.[8]

In the extreme case of shame, on the diminution view, shame is experienced as a form of social expulsion. I am conscious of being diminished to such an extent that I experience a form of social annihilation or expungement: I can come to be conscious of myself as no longer counted as social participant with a social value at all. Exile, or "being sent to Coventry," as expulsion from the social domain, is the punishment of wrong doing, or wrong being, concordant with extreme cases of shameful behaviour or nature.[9] In more moderate cases of shame, I feel socially diminished, without feeling socially expunged. In all cases of shame, I am forced to be conscious of the threat of social rejection and containment by "us," the sensitivity to which means I am subject to the incoherent desire to escape from the self that is to be rejected. This gives us the Levinas observation that "what appears in shame is thus the fact of being riveted to oneself." Levinas, *On Escape*, p. 64. *We retract* from *me*.[10]

2 | ADVERSE SELF-EVALUATIONS

The motive for the account being defended is best brought out by considering, first, the shortcomings of the suggestion that an adverse *self-evaluation* is the core aspect of shame. Prima facie, it is a highly intuitive starting point to take shame as involving a construal of oneself as bad. It is the core commitment of what is perhaps the most influential recent analytical treatment of shame: Taylor's *Pride, Shame and Guilt*.[11] Expressions of shame very often explicitly

involve subjects describing themselves as failures relative to the standards—moral, ethically or ideal—that they endorse. Witness Rostov: he regards “himself as a worthless scoundrel whose whole life could not atone for his crime.”

It is not new to point out, however, that such a self-evaluation does not seem to be required for shame. It is a familiar, even if somewhat puzzling, phenomenon to have people manifesting shame, and self-ascribing shame, when there is no reason to interpret them as construing them as bad. They will both declare themselves as riven with shame, and also faultless, with respect to any standard they endorse.

Perhaps the most familiar kind of case—and perhaps the kind of case that motivates the strand of thinking behind the Mere Exposure Model—is the case of the victim of sexual, or merely violent, assault. A person who has been a victim of assault will often manifest shame—in speech and behaviour—while at the same time sincerely denying that the failure lies in any way with them: “I felt full of shame although I know I did nothing wrong.” A distinct kind of case involves the shame a person can feel for “being the wrong thing” in the eyes of others. The person who is proud and protective of their Jewish identity, can feel shame when admitting they are Jewish in certain social environments. The person, proud of their class identity, can be shamed by the invisibility that descends as soon as their upper middle class hosts, and other guests, hear their accent and mode of speech. A case, conjured by Ellison in his *Invisible Man*, cited by Velleman (p. 45–46, fn. 23), is a particularly complex and rich one. The unnamed narrator is walking through Harlem in the snow, and smells yams cooking on an outdoor wagon. He buys one and decides to eat it in the street, a decision that results in “a surge of homesickness” and “an intense feeling of freedom” at the transgression. As he eats his imagination goes to work in two directions. First, he imagines someone “from school or home” seeing him eating his yam in the street. He thinks “How shocked they'd be!” and reflects “What a group of people we were, I thought. Why, you could cause us the greatest humiliation simply by confronting us with something we liked.”

Second, the narrator gleefully imagines accusing Bledsoe the black, but “white conforming” President of his college of being “a sneaking chitterling lover!”. He declares that were he to make such an accusation:

> with others present, it would be worse than if I had accused him of raping an old woman… Bledsoe would disintegrate, disinflate! With a profound sigh he'd drop his head in shame. He'd lose caste. (Ellison, 2001, p,255)

These imaginative turns, describing and resisting both his own shame—and describing the “disinflating” shame of Bledsoe—brought on by the forbidden sweetness and nostalgia of the yam, lead him to conclude:

> This is all very wild and childish, I thought, but to hell with being ashamed of what you liked. No more of that for me. I am what I am! (p. 255).[12]

Of course, such cases do nothing in themselves to undermine the Adverse Self-evaluation Model. The adverse self-evaluation theorist can avail themselves of a standard response of “construal” theorists of emotion when faced with occurrences of phenomenon that are cognitively discordant with the construal claimed to be central to the attitude or emotion. Consider the danger theorist of fear. According to such a theorist, fear is an emotion that is, or involves, a construal of something as dangerous. Suppose that it is objected that we can remain fearful of things that we judge safe, as when the arachnophobe judges the ordinary house spider as no threat at all, but remains terrified. The danger theorist of fear can respond that they do not deny that there can be *construals* of something as dangerous in conflict with reason, or indeed, with the best judgements of the subject who fears. On their account, fear is an attitude whose purpose is to orientate the subject in an aversive way to dangerous things. That attitude is rational (or fitting, or apt) when that which is feared is indeed dangerous. It is not rational (or fitting, or apt) when that which is feared is not dangerous. On this understanding of the danger theorist of fear, *to get it wrong* in fearing something is to construe something as dangerous, when it is *not* dangerous. So, when the arachnophobe judges that the spider that they fear is not dangerous, while

knowingly continuing to feel fear, they both are, and take themselves to be, in the situation of getting it wrong: in their fear they construe the spider as dangerous when it is not, and they do not judge it to be.

Similarly, the adverse evaluation theorist of shame can suggest that for a subject to feel shame is for them is to construe themselves as bad, and that for the subject *to get it wrong* in feeling shame is for them to (self-consciously) construe themselves as bad when they are not bad. If the subject feels shame when the subject herself is bad the attitude is rational (or fitting, or apt); if the subject feels shame when the subject herself is not bad then the attitude is irrational (or unfitting, or inapt). At first look the cases of shame without adverse self-evaluation, that we have identified above, seem to sit well with this model. The subjects take themselves to feel shame, they do not judge themselves adversely, and they take this to be irrational in some way. The victim of racial or sexual abuse will tend to use the connective "although": "I felt ashamed, although I did nothing wrong." In the end Ellison declares it "wild and childish," and seeks to puncture and ridicule Bledsoe's imagined disintegration and disinflation.

However, to construe these cases *simply* as irrational construals of oneself as bad seems to leave something important out. We see this in the to-ing and fro-ing in the passage from Ellison. The determination on Ellison's part that the shame is irrational—"wild and childish"—is not a discovery of irrationality on the part of the narrator, but more of an instruction to the will: "No more of that for me." Moreover, it is an instruction that he is fully aware that Bledsoe is not yet in a position to make. The person who feels ashamed, despite not doing, or being, anything bad, when they are diminished for what there have done, or are, by another is in many ways construing their situation aright. They are not like the arachnophobe whose construal is entirely discordant with facts of the situation. To feel shame in circumstances of bullying, or prejudice can be to be getting aspects of one's world aright, and to that extent it is rational. When Ellison describes the narrator being ashamed of what he likes, and in imagining Bledsoe's shame, Ellison gives voice to the idea of there being a social diminution in living a form of life. To be an African American, at that time and in that context, was to live with one's social value diminished, and Ellison is conscious of that diminished value. Moreover, he is aware that to *care* about it is for it to cause pain: it is uncomfortable for a person to be aware that they have a diminished social value. And, there is a dimension along which it is rational to care about it: it is costly having diminished social value, to as Ellison puts it, to "lose caste." Ellison does not, of course, *share* the evaluations that his narrator is subject to, and does not share the means by which their social value is determined, but he is conscious of the costliness of the way in which they impact on a subject. And perhaps more importantly, and less obviously, nor does Bledsoe *share* the evaluations that he, Bledsoe, is subject to. However, to a greater extent than the narrator, he succumbs to them without resistance.

Wollheim describes the condition of shame as damage felt in the face of "hostile" judgement with which a subject may not concur:

> The core of the originating experience is an experience of damage: deep damage, or damage to the sense of self…we damaged ourselves by bringing down upon ourselves the hostile judgment. But, since the judgment is not necessarily one with which we concur, the judgment is experienced primarily as the brute impact of the world upon us. (Wollheim, 1999, p. 187).

The problematic for many experiencing shame is how they can free themselves from the shame, experienced as the *brute impact of the social world* on them, with its source in the evaluations of others. Making sense of their situation before they achieve such freedom, I think, means acknowledging that there are cases in which subjects can properly, and without mis-representation of themselves, feel shame in the absence of a construal of themselves as bad. One's social value can be diminished by a form of social life where one is judged, or otherwise responded to, negatively by others, and one can be affectively conscious that one's social value is diminished. And if one is conscious one's self-consciousness will be painful—it hurts being conscious of having a lowered social value, and one will recognize the social costs of such diminution.

A number of philosophers have recognized the fact that we feel shame in relation to social evaluations we do not identify with, and a few have argued that it is not irrational for us to do so. The explanation of this, most often,

draws on the idea that our evaluative lives are not lived autonomously, but take place within a shared moral practice. Sometimes, this fact leads to a move that in some, more or less direct, way re-creates a *proxy* for the negative self-evaluation. This may be through the suggestion that we internalize, or come to identify with, the evaluation of the social other, either by holding ourselves responsible for drawing to ourselves a negative evaluation, as in the case of Wollheim, or because we ethically identify with, and in some way select, the social peer group who have the power to shame us, as in the case of Williams in *Shame and Necessity*. (Williams tells us that Ajax feels shame in virtue "of the relations between what he expects of the world and what the world expects of a man who expects that if it" where "'The world' there is represented by an internalized other", and thus that "Ajax is identified with the standards of excellence represented by his father's honours", p. 85).

Calhoun (2016), however, offers an account of the appropriateness of shame in such cases without interjecting any identification in relation to those who are subordinated.[13] Calhoun asks us to recognize the fact that "moral criticism has 'practical weight' for us and the power to shame when it is seen as issuing from those who are to be taken seriously because they are co-participants with us in a shared social practice of morality." (p. 47).[14] Thus, even if they do not share the criticism they are subject to, "it is no error on the part of the subordinated that they feel the practical weight of their fellow participants' moral criticisms." (p. 72), and that understanding such shame does not require us to attribute to them "either internalized contempt for their own social group or a failure to maintain their own critical perspective in the face of others' shaming contempt." (p. 49).

I think Calhoun is right that moral criticism has practical weight, and right that the moral criticisms of one's social peers are *appropriately* felt as shame by subjects who disavow the criticism. However, the point is a broader and more pervasive one. The point should not be made as a point about our moral communities—those with whom there is a shared social practice of morality—*as such*. Nor should the appropriateness or rationality of shame in non-identifying cases be thought to rest on a relation to a shared moral practice. A shared *practical* practice is enough. Negative evaluations of us—moral, or otherwise—that come from our own social groups—moral, or otherwise—have practical weight. They have practical weight in two ways. The negative evaluations, or diminutions of us by others, have social consequences for us—they diminish our capacity to function alongside others by diminishing the concessions and opportunities accorded us by those who have the power to offer such concessions and opportunities. However, they also have practical weight in a simpler, and often just as costly, way. They are in themselves *felt as weighty*—acts of others that aim to degrade us, can diminish us. They, thereby, directly impinge on us in a painful and uncomfortable way.[15]

As the above suggests, the metaphor of "weight," here, is a very natural and very useful one, but also one that it is apt to be used in very different ways: for characterizing both the, more direct, felt diminution by criticism, and the consequential, more indirect, costs of the criticism for the criticized subject. Matters become yet more complicated when we consider how to characterize the attitude of the subject who is criticized, to their critics, and to the evaluative schemas that are the supposed grounds of their critics' evaluations. Here again it is natural to talk of the criticized subject's *weighting* of the critic, and *weighting* of the grounds of critics' evaluations.[16]

To give a framework for thinking of these distinct relevant kinds of weighting, the diminishing and expanding acts of evaluation, and the social magnitudes that they interact with, will be a task I make (only) a start on at the end of the paper.

Having considered these cases of shame without negative self-evaluation, we might now wonder how we are supposed to think about irrational or inappropriate shame on the view that it is rational or appropriate to feel shame in the absence of any negative self-evaluation as bad. On the account of shame I want to defend, the core case of feeling shame is the case in which a subject is conscious of herself as diminished, having been diminished by her social group. To get it right—to feel shame appropriately and rationally—is to feel oneself to be socially diminished when one has been. If that is right, then one can get it wrong in feeling shame—one can feel irrational shame in at least three ways. One can feel socially diminished, exercising one's capacity to feel shame, when in fact one has not been, or is not in threat of being. This might be either because there was no degrading criticism, or threat of one, or because there was such a criticism but it did not come with the power to diminish one socially. This might be because

it did not come from a source that was part of one's social group, or because it came from a source within one's social group but one that for some reason lacked any power to effect social diminution on another—a child, perhaps.[17]

Before moving on to consider the Mere Exposure Model, as part of positioning the account of shameful self-consciousness that I am trying to set out, I want to consider a response the adverse self-evaluation theorist might make to the suggestion that the forms of shame we have considered fall outside its explanatory boundaries. Perhaps, they may say, one of the ideals relative to which I evaluate myself—and thus take myself to be bad if I fail to meet it—is *the ideal of being positively valued. A* liability to be diminished by my social world would then justify a self-ascription of badness. Perhaps, in fact, I have an ideal not just of being kind, and adequate at dancing, but also of having "high social value." If that is so, then recognition of criticism from another that has the power to diminish my social value, will be a construal of myself as "bad" in so far as it is a construal of myself as failing to meet my ideal of being positively valued or having high social value.

There is something right about the objection—but also something wrong with it. Let me try to illuminate the model of shame as consciousness of social diminution by bringing out how it differs from a model of shame on which shame is understood as a failure to meet an ideal of avoiding social diminution.

The first thing to note is that the theorist who appeals to an ideal of being valued by their social group faces something of a dilemma. If this is an ideal that can be differentially adopted—so that some have the ideal of being valued and some eschew any such value—then the theorist cannot make sense of cases of non-identifying shame in which the subject who feels shame nevertheless fails to take as an ideal—part of his conception of what is *bad*—the valuations of the critics that inflict such shame. To see how this might work imagine a case, a case we can call Caulfield shame, after Salinger's hero, in which a subject explicitly has the ideal *not* to be valued by his social group—by "those phonies"—but nevertheless feels shame. I say his shame is because he is conscious of himself as diminished in social value by their negative evaluations of him, and that Caulfield shame is no less rational or appropriate than Ellison's shame, or Susannah's shame. The subject of Caulfield shame may even feel proud of their shame—it is a marker of their failing to be valued by their social group, and so a marker of their securing an ideal they have—to not be valued by *them*. Perhaps, it will be responded that that cannot be what is meant by the suggestion that shame involves the negative self-evaluation as bad in virtue of not meeting ones ideal of being valued. The kind of, high minded, socially alienated, reflective, ideal a Caulfield might have is consistent with a more universal "caring about the valuation of the other"—and it is *this* caring about the valuation of the other that is the ideal most of us operate with, and which is evidenced in the feelings of shame even in the Caufield case. But if that is the ideal, then it cannot be thought of as just one more ideal in the set of an individuals' ethics and ideals. It will have two features that make it behave rather differently from any such ideals as we understand them. One, it will be a structural and pre-conditional ideal—to be affectively attendant to the valuations of the other looks more like a necessary condition of being able to form an ethical outlook at all, not any kind of ingredient, or value, in the outlook formed. And so understood the view is not obviously discordant with the one being proposed: on that account part of our standing condition as social animals is to be affectively attendant to the valuations of the other, and it is in virtue of that condition that I come to feel shame. Two, if being valued is an ideal I set myself, it will often not offer me *any way of my being* in reference to which we make sense of me aspiring. If we are subject to the feeling of shame in relation to distinct clusters, and groupings, the ideal of being valued, or having high social value, does not point to any particular condition I could aim at. Suppose one sub-group values tallness, and another values shortness, and I have the ideal of being that which is valued by others. What do I value in this circumstance? We can make sense of feeling ashamed of one's height relative to one group, and proud relative to the other, but not easily make sense of what bad thing I take myself to be when I am in that position. Perhaps, it will be said that I shift from having the ideal of reflecting the ideals of each group as I shift groups, but that makes sense only if what is meant by my ideals—the standards relative to which I take myself to be bad when I feel shame—is something contentless, or constantly in flux. As such it fails to look like an ideal at all, never mind one that a person who feels shame need have. One's social world can subject one to inconsistent evaluations and values, such that one can be both diminished and raised up by the

very same feature, or act relative to distinct sub-groups—and be ashamed and proud of it at the same time. This makes better sense of shame, I contend, than construing oneself as failing to meet an ideal one has set oneself.

Having said that, what is right about the objection from the negative self-evaluation theorist, who says that what these cases show is that we can feel shame at failing to meet an ideal of being valued by our others, is that they alert us to the fact that we *do* have as an ideal that the world be good, or at least, not bad. And, of course, if we succeeded in living in a not bad world—or even a just and good world—then we would not be subject to unjust shaming treatment. There would, in such a world, be no appropriate shame for eating yams, or being seen bathing. This is why it is very odd to say, *simpliciter*, that in the cases of unjust shame the subject is nevertheless *right* to feel shame, or *ought* to feel shame. However, its oddness lies in the fact that the ideal for us is for the world to be a *good* world and for us to operate in a community of right minded peers. Thus, things are only as they ought to be, if we only feel shame when we have failed according to some shared ethical or ideal standard. If, however, we ask—relative to this world, with these power structures, and these patterns of evaluation—is it inappropriate for the unjustly shamed person to feel shame, the answer is not as clear. It is wrong that they exist in a world in which the right, rational, appropriate thing to do is feel shame. But they are not making a mistake, or being superficial, in their sense of themselves in that context. What complicates our efforts to put things in the right way, here, is that our *ascriptions* of the appropriateness of feeling shame are themselves acts of appraisal within an evaluative practice, that have the function of educating, scolding, correcting, improving the world we live in, and so on. To say that a subject rightly feels shame is to invoke the primary function of such ascriptions, and so to negatively appraise the individuals. Thus, we cannot without being misleading say that a victim of sexual assault, say, was right to feel shame. What we can say is that her shame is not irrational, and that she is not getting her situation wrong.

Heller captures something of the matter in her observation that, in some sense of the term, the validity of the norms of shame regulation have to be accepted *without reasoning*, and that it is rational to respond to their application, even if they are themselves irrational or wrong:

> In the case of shame regulation, the norms, rules and rituals of conduct we have to conform to are not rational. Of course, they are not irrational either. Their validity has to be, and indeed is, accepted without reasoning. The fact that the rules themselves are not rational (since we cannot ask why they have to be observed) does not mean that the observance of rules is not rational. It is a matter of social self-preservation to observe the rules of our social environment and we are aware of the risks involved if we fail to do so. (p. 217).

Once we keep firmly in mind the fact that we are subject to shame not only in relation to our moral peers, or in relation to a single moral practice, but rather to a complex practical-social world that we actually inhabit, then the idea that shame involves some higher order ideal of evaluative belonging looks more and more problematic. The tendency not properly to separate these matters is perfectly understandable within the context of moral and political philosophy, or moral psychology—where the concern is a primarily concern about how the world should be organized. However, for a philosopher of mind, or social psychologist, interested in the nature and social purpose of shame, the disruption of the gap between the real and ideal must be mapped, as it is on the account offered.

3 | MERE EXPOSURE

Let me now turn to the second strand of philosophical theorizing in relation to which I am aiming to structure the discussion. According to my rendering of the Mere Exposure Model, for an individual to feel shame is for them to construe themselves as exposed to another, and to feel shame requires *only* such a construal as exposed to another, and no construal as *bad*. The account of shame I am offering in many ways falls more naturally alongside this model, than the Adverse Self-Evaluation Model. It takes shame, at its core, to be a social emotion, and an emotion that does

not require the subject to construe themselves as "bad." However, in contrast to the Mere Exposure Model, the Social Diminution Model takes there to be a negative valance intrinsic to shame—that is not intrinsic to other forms of social self-consciousness.[18] It also seeks to make clear what kind of construal of oneself in relation to the other is central to shame—it is a form of animal self-consciousness.

How exactly we are to understand "construing oneself as exposed to another" is up for grabs. To that extent the exposure view allows for family of views, and is not, in one way, a particular view. At one extreme, we may take it to invoke only the idea that a subject judges herself to be exposed to another. I will, however, assume that the construal of oneself as exposed to another is, in the central case, a form of self-consciousness in which a subject is conscious of herself as exposed to another. There are two dimensions along which such self-consciousness could vary. It could vary along the *"how she is taken by the other"* dimension—is she conscious of herself as exposed to the other as an object, as a conscious other, as a self-conscious other, or an evaluating other? It can also vary along the "*how she takes the other*" dimension—is she conscious of herself as exposed to a conscious other, a self-conscious other, an evaluating other? I will assume that the exposure view is committed, at the least, to the subject being conscious of herself as exposed as an object to a conscious other.

Perhaps the core text for inspiring the mere exposure view is Sartre's discussion of "The Look" in *Being and Nothingness*:

> Pure shame is not a feeling of being this or that reprehensible object but, in general, of being *an object*, i.e., of *recognizing* myself in that degraded, dependent, and frozen being which I am for the Other. (Sartre, 2018, p. 392).

The extent to which Sartre is concerned with exposure only is not obvious—the example in relation to which we are invited to envisage the feeling of shame erupting is being caught sneaking a look through a keyhole: not an honourable act. Moreover, making proper sense of Sartre's overall view requires making proper sense of the metaphysical framework in which his view of the self is situated; taking on that task is not my aim here.

Instead, I want to note, before exploring what might make mere exposure problematic, is that while our objecthood—that we recognize in our interaction with the Other—with philosophical work, can come to seem problematic and troubling, our opening thought should be to *revel* in it. Being an object—being this human animal—is central to our being able to get almost everything we want and love. To find shame merely in our materiality is, we need to remind ourselves, a *peculiar* view—even if widespread in Christian traditions. We could rightly cling to our cosy, material, objecthood, that enables touch and taste, and find horror in the thought of being a non-material mere for itself—in *not* being able also to recognize myself in that "degraded, dependent, frozen being which I am for the Other."

So, in what way could *mere* exposure as an object to another be shame inducing? There are countless overlapping, and inconsistent, ways of drawing out the ways in which exposure may link to shame, many coming out of readings of Sartre himself. I am going to explore only one resource in this piece, that of Velleman, in his seminal piece on shame. Velleman asks, in that paper, what shame would have to be for Adam and Eve to come to feel it when they eat from the tree of knowledge, the effect of which makes them recognize that they are exposed to each other's gaze. His answer is that they learn that they have the power of privacy. The power of privacy, for Velleman, is the power to control *how* we are for others, that is, the ability to be self-presenting:

> not to be seen as a self-presenting creature would be socially disqualifying: it would place you beyond the reach of social intercourse altogether. Threats to your standing as a self-presenting creature are thus a source of deep anxiety, and anxiety about the threatened loss of that standing is, in my view, what constitutes the emotion of shame. (p. 37).

So, as I read him, a Vellemanian answer to the "what would be problematic about coming to be conscious that I am exposed to another" is that exposure reveals to me my capacity to self-present, and with it, the limits of my control

over my self-presentation to others. Shame is occasioned by exposure, because exposure gives rise to anxiety about losing my standing as a self-presenting creature. What kinds of exposure are *candidates* for that anxiety? Exposure of any features that I do not, or may come to not, desire the expression of in the way I self-present, that is, any feature that do not have full control over? Uncontrolled expressions, and features, are not always, and indeed need not often be, a problem, on Velleman's view, because I may desire to present myself in a way that aligns with such expressions or features. But uncontrolled expressions, and features, are always *potentially* problematic for Velleman—given the instability of our desires to self-present any expression, or feature, not fully under my control is not excluded as a source of anxiety.

What expressions and features are not fully under my control? Obviously, fixed properties of me: my hair colour, my nose shape, my height, the pitch of my voice, my parental background. But also involuntary, non-fixed properties of me: my blushes, my gait, my laughing, my sneezes, my crying, my snorting, my sweating. Importantly, it is not only the involuntary that may not be fully under my control, and properly aligned, with my desires to self-present in a given way. My shouting in glee, my smiling at my friend, my talking too much when nervous, my hugging my children when they go past, my raising my voice in anger, my whispering in fear, are all impulsive, acts and expressions that slip through my attempts to control them.

Velleman is surely right that any of these features can be triggers for shame, but I do not think he is right in thinking that they are so *because* we have as a governing aim the aim of being self-presenting, and that they are threats to that aim. I want to suggest that once we are pre-occupied with our self-presentation, and anxious about our uncontrolled features and expressions, we are already, in some way, in the circumstances of shame.

Let me try to bring this out with reference to one case: our facial expressions. In the context of Velleman's account it makes sense to ask "why isn't my face—in its uncontrolled responsiveness—a primary source of shame?" Our impulsive, expressive, responsiveness shows up no more clearly than on our faces, and we do not have much luck in picking and choosing which kinds of expression are manifest. My frowns show themselves, even if I would prefer just the smiles to get through; my tremulous lips edge their way forward against my sincere wishes, while my hoped for laughs get stuck in my throat. Our faces are complex social barometers that we have little deliberative control over. That the face is an interesting case is not news to Velleman, and he has an answer to my question:

> Of course, the face often betrays many feelings, and the question therefore arises why a bare face isn't considered even more shameful than naked genitals.… The face is indeed shameful insofar as it defies the will and thereby foils self-presentation; but insofar as it is instrumental to self-presentation, the face is essential to the avoidance of shame…But face is to be saved only for the sake of being effectively displayed; and most cultures therefore favour facial disciplines other than concealment.

Is our choice really either to conceal our faces, or practice facial discipline? And what would it be to learn facial discipline? I am not alone in lacking facial discipline—my face is highly motile, it colours easily, and is very readable even when I am not conscious of how it is appearing. Suppose, as Velleman suggests I very possibly could, I have desires about how to self-present that I do not satisfy as a result of my lack of facial control, and suppose I decide to teach myself facial discipline. What should I do? I would have to be vigilant about my emotional reactions and step in to repress and block the countless impulsive facial perturbations that constitute their expression. The safest bet might be to work on holding my face fixed at all times—only releasing it when I am sure that it is under my full deliberative control. I would surely learn that monitoring and selecting between spontaneous expressions of my emotions is much harder than blocking spontaneity at all. A fixed mask-like expression might be the most effective shame avoider.

It does not seem right that the secret of avoiding shame lies in facial discipline: in the capacity to control the impulsive, un-controlled, un-chosen, responses to our world and others. For, what I have described above, produces a portrait of a person that we may suspect to be full of shame. On this path, I could come to adopt the face mask of the permanently socially anxious, forced to manufacture their spontaneity in relation to others. The problem, in my

view, started in the thought that shame properly resides in the uncontrolled responses of the human face, and is exacerbated in the thought that we modulate such shame by seeking to bring the form and presentation of that face under my control.

The theme that shame avoidance does not lie in the efforts of the shamed subject to bring herself in line with desired self-presentation expected by others is a familiar one from literary treatments of shame. Adamson, in a wonderful discussion of Eliot's depiction of the shame of Maggie Tulliver in *Mill on The Floss*, brings out Eliot's suggestion that the antidote to shame is not self-manufacture but love and acceptance of those determining one's social worth. He says:

> The first two books of the novel show how Maggie's efforts to express herself are thwarted by a normative environment that rejects her as wrong and disordered…Her mother, and her [mother's] sisters, shrill arbiters of social standards, stigmatize both her thick hair, which refuses to curl as is the fashion, and her brown skin, a further sign of defectiveness, as shameful physical attributes' (Adamson, 2003, p. 318.)

In contrast to her mother and her brother, Maggie's father throughout “offers her love and recognition” (Adamson, p. 318). However, in response to Maggie's Aunt Pullet's insistence that the state of her hair makes “her skin so brown,” Mr Tulliver, Maggie's father replies “the child's healthy enough—there's nothing ails her. There's red wheat as well as white, for that matter, and some like the dark grain best, But it ‘ud be as well if Bessy ‘ud have the child's hair cut, so as it ‘ud lie smooth.” (Vol I, Book First Book, 6: Eliot, 1985, p. 118).

Maggie, after hearing her father suggesting that “it ‘ud be best for her hair to be cut, and on being told by her mother to get her hair brushed for shame,” goes to her room and in a fit of blind resolve cuts her hair “straight across the middle of her forehead.” Eliot describes her as “crying before the glass” because “she felt it impossible that she should go down to dinner and endure the severe eyes and severe words of her aunts.” Instead “she sat as helpless and despairing among her black locks as Ajax among the slaughtered sheep.” (Vol I, Book First Book, 6: Eliot, 1985, p. 122).

Adamson draws our attention to the significance of Eliot's, somewhat comic, evocation of Sophocles' Ajax. Ajax, in that play, has been shamed by Agamemnon, and Menelaus, in their decision to award the dead Achilles' armour to Odysseus and not him. In doing this, they mark the former as the pre-eminent warrior. The latter goes mad with shame and fury at the dishonour and diminution, determined to seek out, and fight, Odysseus and his men, to establish his credentials. The red mist he falls under, with an intervention by Athena, results in his mistaking a flock of sheep for his targets. He falls among them with violent fury, coming to his senses, and seeing what he has done:

> When he gazed at the room filled with ruin he struck his head and uttered a loud cry, then fell among the fallen corpses of the slaughtered sheep and sat there grasping his hair and tearing it with his nails. (Sophocles, 1994, Il. 305–310).

These texts, on Adamson's reading and mine, understand a deep truth about shame—and that is that the alleviation of shame rarely lies in the hands of the person suffering it. Usually the best one can hope for from oneself is the analgesic power of forgetting.

Perhaps Velleman could complain that the avoidance of shame, by management over one's self-presentation, is a different matter from the alleviation of existing shame, and the management of shameful feelings. It would odd if these two things were not closely connected, but I have in any case suggested that attempts at pre-emptive full facial control would plausibly result in the “fixed-face” solution, which strikes one as no solution at all. If management of self-presentation threatens only to make things worse in cases of alleviation, the idea that shame management is a matter of managing one's self-presentation comes to look problematic. And this, I think, should not be surprising. Shame, and its management, is not an active, autonomous business. Its management and alleviation lies in our

relations to others; the best hope for the management of shame—pre-emptive and reparative—lies in the gift of esteem from others. The comic, and grotesque, efforts of self-presentation described above remind us that dealing with shame by efforts of full control, self-styling, or corrective magnification are just as likely to make matters worse, and, themselves, to provide, instead, new sources of shame. Acts of alleviation from shame lies in the hands, or sometimes, at the risk of being soupy, in the hearts of the other. Forgiveness and acceptance, not self-control, are the central antidotes to shame—and they are salves applied by others.

4 | STRUCTURE OF SHAME AS DIMINUTION

Having tried to motivate the idea that there is both space and need for the *Social Diminution Model*, I want to finish the paper by setting out framework for understanding what kind of valanced affective self-consciousness is involved.

Let me first return to an articulation of a form of interpersonal self-consciousness that I have offered elsewhere. In my account of "ordinary self-consciousness" (OSC) I take the core of ordinary self-consciousness to involve a subject being conscious of herself, as herself, and up for evaluation, by another. More precisely, in the core cases, of ordinary self-consciousness,

> For X to be OSC is for X to be a subject, X to be conscious of X, conscious that she, herself is X, and up for evaluation, by another Y, using Y's evaluative schema(s).[19]

OSC, as I characterized it there, is a form of self-consciousness, born of a sensitivity to the manifest power of the other to evaluate me. It typically manifests as:

> "self-perusal from the perspective of the other, knowing at the same time that it is oneself that is the object of perusal, which gives the state the character it has. Thus, rather than oscillating between awareness of oneself from the inside and from the outside, it is that the two perspectives are held Janus-faced together" (p. 107).

My sensitivity to the power of the other to evaluate, and my liability to being conscious of myself as up for evaluation, are two sides of a single form of self-consciousness. Getting the phenomenon right, I argued, also requires us to distinguish between the self-conscious subject's relation to the *evaluator*, on the one hand, and to the *evaluative schema(s)* by means of which they are being evaluated on the other. Ordinary self-consciousness makes us poised to be conscious of ourselves relative to both dimensions of an evaluation by another. The occasions and results of being so poised will also depend on the subject's *relation to*, *knowledge of*, and *weighting of*, the evaluator, on the one hand, and the subject's *relation to*, *knowledge of*, and *weighting of*, the evaluative schema(s) on the other.

i. Relation to: the other may be present, expected, remembered, imagined or internalized or introjected into, the subject.
ii. Knowledge of: the other, and the evaluative schema(s) relative to which she is up for evaluation may be known to the subject in detail, or barely at all.
iii. Weighting of: the subject may weigh, care about, the other, and the evaluative schema(s) relative to which she is up for evaluation to a different extent in different ways.

Human shame, I want to suggest, depends on our capacity for ordinary self-consciousness—our capacity to be poised to soak in, be pervious to, to absorb, the evaluations of others in way that alters, and colours, our consciousness of ourselves. The propensity for shame rests on being liable to have our consciousness of ourselves transformed by the consciousness of the negative, and in particular the diminishing, evaluations of others, and the nature of the

transformation will be affected by the differences in relation, knowledge and weighting to the evaluator and evaluative schemas. A diminishing evaluation is an evaluation that reduces the social magnitude or worth of the person evaluated.

Let me try to unpack this in three stages. By considering (a) the kind of self-consciousness being invoked, (b) the source of the negative valence, and (c) the idea of social magnitude.

4.1 | Shameful self-consciousnesses

On my story central cases of shame involve a consciousness of a negative evaluation, particularly evaluations that are evaluations of, or effect, our social worth. Shame is a form of affective self-consciousness experienced by a subject conscious of herself as diminished by such an evaluation. The account given is, deliberately, not given in terms of *judgements*, or *appraisals*, of oneself as diminished but in terms of a subject being conscious of being diminished by an evaluation. It is a form of self-consciousness that realizes the aim of the evaluative acts and expressions of others of which we are conscious, without the need for our identifying with the sources of those evaluations.[20] Moreover, it is at its core a form of personal *responsive* self-consciousness. We are pervious to, we absorb—our sense of ourselves changes, and is calibrated to—the evaluations of others that are manifest to us directly. Just as the fire has the power to heat and make us conscious of ourselves as hot, the sneer of the other has the power to shame and make us conscious of ourselves as diminished.[21] It is important to note that, looking at the other side of the relation, the evaluator may be giving expression to a negative evaluation—realized by their judgement or emotions—with no more than a frown or a curl of the lip. An evaluation and its expression will often be cognitively complex and contentful but it can be a negative affect and its expression only—a feeling and expression of disgust, say.

A subject may or may not agree with the grounds of the diminution—depending on what weight they give, if any, to the evaluative schema operative.[22] If they give weight to the schema and the evaluator, where giving weight means they absorb the diminution, they may suffer identifying shame—what we can call "I-shame." If they give no weight to the schema, but nevertheless weight the evaluator, and so the evaluation, then then may suffer non-identifying shame: "NI-shame."

So, on my account, when X is (in central cases) I-shamefully self-conscious:

1. X is a subject, X is conscious of X, conscious she, herself is X, and has been negatively evaluated, by Y, using Y's evaluative schema(s)
2. Y is a whole or part of the group X takes herself also to be part of.
3. X positively weighs Y's evaluation.
4. X's positively weighs Y's evaluative schema.
5. The positive weight given to Y's evaluation makes X conscious of herself as diminished by the evaluation by Y.

And, X is (in core cases) NI shamefully self-conscious when:

1. X is a subject, X is conscious of X, conscious she, herself is X, and has been negatively evaluated, by Y, using Y's evaluative schema(s)
2. Y is a whole or part of the group X takes herself also to be part of.
3. X positively weighs Y's evaluation
4. X's negatively weighs Y's evaluative schema.
5. The positive weight given to Y's evaluation makes X conscious of herself as diminished by the evaluation.

Of course, shame is perhaps as often, or indeed more often, felt in the fear, or expectation of, a negative response, as in any actual current negative response. In many, maybe most, cases of shame there is no negative

evaluation by the social group—it is rather expected, or feared, or imagined, or remembered, or in some other way evoked.

It may be thought that I am making my life too easy by saying that we can deal with cases in which a subject feels shame in the absence of a present actual negative evaluation or response, by appealing to expectation, memory, imagination and other psychological forms of carrying another's point of view.

Here is a way to show that such extensions are not ad hoc, but in fact entirely predictable. Imagine a creature capable of a particular form of feeling diminished only by an actual present negative evaluation by another conspecific, whose evaluation they care about.[23] Now, imagine that creature develops a capacity to remember such evaluations, or to anticipate ones like them, or to imagine them, to hear the voices of the other in their heads, or come to evaluate itself—would we not imagine that the development, and exercise, of such capacities will bring, in their train, a capacity for the creature to feel diminished in relation to a rich range of thought triggers—to feel as she felt when being negatively evaluated with her critic right there. It is a feature of creatures like us, who can travel cognitively in time—through memory and expectation, and in possibility—through imagination and conception, that the core of an apt response reaction can depend on there being cases of present tense, actual, interaction, but that the response reaction be more often triggered in the absence of the present or the actual. We actually fear anticipated threats, and feel shame at anticipated diminution.

There is a further complication we need to deal with. Many shame theorists have argued that shame with a negative valance can be felt in relation to positive evaluation, as well as to criticism.[24] Many such cases are in my view cases of embarrassment, rather than shame. Genuine shame cases are much rarer, and require a more complex structure, than the negative evaluation cases, but we still need to understand them. The standard case called on to illustrate this possibility is the case of the life model who comes to feel shame when the painter shows a sexually admiring interest in her.[25] I do not think that this is a clean case—the communication by the painter of a sexually admiring interest, in the circumstances of paying for her to model her naked self, is not a positively evaluating act overall—it is, in our social world, narrowly a form of praising, but it is also a diminishing, implying that the circumstances are ones in which the model has offered her nakedness as an object of sexual interest, in return for a fee. Indeed, part of the source of her shame comes from being taken to participate in selling sexualized access to her body. The artist case, in my view, is better understood along the lines of the Susannah case: it is shame from diminution due to sexual exploitation. A better case would be one in which I am heartily welcomed in, and praised, as "one of them" among a group of strangers whose evident values, behaviour and sensibilities in fact disturb and upset me: a case, say, where it is assumed that I will laugh and enjoy viciously cruel language and humour.

In such a case, although I am subject to no critical evaluation from the relevant others at all, I can still feel shame. One obvious way to model such shame is to include it as a kind of opposite or mirroring shame to shame from diminution, shame from inclusion:

X is shamefully self-conscious from inclusion when

1. X is a subject, X is conscious of X knowing she, herself is X, and has been *positively* evaluated, by Y, using Y's evaluative schema(s)
2. Y is NOT part of the social group X takes (or imagines) herself to be part of.
3. X negatively weighs Y's evaluation and/or
4. X negatively weighs Y's evaluative schema.
5. The negative weight given to Y's evaluation makes X conscious of herself as diminished by inclusion within "them."

Given the account I have given of what a social group is, and who is in it, shame from inclusion modelled in this way will, at most, work in cases where the praise and inclusion comes from strangers who are not part of my practical life.[26] An option that raises fewer new elements, and would offer an account of shaming praise by members of my own social group, would be to adopt Taylor's own suggestion in response to the life model case, and take shame

from inclusion or praise as a kind of consciousness of diminution in relation to *other evaluations* I give weight to. We might instead think of shame from inclusion like this:

X is shamefully self-conscious from inclusion when:

1. X is a subject, X is conscious of X knowing she, herself is X, and has been *positively* evaluated, by Y, using Y's evaluative schema(s), and is liable as a result be negatively evaluated by Z using Z's evaluative schema.
2. Z is the, or part of the, social group X takes (or imagines) herself to be part of.
3. Y either is, or is not, part of a social group X takes (or imagines) herself to be part of.
4. X negatively weighs Y's evaluation and/or
5. X negatively weighs Y's evaluative schema.
6. X positively weighs Z's evaluation and/or
7. X positively weighs Z's evaluative schema.
8. The positive weight given to Z's negative evaluation of Y's positive evaluation, or of X attracting such an evaluation, makes X conscious of herself diminished by the evaluation by Y.

The proposal is that shame is kind of self-consciousness, and, more narrowly, an affective form of self-consciousness that has as its object the human animal feeling shame. However, more narrowly, I claim, that shame has as its object the social magnitude of the individual who feels the shame, and that our shameful consciousness of our social magnitude is typically determined by a sensitivity to weighted evaluations by others, and their schemas.

I understand shame as having the function of incorporating changes to, or threats to changes to, our social magnitudes, in self-consciousness. There are, of course, other ways in which we can be conscious of our social worth—we can form beliefs, we can ask others, we can look and see how easy it is to get others to help us, but the capacity to feel shame—and indeed pride—is an inborn social calibration faculty.

4.2 | The source: Me or them?

Consider a case in which I am conscious of being socially diminished by the evaluative acts of another, but entirely rejecting their basis or grounds, respond immediately in anger rather than shame. Suppose that I am falsely accused of being a liar. Or suppose I am mocked as stupid on the grounds that I come from an Irish background. On the account I have offered here, an immediate, appropriate and non-criticisable affective response would be one of shame. However, I may not respond with shame, I may respond with steely fury. I may just feel angry that I am being subject to unwarranted evaluative acts against me, intended to diminish me.[27]

But now what is the difference between the case in which my immediate response is anger and the case when it is shame? Will the difference not lie in how things are with *me*? Is it not *my* tendency to respond, my evaluation of myself, that is the source of my shame, not after all the others' evaluations? We might worry that shame cannot simply be a form of consciousness of myself as diminished, cannot be my sense of my own social worth absorbed from other's diminishing of me, if it is as possible to respond to such an absorption with anger, as with shame. Relatedly, we might start to worry that the self-evaluation view is right after all. When I feel angry, in response to acts of diminution, I reject the evaluation. So, when I feel shame it is not because, somehow, I agree with it, internalize it, identify with it?

The self-evaluation view is not right after all. The difference between the case in which I respond only with anger and a case in which I respond with shame is the difference between being affectively conscious of myself as diminished, and not. In so far as anger is a response to an attempt at diminution, it is best understood as affective resistance to the diminution—it is a refusal to absorb the diminishing of my worth by another. Anger may be thought of as the liability to shame seen off.[28] Consider the case of Diana and Acteon—she utilizes her fury, and power, to overcome her liability to feel shame. Consider a parallel with fear. Fear can rightly be understood as an affective

apprehension of danger without making fear when faced with danger compulsory—some people faced with danger feel fearless, some excited. So, too when faced with diminution, or its prospect.

A case where I respond immediately, and only, with anger is a case in which I do not positively weigh the disapproval of the other in such a way that come to be conscious of my diminution—I do not feel diminished. I may *judge*, *believe*, *know* or *suspect* that my social worth has been diminished. However, it does not condition my affective relation to myself and to my diminished social magnitude. It is as if I recognize danger and feel no fear. Cases of social disapproval in which I at no point feel a vestige of shame—only anger, or indifference—are cases in which I do not absorb the others' evaluations in calibration with them. I do not positively weigh them in such a way that they are absorbed and determine my affective self-consciousness of my social value, either because I am impermeable or because I manage actively to resist absorption.

The matter is complicated by the complex dynamics that exist between shame and anger. It is not the case that we respond to changes, or threats to our social worth either by feeling anger or by feeling shame. Often, we feel both, and often anger is an expression or transformation of shame. We can come to feel anger rise as part of a re-assertion of power and worth in the face of the shame. I doubt that this been put better than by Toni Morrison:

> Anger stirs and wakes in her; it opens its mouth, and like a hot-mouthed puppy, laps up the dredges of her shame. Anger is better. There is a sense of being in anger. A reality and presence. An awareness of worth. It is a lovely surging…The anger will not hold; the puppy is too easily surfeited. Its thirst too quickly quenched, it sleeps. The shame wells up again, its muddy rivlet seeping into her eyes. (Morrison, 1970, p. 50).[29]

The possibility of anger in response to diminution, does not show that shame is affective consciousness of my diminution, with my endorsement attached. Anger in such a case may be the *response* to shame, an emotion of reflection, born of a resistance to my sense of my social value, determined from without. It is, as we saw in Ellison's "to hell with being ashamed", a girding of the will.

Essential to the description being offered here is the idea that I can "positively weigh" others' evaluations and evaluative acts, in such a way that in doing so I immediately affectively incorporate or absorb changes to my sense of social worth in calibration with them. I relate to the other affectively as a determiner of my social value. The kind of absorption that the account relies upon is to be distinguished from more familiar claims that we come to identify with, or internalize, the evaluation of the other even when we do reflectively agree with it. Such identification or internalization is only needed if we cleave on to the idea that our consciousness of our social worth must be fixed autonomously. I have argued that it is not—others get in there, whether I like it or not. That we can be subject to a sense of our own diminution—as a "brute impact," as Wollheim puts it—without any alignment of my evaluation with my social worth is a practically and socially important aspect of the account. The oft trotted out homilies to the effect that our sense of ourselves is in our hands: "You cannot control how they treat you, all you can control is how you respond to it" may be helpful strategies to ease the pain, and may function to embolden or suppress. They can, however, be misleading. The power of others to determine my sense of myself, without my collaboration or collusion is considerable, and central to human cooperation. Shame is not inevitable given my consciousness of my diminution—but that does nothing rule to out shame being a form of consciousness of my diminution.

The socially embedded account of shame being offered—that locates the core capacity for shame in a human capacity to feel a valanced form of self-consciousness in calibration with, and incorporated from, the evaluation of one's social value by others—often, and rightly, provokes the following question: what about the individual who feels shame *autonomously*, when they fail according to their own very high standards—standards which no one else shares or gives a hoot about?[30] What about O'Hear's craftsmen, "with high standards of their own, feeling shame just because they have let themselves down (not produced a masterpiece), without…imagining other craftsmen inspecting and condemning their work." (O'Hear, 1976–1977, p. 77) In fact, I think, we barely have the concept of a "masterpiece" without the idea of shared community values against which teaching and learning take place—who is

the pupil?—but setting that point aside, is it plausible that such a person could feel themselves diminished in social worth, when they are subject to *no* social disapproval, and subject to no threat, or expectation, or imagining, of social disapproval? My short answer is "yes, we can come to play a role in determining our sense of our social worth." The longer answer is as follows:

The project I am engaged in here is not one of giving necessary and sufficient conditions for particular occurrences of shame. Nor am I concerned, primarily, with particular shaming situations. I am interested, in a task within the philosophy of mind, of trying to understand an aspect of the *architecture* of human self-consciousness. I have argued that shame is primarily, and at its core, a social emotion—in particular, that is rooted in a human capacity for being conscious of oneself as diminished in social value due to a consciousness of the negative evaluations of others in our social groups. We are socially nested, socially calibrating animals, and shame is an affect response, with the affective subject as its own object, that has the function of tracking the social magnitudes it is partly realizing. The question of whether we do, or could, come to bear this affective relation to ourselves without the disapproval of others—with only our own disapproval determining our worth—is the question of whether we could we could come to be the autonomous in determining our sense of our social magnitudes. We could mean two things by this question. We might mean: could our individual capacities for affective shame develop in such a way that we become the sole—the only—determiners of our sense of our social magnitudes? Or we might mean could we also, autonomously, be determiners of our sense of our social magnitudes, alongside others?

The scope for idiosyncrasy and variation in the development of individual human minds is almost limitless—there is no end to nature's zoo. So, there may be rare individuals who come to be the sole arbiters of their sense of their social value, so that their shame and self-evaluations are in perfect lock step: the only gaze with the power to diminish them is their own. Those individuals are likely to be peculiarly insured against, inured from, or to have unusual atypical capacities to discount, the responses of others. However, the temptation to answer "yes" to the first question applied to human capacities, in general, lies mostly in a phantasy that virtuous individuals align their shame responses with the moral order, and that the costs of shame be borne only by those who ought to pay. A virtuous person in an ethical world will feel shame always, and only, when she is, or has done, bad, and we work for, and hope for being virtuous people in an ethical world. But we all fail in virtue, and the world is not, and will not be, a fully ethical and ideal world. In a non-ethical non-ideal world, where social magnitudes are not determined in relation to worth, the only means of retaining any control, and coming closer to securing the alignment we wish for, is for us to aim at autonomy, in line with our ethical commitments, in our affective responses. However, we are not, in general, built like that. We may wish for autonomy over our shame lives—we may wish for us to be the sole determiners of shame—but most of us cannot achieve it, and it would not be in the nature of our capacity for shame if we could. The most that most of us achieve is an aim, without a clear idea of means, to better control our shame, along with an iterated shame when we fail: shame, and shame at my heteronymous, easily influenced, dilettante shame.

Even if the above is right, however, it does not mean that we cannot answer "yes" to the second question—we can, and do, develop a supervisory, evaluator's relation to ourselves so that we, ourselves, are also determiners of our social worth, and conscious of our own self-inflicted diminutions. We may also think that our capacity to develop this capacity is important in the management of our ethical lives. It could also be argued that the capacity we develop when we come to be able to bear this relation to ourselves is a distinct enough capacity for us to treat it as a distinct kind of emotional response. How we should best individuate our emotions is not something that can be settled here, and part of my aim has been to lead us away from such an activity, and towards identifying the structures of self-consciousness and other consciousness, and seeing how they interact with each other and our capacities to care. The important point to make for now is that the account of the nature of shame and its natural function that is offered is fully consistent with humans coming to take themselves as objects of approval and disapproval, and to respond to themselves as they have learned to respond to approvals and disapproval, and thereby come to develop a capacity to feel shame through self-diminution.

In her discussion of shame Heller distinguishes between shame and "conscience." Her account of the nature of each and the relation between them is complex, but she articulates the core of the distinction as follows:

> In the case of shame, the authority is social custom (rituals, habits, codes or schedules of behaviour) represented by the eye of others. In the case of conscience the authority is practical reason which can manifest itself as the "internal voice". Both authorities can approve as well as disapprove. (p. 215).

Perhaps we should think of our craftsman as feeling conscience not shame. However, although suggesting a sharp distinction—with social custom in contrast to "practical reason" as the authority—things are, even for Heller, much murkier.

> [Shame] is the only in born moral feeling in us. No wonder then that it has played and still plays an enormous part in the process of socialisation. Since the emergence of the internal authority of judgement of moral conduct, namely conscience, the power of shame has become more and more ambiguous. Both because of its inborn character, the shame affect will never be overcome. (p.216)

Conscience, even if distinct, and grounded in "the authority of practical reason" is, for Heller, a late comer, growing out of shame, and such that it can never fully displace its progenitor. Moreover, conscience *itself* proves to be a complex mechanism, not subject to autonomous control:

> But how about conscience as the sole arbiter of human conduct? Can it be generalized? And if so, can autonomy replace heteronomy? I want to argue that conscience as the sole arbiter of human conduct is as equally expansive as legislative conscience and that its generalization produces new types of external authorities of peculiar provenance. All of these new authorities represent, however, new forms of domination. Herein lies the "cunning of practical reason"…Norms, obligations, values, goods—what are they? They are not of flesh and blood. One cannot grasp them; they are not palpably real. Why obey them? Why succumb to them? They may well be fancies, ghosts, apparitions. But they are not *innocent* fancies or apparitions. They are coercive. They are thirsty gods who live on human blood and sweat. (p.224)

Just as a subject can come to be alienated from the evaluation of her social group and feel non-self-identifying shame, there is scope for a subject to come to be alienated from her own legislative conscience. A story about how we develop capacities to determine our own social worth, and turn our capacities for approval and disapproval on ourselves in changing it, and our consciousness of it, will be complex. But we know it must be available.

4.3 | The idea of social magnitudes

This is not the place to offer an account of social magnitudes. But it is the place to acknowledge that the description of shame I have offered has the notion in the background, and to acknowledge that it supposes that social magnitudes have certain properties.

Social magnitudes and our sense of them, in my construal, must be set in coordination with the evaluations we give of each other. They are, therefore, as helpfully compared with social *price*, as with social *value*. My price is what others will give me, and is not dependent only on the goodness properties I instantiate. Like price, I can have conflicting social magnitudes relative to distinct sub-groups within my social group. My price can vary depending on the market I am dealing in, and I can be in more than one market at a time. Of course, this also allows for a notion of social value to run alongside this one of social price(s).

Social magnitudes—and our consciousness of them—must allow for flux and variation along distinct temporal dimensions. We have a more or less stable social magnitude, and sense of our social magnitude. However, we are also subject to situational fluid changes, and hence we can feel diminished or expanded by the hour.

Somewhat as we have distinct long-term and short-term bodily images—where the long-term bodily image is responsible for our sense of the basic volume, and architecture of ourselves, and the short-term responsible for our sense of the changes of our position and movement—we can have a long-term and short-term sense of our social magnitude. The apprehension of a stupid remark recognized as such by one's colleagues can elicit a shame response—the consciousness of social diminution—but it can be flushed out without altering one's more stable sense of one's social magnitude.

The account also needs social magnitudes to *matter*. How exactly they matter is a difficult question—but however they matter it must be such that it is *appropriate* for consciousness of the diminution of my social magnitude to be a form of anguish, pain, or discomfort. I am interested in resisting the dubious complaint that to care about what others think, even when they get things wrong, is childish or immature. The injunction to "not mind" is the injunction of the person whose social magnitude is safe from shrinkage. It may be that the best way to understand social magnitudes is as related, directly or indirectly, to a set of licences, privileges and opportunities—often licences, privileges and opportunities over the possibility of gaining greater social magnitude. But, determining whether that is right is a task to be taken on elsewhere.

Finally, changes to our social magnitudes are properties of ourselves that we can affectively be conscious of. Our sensitivity to such changes is very imperfect—subject to error, delusion and irrational influence from ourselves and others. Nevertheless, this account needs social magnitudes to be such that it makes sense that human self-consciousness operates in a way that enables us to be sensitive to changes of them—expanding and diminishing—for that, at its core, is what shame is for.

ENDNOTES

[1] Thanks to my colleague Tom Stern from bringing this passage to my attention, giving me written comments, and talking to me about all this, throughout. I have presented on these ideas at University of Graz, University of Harvard, University of Kent, University of Leeds, SEFA in Oviedo, at ESPP in Tartu, UCL, University of Warwick—I have benefitted enormously from the responses of audiences. Thanks also to the EJP Executive Committee for discussion at the workshop in Amsterdam, where this material was delivered. It was one of the most enjoyable and rewarding philosophical discussions I can remember being part of. Thanks are due to many individuals who have discussed these topics with me over the past few years. Thanks, in particular, are due to Akosua Bonsu, who convinced me (see Bonsu, 2012) of the importance of non-identifying shame, and to Alec Hinshelwood, Léa Salje, Matt Soteriou, James Laing, Doug Lavin, David Olbrich, Sarah Majid, and Sarah Richmond.

[2] It is instructive to contrast Rembrandt's "Susannah and the Elders" with Titian's depiction of Ovid's story in his "The Death of Acteon." Diana responds in fury, having been inadvertently caught bathing by Acteon when he is out hunting. She turns him into a stag with the result that he is hunted down and killed by his own hounds. The painting depicts Acteon's death with Diana running forward, head back and away from the viewer, breast exposed—any shame ferociously dissipated. The painting presents us with possibility of facing down shame with anger. How to understand the possibility of fury dissipating shame is something I will come back to. Thanks to Christoph Menke for making me think more about Diana.

[3] See Nussbaum (2004), Deonna et al. (2001). See Lebron (2013) for an important discussion of the social uses of shame ascription.

[4] Zahavi (2014) also offers an account of shame as form of social self-consciousness. He is particularly concerned to explore how shame relates to our understanding of conceptions of the self—in particular the self as social object—in a way that I am not. My project aims at keeping firmly rooted in looking at the responses of human animals as such. He also takes the form of self-consciousness involved in shame to be self-evaluative in a way that I do not (see Zahavi, 2014, p. 226). However, we agree on a lot.

[5] Such as that articulated, for example, by Iris Marion Young (2011, chapter 2).

[6] Work from Katerina Fotopoulou's lab, on the nature of affective touch, is a good antidote to the tendency to dualism in the identification of feelings. It also shows the way in which we absorb interactions which others into the way we feel about our own bodies. (See Crucianelli, Cardi, Treasure, Jenkinson, & Fotopoulou, 2016; von Mohr, Kirsch, & Fotopoulou, 2017)

[7] This is not to say that we do not also often interpret and respond to—react with mental anguish—our bodily responses, and that this can be part of our overall shame experience.

[8] Although, I am not committed to the details of her story about submission, in particular, I agree with Maibom's point that the way in which shame evolves, and is socialized, does not mean that we cannot locate a core structure in relation to which we can understand its social nature and function. (Maibom, 2010)

[9] What exactly such social expungement amounts to, and what the nature of its realization is, are good questions proper answers to which will require developing an account of social value, which I do not do here.

[10] The painful feeling of being stuck with oneself in shame leads us, also, to seek 'self-escape'. We explore the idea that alcohol provides one such method of self-escape in Morgan and O'Brien (2016).

[11] See also Deonna et al. (2011)

[12] This passage is cited by Velleman (2001), fn. 23. Similar cases are explored in Calhoun (2016) in the section "Shame before the other's unmirrored gaze", pp. 58–62.

[13] Although I came to it a bit late, Calhoun's work seems to me to make the best sense, of the work I know, of the claim that one can rationally feel shame without any kind of identifying evaluation.

[14] The account I develop here also has affinities with Maibom's "social-centred shame" (Maibom, 2010). She, however, focusses on the idea of social submission, rather than the idea of practical weight.

[15] Calhoun adds a point about this discomfort in a footnote (fn. 18): "Someone who insists that rational, mature people would not feel shamed by criticisms they reject might nevertheless think that a rational, mature person could experience some other unpleasant feeling, such as discomfort at the awkwardness of having to interact with openly sexist or racist people. One need not agree with a would-be shamer's contemptuous views to be made uncomfortable by them."

[16] In characterizing "Ordinary Self-Consciousness" (O'Brien, 2011) I deployed the metaphor of weight, using it to talk about assigning distinct weights to the evaluations of others, and to their evaluative schemas, where the greater the weight the more a subject cares: the more it weighs on her.

[17] This is a kind of mirror possibility to the idea in law that one can only be liable for defamation if the person who has allegedly been defamed has any kind of reputation to lose. I can only be actually social diminished if the critic who shames me has the standing to do so, as well as if I have standing to lose.

[18] See, for example, my study of "Ordinary Self-Consciousness," O'Brien, 2011. Let me take this chance to include an attribution that I ought to have included in that paper. My student James Laing has pointed out to me that Anscombe (1981), in her "The First Person," declares at the beginning that her topic in that paper is *not* what she describes as self-consciousness as used in "ordinary language" I had no conscious recollection of the phrase, but I have read that paper many, many times; my label "ordinary self-consciousness", in all probability, came from doing so.

[19] See O'Brien (2011). In that paper I said both that the subject was "aware" and "knew" that she, herself was up to for evaluation—but I now prefer to stick with "conscious" throughout to make it clear that it is a feeling of self-consciousness that is at issue.

[20] We need to make a distinction between evaluative acts that aim at diminishing (or enlarging) a person's social worth, but which are indifferent to the affective response of the diminished (or enlarged) subject to herself—and acts that have as their primary aim the inculcation of affective forms of self-consciousness. The same act of approving or disapproving can have both aims, but they are distinct. The category of evaluative acts aimed at affective responses—praisings, blamings, laudings, shamings, sneerings—are, in my view, philosophically important. There has been considerable discussion of the importance of our affective responses to acts of others—Strawson's reactive attitudes, for example—and much discussion of acts intended to change the minds of others by changing their beliefs or their intentions. There has been little discussion of the significance acts intended to change the way people feel—and in particular to change the way people feel about themselves. A core element of human interaction involves the attempt to control others by engaging in acts intended to change how they feel, and feel about themselves. I explore this elsewhere.

[21] See Laing (2020)—especially Chapter 1—for an excellent discussion on how best to model the kind of transaction involved, and for criticism of my earlier attempts to do. He may well still not be happy.

[22] A subject may not know the grounds of the diminution: it may not be accessible in the way in which the evaluation is communicated, a naïve, or simple, subjects may not have even the capacity to be conscious of the evaluative schemas operative. To experience shame all that is needed is sensitivity to an axis of positive and negative evaluations that are capable of inducing a sense of diminished social magnitude.

[23] Something like a 3-year-old human child might be the kind of creature you bring to mind.

[24] These are not the cases that Heller has in mind when she talks of shame in response to approval—cases in which we experience a highly pleasant feeling.

[25] This is a case from Max Scheler, discussed by Taylor (1985, pp. 60–61), and by Williams (1993, p. 220).

[26] Thanks to Fiona Macpherson for raising the question of the relation of shame by inclusion to the social group, on the notion I have been working with.

[27] Thanks to Ulrike Heuer pressing me on the possibility of anger.

[28] This thought might be thought to be reflected in Aristotle's construal of anger as "desire, accompanied by pain, for revenge for an obvious [uncalled for] belittlement of oneself [...]" (Rhetoric 1378b). Thanks to Tom Stern for this pointer.

[29] Thanks to Ege Yumusak for sending me this quotation. Connolly (2014) contains an excellent extended discussion of *The Bluest Eye*, although she does not include this passage.

[30] Thanks, in particular, to Bill Child for pressing me on this point.

[30] In many ways my project is closer to that operative in Darwin (1897), than to those pursued in more recent moral psychology.

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How to cite this article: O'Brien L. Shameful self-consciousness. *Eur J Philos*. 2020;28:545–566. https://doi.org/10.1111/ejop.12596