

# **On Shame**

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## Abstract

Shame is widely regarded as an emotion of *self-assessment*; that is, an emotion intimately related to the sense of *who* one is. Consequently, shame is often thought to occupy one of the most central places in our moral psychologies. On the one hand, shame powerfully features in interpersonal and social interaction, being bound with what is has been termed the 'social' self. On the other hand, shame regulates our intrapsychic well-being, crucially bound with what is has been termed the 'intimate' or 'inner' self. These psychological features generate a rough *conceptual* divide. An aspect of this divide may be taken to turn on the philosophical question of whether the thought and judgement of the *other* necessarily feature in explanations of shame. Answers that clearly fall on one or other side of this divide allow shame to be characterised in one of two general ways: heteronomously or autonomously. Both characterisations, however, appear at to be at odds with one another. Our problem, in a nutshell, is that explanations of shame appear to straddle both sides of this autonomous and heteronomous divide, resulting in a tension. I focus on the nature of this tension, and consider a way to resolve it.

The study divides into three parts. In the first part, I provide an overview of shame, calling upon a broad range of philosophical and psychological accounts. I isolate some of the most important characteristics of shame and the general categories under which they fall. In the second part, I use the notions of autonomy and heteronomy to explore a central feature of shame, that is, the shaming judgement. In the final part, I reconcile shame's heteronomous and autonomous aspects in a philosophical characterisation of the phenomenon of shame that makes the *self*, rather than the *other*, its central feature.

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# 1 Introduction

Self-conscious emotions, such as guilt, shame, embarrassment and pride<sup>1</sup>, are regarded as a family of psychologically complex emotions, often contrasted with what are usually called, 'basic' or non-self-conscious emotions<sup>2</sup>, such as fear, disgust and pleasure. The key difference between self-conscious and non-self-conscious emotions is that the latter do not necessarily depend on such things as self-reference, self-awareness, self-evaluation or a 'sense of self.'<sup>3</sup> That does not mean, however, that the more basic emotions and, some of their characteristic features, cannot also appear in the more complex emotions.<sup>4</sup>

Historically, the emotion of shame has been thought of as serving the general function of self-protection.<sup>5</sup> According to one group of views, shame protects the *social self*.<sup>6</sup> These views focus on what we shall be calling the 'heteronomy'<sup>7</sup> of shame, tracing back to the interpretations of Aristotle, Spinoza, Descartes and, more recently, Sartre. Here, shame is thought to arise before the *other*. However, shame is also thought of as arising independently of the other. Such views highlight, what we shall be calling, the distinctly 'autonomous' aspects of shame. According to this group of views, shame protects the 'intimate' or 'inner' self, mediating between the 'inner' domains of the self, it is thought, quite apart from the external or social realm. Here, shame emerges on an entirely intrapersonal level from, some have suggested, a failure to achieve a self-directed ideal.

That is just to highlight shame's function. There are other aspects to shame that can be plotted along this same, very approximate, 'intrapersonal-interpersonal' or 'self-other' divide. Part of our focus in this thesis concerns the opposition between one's personal convictions as against a (mere) concern for the regard of others. This latter opposition is most obvious when one is shamed before others even though one does not share their opinion. In other words, one may feel shame even though one does not concur with the content of the judgement that shames one. For example, two lovers may feel shame, not because they derive

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<sup>1</sup> Lewis (1993) and Tangney & Fischer (1995) principally name these.

<sup>2</sup> See for example., Tomkins (1963), Ekman (1992).

<sup>3</sup> I follow Lewis (1992) in this regard. '[E]motions can be classified in relation to the role of the self. The elicitation of fear, joy, disgust, surprise, anger, sadness and interest does not require introspection or self-reference. Therefore, let us consider these emotions as one set. The elicitation of jealousy, envy, empathy, embarrassment, shame, pride, and guilt does require introspection or self-reference. These emotions constitute another set... Thus, I propose that the difference between primary and secondary emotions is that the secondary emotions involve self-reference. Secondary emotions will be referred to as self-conscious emotions...' pp.19-20.

<sup>4</sup> For example, the 'involuntariness' or 'passivity' of the 'basic' emotions is a feature found in shame and guilt.

<sup>5</sup> This functional ascription, however, conflates the occurrent state with its dispositional cognates. Please see below for more.

<sup>6</sup> The 'social' self or selves is the persona or personas one tries to present to various others, significantly governing one's behaviour.

<sup>7</sup> I reserve a fuller specification of these terms until chapter 2.

any value or, see any correctness in the community's stance on pre-marital relationships, but merely because they will be judged harshly and viewed in lesser regard by this community. A simplifying way of distinguishing between such self-focused, 'private' regard, as against an other-focused, 'public' regard in shame is by allowing its characterisation to turn on the question of whether an *actual* other is essentially involved.

However, if one reads the literature on shame, especially with this question in mind, one becomes aware of a tension between various characterisations of shame. Very roughly, this tension emerges between characterisations of shame, which, in some way, essentially involve reference to the other, and those, which do not. Let us briefly show how this tension emerges.

### 1.1.1 The problem

First, when we ask the seemingly straightforward question: 'Is the *actual other* essentially involved in shame?', our immediate, knee-jerk response is usually in the affirmative. This is especially so when thinking of examples of shame, such as shame at one's nakedness, in which, as with the related emotion of embarrassment, the actual other is necessarily involved. It is being *seen* to be naked, not nakedness as such, which shames one. And the notion of the *look* or the *gaze*, and associations with shame's etymology in the notion of hiding and covering oneself before the intrusive gaze of the other, are foremost in one's mind.

But then, in reflecting on the issue under slightly different circumstances, we realise that the gaze of an actual other is not always necessary. Our thoughts turn to Sartre's voyeur, who, while peeking through a keyhole jumps at the sound of footsteps in the corridor. The voyeur is overcome with shame at what he now recognises to be this vulgar act. The actual other, or the other's look, is then represented, once removed from an actual other. But now the look and an actual other do not essentially feature. The answer to our initial question is still, broadly, in the affirmative, but we should want to resist the notion of *actuality* when specifying the other: an *imagined* actual other, or, that *representing* the actual other, will do. The question, therefore, should be: 'Is the real *or* imagined-to-be-real other essentially involved in shame?' And again, we shall answer in the affirmative.

However, a little further reflection reveals that if the other is only imagined as being real, in other words, if he is of my own making, then that which shames me in this unobserved situation, that is, the *shaming judgement*, derives from none other than myself. I have, quite literally, and not merely through my act, but through my self-derived, self-focused, reflexive

judgement, brought shame upon myself. We then suspect that it is not so much the imagined other, that shames one, but rather, what the imagined other helps one to do. That is, he helps injure or threaten one's sense of self-worth or self-value which contributes to one's shameful 'fall'. We find ourselves considering examples in which one's self-worth is bound to wholly individual pursuits. Take the production of a masterpiece, a commonly cited example, which no other will ever see. A perpetual failure to produce that masterpiece, through, say, one's unattainably high self-standards, may, amongst other things, issue in shame, or so one might think.

Now, if one's very own judgement is the independent cause and reason for one's own shameful fall, is it not the case that we should be answering the above question negatively? Is it not the case that the actual *or* imagined other is, after all, *not* essentially involved in shame? Do I really need the *other* in order to negatively evaluate myself? Is my belief that taints my self-image essentially dependent on the judgement of another? Answering these questions so as to exclude the necessity of the other means that something of a contradiction seems to have been derived between our first two explanations and the last explanation of shame. If not that, at least a tension emerges between characterisations of shame: those that essentially involve the other, and those that do not. The tension, then, is about how the notion of the other is, or seems to be, an essential feature in some instances of shame, yet not to others.

The nature of this tension will be the central question of this thesis. Let us note at the outset that I shall resist what is also a knee-jerk response to these negative replies: the response that claims that the other is in fact an essential feature of shame. This response stems from the view that shaming judgements, even if entirely *self*-focused and self-derived, necessarily come to us either in the *form* of an other's judgement or, they necessarily involve beliefs about the *other's* view of one. Simply put, this view maintains the notion of the other is already part of the very essence of shame.

*But that view is to presuppose the role of otherness at issue here.* It may be that otherness is part of the structure of shame, but that, I am claiming, needs first to be established, not least of all, for two reasons that this brief introduction should have highlighted. First, an account of shame should carefully distinguish between the presence of an actual other; the actual other's judgement; the imagined-to-be-real other, the imaginary other; the imagined or hypothesised judgement of the other; our own self-derived judgements and finally, the form and content of these shaming judgements. And, secondly, given that these distinctions are not usually made or made entirely clear, the potential for confusion and overlap is quite substantial and should not, therefore, be underestimated.



### 1.1.2 The proposed solution

What emerges when we start to think about shame is that the role of the other is unclear; it is unclear whether it is essential, and if it is, in what ways it is. I will propose that the problem, as stated, manifests a tension because it is underspecified. Any 'tension', therefore, will not be resolved by, say, directly refuting one or other side of the tension. Rather, the problem will be shown to be more complex by characterising shame in a way that involves certain elements not usually employed in discussions of shame, but in a way that does justice to the urge to describe shame in these seemingly opposing ways.

In a sense, then, I replace, and to some degree, explain away the tension. This will be done with the addition of a plausible, commonsensical specification of shame's object: the *self* or rather, one's *sense of self*. On that specification, this non-metaphysical 'self' has two aspects: the first involves the *other*, and the second, does not. However, both 'self-aspects' are not only mutually compatible, but also mutually dependent. In this way, I shift the characterising focus of shame from the *other* to the *self*, in an attempt to explain away the tension.

## 1.2 The argument

There are many diverse approaches to shame. They encompass those of biology, ethnology, sociology, and numerous psychological and psychoanalytic perspectives, not to mention those of philosophy. Given such diversity, there is the question as to whether shame represents a single, unified category or an umbrella term for many diverse, and incommensurate categories. That question, not surprisingly, is immensely difficult to answer, requiring not only much interdisciplinary work and knowledge, but also a suitably accommodating methodology.

But we need not engage with that question; my aim here is not to unify diverse approaches, but to glean what is helpful from them in coming to understand the philosophical implications of the *experience* of shame; an experience about, and of, the *self* and, one that manifests a tension in different philosophical (and psychological) characterisations of the phenomenon. That understanding does not require a methodology that synthesises diverse approaches, just one that is receptive to shame's experiential complexity. I *initially* divide these characterisations of shame (deriving from different characterisations) according to the significance attributed to the role of the *other*, whether real, imagined, 'internalised' or 'externalised'.

My argument begins with claims that I consider to be relatively uncontroversial. These claims gather support from different approaches to shame, their mutual compatibility and explanatory potential, I take it, adding to their plausibility. In chapter 2, I survey numerous accounts and characterisations of shame. Chapter 3 will show how a key tension appears to emerge between these characterisations, as the shaming judgement is considered. Chapter 4 will seek to make sense of that tension, culminating in our own, positive characterisation of shame.

### 1.3 Clarification of terms

Let us clarify three possible sources of confusion in characterisations of shame. First, shame (and guilt<sup>8</sup>) appear under two headings in the literature, each of which is distinguished by whether they appear as the *explanans* or *explananda* in certain explanations. It is important to be clear about the heading under which we shall be considering shame here, as they are sometimes conflated. The first is associated with the subject area of ethnology<sup>9</sup>, and its related approaches to phenomena in which guilt and shame feature as the *explanans* in ethnological explanations. Here, shame and guilt are considered as *objective conditions* of other phenomena. This means that guilt and shame concepts are used to classify the antecedent causes or conditions in the explanation of ethnological phenomena. Regarded as such, they are loosely termed ‘objective’. So for example, one may view the ethnological notion of shame as a *condition* of condemnation or dishonour<sup>10</sup> such that ‘one is ashamed if condemned’. Equally, guilt may be viewed as a condition of just or deserved punishment such that ‘one is justly punished if guilty’.

We can immediately see how some ethnological classifications follow from the social norms and practices that are the consequents of one or other of these distinct conditions of guilt or shame. Cultural groups that value the notion of justice most highly tend to be guilt-orientated, while cultural groups that place most value on a sense of social honour tend to be shame-orientated. Numerous anthropologists<sup>11</sup> have distinguished between Eastern and Western ethnologies by making use of the opposition between what has been labelled a ‘guilt-culture’ and a ‘shame-culture’.

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<sup>8</sup> I compare shame with guilt merely for the purposes of exegesis.

<sup>9</sup> Ethnology is the scientific or causal study of human groups and their *relations* to one another. Ethnological phenomena consist in such things as social norms, practices and beliefs.

<sup>10</sup> The *justificatory* relationships between guilt and punishment and, shame and condemnation are normative and accordingly, non-ethnological as defined here.

<sup>11</sup> E.g., Mead (1937), Benedict, R. (1947).

There are, also, many philosophers<sup>12</sup> who have, more or less, employed this ethnological distinction as the basis of a *moral* one, namely, between guilt and shame moralities, as for example, in explanations of ancient Greek cultures and their moral systems and, more recently, as a means of characterising contemporary Western morality. That Western culture is a 'guilt-culture', as diametrically opposed to a 'shame-culture' associated with the Eastern hemisphere, is regarded as a commonplace.<sup>13</sup> It is, however, a classification often made with minimal grasp of the complexities of 'guilt' and 'shame'. For instance, the classification is sometimes made by seeing which motivational basis (i.e., guilt or shame) can best explain subjects' behaviour. This is done, somewhat crudely, by associating guilt with an internalised 'conscience', and shame with an external public standard.

The latter psychological characterisation of shame as being associated with an external and public standard, as we shall see, has had some influence on contemporary accounts of shame.<sup>14</sup> But that characterisation should not be taken as read; nor is suitable as the basis of an ethnological description.<sup>15</sup> This is because the 'shame-culture'-'guilt culture' distinction is made to turn on an inaccurate psychological description of the states, guilt and shame.<sup>16</sup>

Under the second heading, shame and guilt are considered as *internal states* in which they feature as the *explananda* in psychological or psychologically related explanations. Under this heading, shame and guilt are regarded as subjective, psychological and occurrent states. For example, shame may be viewed as arising together with a threat or injury to one's self-worth or, the result of a belief about one's flawed character. This can occur, for instance, when one faces up to the realisation that one has committed a serious wrong, negatively reflecting on the sense of who one takes oneself to be. Shame, *under this latter heading*, shall be the central focus of this thesis.

The second potential source of confusion arises because there is a dual aspect to the phenomenon of shame that is not always made clear. Under the first aspect, shame is regarded as something negative, painful and to be avoided. Under the second aspect, shame is regarded as something which is all of these things, but with 'positive' consequents, some of which take on moral significance, such as deterring morally shameful behaviour and, positive, first-personal antecedents, such as integrity, self-respect, and moral sensitivity. So, for

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<sup>12</sup> E.g., Dodds. (1951) And more recently, Williams (1993), Baier (1993), Gibbard (1992).

<sup>13</sup> Typically, one appeals to Judeo-Christianity's influence on Western culture and morality with the religious prioritisation of 'sin' and accompanying 'guilt'. This view, however, makes parallel assumptions in need of precisely the same kind of support that I will show is lacking in the ethnological classification between guilt and shame cultures.

<sup>14</sup> For example, Gehm et al (1988) associate shame with public exposure and guilt with private transgressions. p.74.

<sup>15</sup> For more on the inadequacy of the guilt-culture, shame-culture distinction, see Cairns (1993).

<sup>16</sup> '[T]here is little empirical support for the commonly held assumption that shame arises from public exposure of some failure or transgression whereas guilt arises from the more private pangs of one's internalized conscience.' Tangney & Dearing (2004) p.24.

example, the capacity for shame can be seen as a necessary component of moral sensitivity, when contrasted with an absence of shame following recognition of a wrongful deed or disposition. One side of this duality, taking the negative aspect first, refers to the occurrent state or *emotion* of shame. The other side, the positive aspect, refers to what is usually called a '*sense of shame*', or a '*sensibility towards shame*', a shameful '*disposition*' or '*trait*', or, '*shame-proneness*', that is, one's propensity to (appropriately<sup>17</sup>) experience the occurrent state of shame.

To help bring out this duality in shame, it will be useful to briefly consider this passage from Spinoza. Here, we shall witness how a more contemporary definition of a *sense of shame* has assumed a meaning once granted to '*modesty*'. He writes,

Shame is pain accompanied by the idea of some action of our own which we imagine others to blame...But we should here remark the difference which exists between shame and modesty. Shame is the pain following the deed whereof we are ashamed. Modesty is the fear or dread of shame, which restrains a man from committing a base action. Modesty is usually opposed to shamelessness, but the latter is not an emotion...<sup>18</sup>

Implied here are the notions self-assessment, self-blame and, note, the essential reference to '*others*' - things that we shall return to. This passage highlights both the dispositional, '*positive*' aspect, labelled here as '*modesty*'; and, the occurrent, '*negative*' aspect, labelled here as '*shame*'. Spinoza maintains that the former is not an emotion because it merely it involves the '*fear or dread*' of the '*negative*' emotion, it is considered to be a faculty or a capacity for anticipating the conditions in which shame will arise in order to restrain base action. But it does not necessarily entail the experience of the occurrent state itself.

Finally, a glance at some of the psychological and philosophical perspectives on the phenomena of shame qua a *psychological state*<sup>19</sup>, reveal an apparent conflict too, this time along a different plane. On the one hand, there is a pressure to think of shame as very sophisticated, possessing both normative and evaluative elements. It is widely accepted that shame is generally thought to arise when one fails to achieve a self-ideal. Guilt, which is closely bound with norm-transgression, is thought to arise when one violates held principles or endorsed social norms.

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<sup>17</sup> I.e., normatively.

<sup>18</sup> Spinoza (1934) p136.

<sup>19</sup> I.e., momentary feelings as opposed to dispositions or a propensity towards shame, which exclude the former.

On the other hand, there is pressure to think of shame (but perhaps less so with guilt) as rather primitive affective responses, manifesting themselves in various autonomic ways, such as blushing and increased heart rate and, through certain behavioural indicators, such as gaze-aversion, changes in one's facial expression, voice or posture. Such responses, however, are in evidence very early on in human life; before the cognitively complex notion of a norm or a self-ideal has been formed or adopted, and before the category of a *self-assessing* emotion, under which shame typically falls, has fully developed. For our present purposes, this latter and apparent conflict will be regarded as evidence of different variations of shame: one being the *protoemotion*, the other, being the 'complex' or mature emotion.

With these points in mind, let us move onto an overview of the emotion of shame.

## 2 A Brief Overview of Shame

‘Who, on the other hand, is not deeply mortified with reflecting on his own folly and dissoluteness, and feels not a secret sting or compunction whenever his memory presents any past occurrence, where he behaved with stupidity of ill-manners? No time can efface the cruel ideas of a man’s own foolish conduct, or of affronts, which cowardice or impudence has brought upon him. They still haunt his solitary hours, damp his most aspiring thoughts, and show him, even to himself, in the most contemptible and most odious colours imaginable.’ D. Hume *The Enquiries. Appendix. IV.*

In this chapter I introduce the emotion of shame in very broad and general terms. I look to its phenomenology, and give a brief account of the most important characteristic features and concepts that have been associated with shame. It is helpful to compare and contrast shame with its closely related counterpart, guilt, as well as showing how shame is related to notions of embarrassment and self-worth. However, such comparisons must be made with care and I do so only in limited ways. Shame often arises and overlaps with other emotions and states making any clear or absolute differentiation difficult. Furthermore, related notions, such as self-respect, often used to help explain shame, are themselves subject to divergent and sometimes conflicting accounts. The ultimate aim of this chapter will be to draw out two characteristic features present in the various accounts of shame that will be surveyed. These features will appear under what I will later term, ‘heteronomous’ or ‘autonomous’ characterisations of shame. This can be crudely captured by whether reference to the other appears in shame’s characterising features.

### 2.1 Distinguishing guilt and shame

Guilt and shame often arise together and interact with each other. However, numerous psychologists have claimed that instances of shame are often and mistakenly assimilated to guilt.<sup>20</sup> A number of reasons for this have been suggested, none of which are altogether clear. These include the following: the problems of identifying (and hence differentiating) the constituents of guilt and shame; the tendency to reduce shame to a purely physiological, and more primitive reaction than guilt;<sup>21</sup> the fact that psychological and scientific language has paid

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<sup>20</sup> E.g., Lewis (1971), Erikson (1963).

<sup>21</sup> Nathanson (1992).

comparatively little attention to the 'inner-life' (typically associated with shame) as it has toward 'impulses' or 'drives' (more readily suited to an analysis of guilt);<sup>22</sup> the historical avoidance of shame from the psychoanalytic community<sup>23</sup> where, according to a number of commentators,<sup>24</sup> psychoanalysts, most notably Freud,<sup>25</sup> have failed to pay sufficient attention to the phenomenon of shame and have focused instead on the notion of guilt.

The effects of the foregoing factors on any general characterisations of both guilt and shame are hard to establish. It will take as read that such effects have generally resulted in shame's close association with guilt, whether or not the tendency has resulted in shame's assimilation to guilt. What is agreed, though, is that guilt and shame can and often do arise together and with overlapping antecedents and consequents. For example, one may feel ashamed over one's guilty conduct. Equally, guilt feelings may be experienced through or together with shameful shortcomings. Williams<sup>26</sup> cites an example of one who, in a moment of cowardice, lets someone down. Here, shame results in falling short of the self-ideal of being courageous and guilt results in violating what might be thought to be the moral norm of assisting another in need when reasonably able to do so. But there are also instances where shame can be used to deviate attention from one's guilt, such as when a child uses her shame and remorse to diffuse the anger of a punishing parent. We need, therefore, to be sensitive to the issues that beset any *absolute* distinction, indeed, it may be that none is possible.

Before we analyse shame, let us cite five of what appear to be the most widely accepted and influential philosophical and psychological views of shame and guilt. As we shall see, the following points are only very general and admit of numerous exceptions.

(i) Attached to shame is the concept of an ideal essential to one's self-conception, where a failure to attain that ideal results in shame. Attached to guilt is the concept of a (behavioural) rule or a norm.<sup>27</sup> When rules are transgressed, typically through wrongdoing or bringing about a bad state of affairs, guilt results.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Kaufman (1993) p.17.

<sup>23</sup> For one, 'Observers of psychopathology have likewise universally ignored shame in construing the sources of psychological disorder. They refer to drive conflicts, guilty impulses, interpersonal dynamics, cognitive self-statements, dysfunctional family systems, but not to shame.' *ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> E.g., Pines (1987) pp16-31. Retzinger (1998) pp.206-22. Kilborne (1992) p. 231.

<sup>25</sup> Pines (1987).

<sup>26</sup> Williams (1993) p.92.

<sup>27</sup> Piers and Singer (1953).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

(ii) Shame may take or involve a wider domain of objects than guilt. One reason is that guilt maintains closer causal ties to transgression than shame does to failure. This means that when guilt is experienced, one is *usually* causally responsible for the transgression; blameworthiness and intentional acts are not necessary conditions for shame, however.

(iii) Shame is orientated towards the self, which has failed to achieve its ideal state or end-goal. Guilt, meanwhile, is not so much directed towards the self as it is to one's acts or omissions or, the causes of transgression.<sup>29</sup> This has been tied to the view that shame involves *characterological* attributions of self-blame, while guilt involves *behavioural* attributions.<sup>30</sup>

(iv) Guilt induces the tendency to take reparative action. As such, it is usually closely tied with seeking to recompense the 'victim' of one's transgression. Shame, however, induces the tendency to instigate a change within ourselves, such as some form of 'self-development' or reformation of character.<sup>31</sup> Thus, shame is less closely bound with the idea of compensation.

(v) Finally, it is often claimed that the experience of shame is triggered by the 'look' of the other, generating the desire to hide.<sup>32</sup> Guilt is triggered by the 'voice', generating the desire to compensate the victim.

With these rough distinctions in mind, let us now try to piece together some of the notions involved in the emotion of shame.

## 2.2 The emotion of shame

In the contemporary literature on shame, one often finds that shame is described in causal terms (sometimes it is traced over an extended causal history) and, that shame serves particular functions. For our purposes, I will broach shame's causes through the more general category of shame's antecedents. Shame's antecedents and functions, therefore, will comprise our explanatory points of departure.

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<sup>29</sup> Lewis (1971) p.30.

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Janoff-Bulman (1979).

<sup>31</sup> Heller (1985) p.28.

<sup>32</sup> Shame's associations with 'avoidance' derive from its etymology in the idea of 'hiding' or 'protection' from being seen by the other. Nathanson (1987). p8.



From here, a dividing line will be drawn between shame's antecedents and functions according to whether the notion of the other essentially features in these explanations. Accounts which make the other essential to shame tend to highlight shame's *interpersonal* functions and the importance of social-esteem. Accounts in which the other is inessential tend to highlight shame's *intrapersonal* functions and the importance of negative *self*-evaluation or assessment (independently of reference to the other).

I shall distinguish between shame's *psychological*, *causal* and *conceptual* antecedents: distinctions that are not always made clear, nor always found in various accounts of shame. As we proceed, I shall indicate on which side of our dividing line shame falls. But first, let us consider the *function* normally ascribed to shame.

### 2.2.1 Shame's function

A functional explanation is generally taken to be an explanation of something in terms of its function or role. Many philosophers describe the emotions as serving some role<sup>33</sup> or, as aiming at some *telos*<sup>34</sup> within a causal system. One such *telos* or function, it is often held, is to provide a person with an orientation or an attitude towards an object or an event.<sup>35</sup> Emotions may, for instance, orientate one towards that which has an effect on one's well-being, such as when fear protects one from an object perceived as dangerous. In fact, a more specific way of characterising the emotions is by showing how they serve self-regulatory functions critical to the individual's interpersonal or intrapersonal well-being.<sup>36</sup> We may ascribe numerous functions to shame: the development of the self, socialisation and social-distancing.<sup>37</sup> But the general function of shame (and guilt) from both internal and social perspectives can be thought of as that of *self-protection*, a theme which finds expression in many philosophical accounts of shame.<sup>38</sup> The failure to avoid exposure or to protect the self, it is maintained, can result in a loss of integrity, self-respect or self-worth.

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<sup>33</sup> I do not distinguish, as some philosophers of biology do, between 'functions', which refer to causal relations as logically independent from 'purposes', which are ascribed or attributed to a thing *by* someone.

<sup>34</sup> I do not mean to exclude purely instrumental functions, which may have no immediate end but serve further ends as part of a more complex teleological system. An example would be the function of an act of imagination.

<sup>35</sup> For e.g., de Sousa, (1987), Rorty (1980). pp.103-126.

<sup>36</sup> Functionalist approaches to the emotions often make this claim. E.g., Barrett (1995).

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* p.41.

<sup>38</sup> Taylor (1985), for example, calls shame the emotion of self-protection. p.81. Wollheim (1999) and Williams (1993) agree. Guilt may be seen as serving a self-protective function to the extent that it, together with shame, are aspects of the phenomenon of *anxiety*. The function of anxiety, most psychologists agree, is that of self-protection.

### **Shame's interpersonal function**

It is often maintained that shame protects oneself from the condemning other, and from the emotional discomfort or pain that accompanies one's failure or transgression in that condemnation. However, interpersonal functional ascriptions seem to conflate the emotion of shame with a sensibility towards shame (an oversight we prepared ourselves for in §1.5). Under the interpersonal function, it is not the occurrent, psychological *state* of shame, but the *prospect or threat* of shame, an awareness of which helps to comprise one's *sensibility towards shame*, that protects the self from painful exposure before others. It is not that the occurrent state of shame protects the self; shame itself, as we shall go on to show, involves exposure and revelation, not protection.

The *effect* of shame, however, can help to motivate the avoidance of that which has shamed one, to hide or to avoid contact with others, or it can help motivate a practical change in one's attitude. But avoidance or change is not the antecedent *reason* for why shame arises, we do not feel shame because there exists something to be avoided— avoidance occurs only *after* the event. Thus, this interpersonal ascription of protection from the other is referring primarily to shame's dispositional cognates, not to the emotion of shame. Williams, in his account of shame, equates the function of self-protection with a reaction to a loss of power. He writes, "A *sense of shame* is a reaction of the subject to the consciousness of [a] loss [of power]: in Gabriele Taylor's phrase... 'the emotion of self-protection.'"<sup>39</sup> But let us observe, Williams does not, unlike Taylor, make the mistake of attributing that function to the emotion, but rightly attributes it to the disposition.

### **Shame's intrapersonal function**

To say that the prospect of shame serves the intrapersonal function of self-protection is to presuppose quite a lot. For one, it presupposes that which merits or needs protection, such as that which one esteems or values. Given that we are speaking at the intrapersonal level, we can fairly easily see that one's self-worth, at this *intimate*, as opposed to social, level could be that object of protection. But until we deal with the notion of self-worth (our next task) it is hard to stipulate just what the disposition of shame is protecting at this intimate level. Amongst other things, a more detailed account of the sense in which the self, or rather, aspects of the self feature at that level is also demanded, if not just to support the idea of self-value. But the notion of that sense of self, the precondition of self-value, is, rather tendentiously, often left vague, or worse, not defined

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<sup>39</sup> Williams (1993) p.220. My emphasis.

at all. An explanation of this sense of self will be another task that we shall need to perform before we are through.

We shall deal with the notions of self-value, self-esteem and self-respect in what follows. What functionalist accounts tell us is that, given that a sensibility to shame serves the role of self-protection, the emotion of shame is expressive of a harmful exposure. We shall deal with this below.

### 2.2.2 Shame's antecedents

Two of the most commonly mentioned antecedent conditions of shame are 'self-respect' (or 'self-worth' or 'self-esteem'), sometimes assumed to be shame's *psychological* antecedent and the 'other' sometimes assumed to be shame's *causal* antecedent (or event-cause).

It is not uncommon to find shame defined as the emotion which arises when one's regard for oneself is lowered before an audience or other.<sup>40</sup> Such definitions fall on one side of our aforementioned divide: the side on which the other is assumed to be a necessary condition. On the other side, the side in which the other is not assumed to be a necessary condition, we find also the idea of a *negative* assessment or appraisal of oneself but this time independently of the other's regard. On both sides, however, we find the very same cognitive antecedent: a belief or a judgement about the self.<sup>41</sup> That antecedent belief or judgement will be referred to as the *shaming judgement* but we shall defer its analysis until the next chapter. Let us now deal with the first side of our divide, where the other essentially features.

#### The Other

The notion of the Other in shame features prominently in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*,<sup>42</sup> Descartes' *The Passions of the Soul*<sup>43</sup> and Spinoza's *Ethics*.<sup>44</sup> Numerous accounts of shame since then, ranging from those of empirical psychology, psychoanalysis and functionalism, through to the phenomenological characterisations of Sartre and more contemporary philosophers and

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<sup>40</sup> For example, Sartre (1953), Williams (1993), Wollheim (1999), Deigh (1983), Scruton (1986), Stocker (1996).

<sup>41</sup> I do not include vicarious shame, which takes another person as its object.

<sup>42</sup> 'Generally, we feel shame before those for whose own misconduct we should also feel it...' Book II, Chapter VI. However, Aristotle, in this text, seems to leave open the possibility that shame can be felt, albeit to a lesser degree, if a thing is not done before men's eyes. 'And we feel *more shame* about a thing if it is done openly, before all men's eyes...' Also, he defines shame as discredit, which need not necessarily involve the other.

<sup>43</sup> Shame is 'the evil...that is or has been in us that is referred to the opinion that others may have of it'. Part II, article LXVI.

<sup>44</sup> 'Shame is pain accompanied by the idea of some action of our own which we imagine others to blame...' Part III, XXXI.

psychologists, have laid heavy emphasis on the role and place of the *other*. That role gives shame its distinctive social and, what I shall be calling, 'heteronomous' aspect.

For Sartre, shame facilitates the discovery of oneself in both the intrapersonal<sup>45</sup> and the interpersonal realm.<sup>46</sup> Shame, accordingly, is a concern for how I appear before the other, and through this concern I become aware of myself and others in that social space. This aspect, it should be noted for later, appears in contrast to the social independence and 'autonomy' that guilt and shame, quite independently, have also been described as possessing.

A natural starting point in the analysis of the other in shame is in its genesis in the individual. Let us briefly consider this.

### The protoemotion - early formations of shame

The exact point at which a *primitive* shame emerges in the infant is debated amongst psychologists. Some believe it arises when the infant develops muscular control over their bodies and bodily functions<sup>47</sup> (a more autonomous construal). Others maintain it arises with the control the newly born has over eye-contact with its care-giver<sup>48</sup> (a more heteronomous construal). In the latter, the initial grounds for shame are thought to lie in the infant's first recognition of the other as distinct from itself. This is thought to occur when the infant suffers disappointment for the first time.

For example, some functionalist approaches<sup>49</sup> to the development of shame maintain that during infancy, shame serves to subdue the affect of excitement when a social interaction is thwarted. A primitive form of the shame-affect first occurs when the infant's wishes or desires are not met with the expected response upon interaction with its caregiver. The other is introduced as a primary component in these accounts because coupled with the infants initial shame-state is a primitive awareness of something that interferes with its own satisfaction of a desire or wish; an awareness of the 'other' which lies beyond what the infant comes to recognise as its bodily-self.

This is one reason why Nathanson and Barrett, for example, think that shame is responsible for creating the distinction, in the mind of the infant, between the self and the other, from which self-recognition and the first notions of the self arise. These close links with the early recognition of the self help to explain why shame has been described as such a powerful and disturbing emotion.

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<sup>45</sup> 'Shame reveals to me that I am this being.' Sartre (1958) p.262.

<sup>46</sup> 'Shame is shame of oneself before the Other; these two structures are inseparable' *ibid.* p.222.

<sup>47</sup> Erikson (1963) pp.252-254.

<sup>48</sup> Nathanson (1987) pp.1-63.

<sup>49</sup> Schore (1991), Tomkins (1987), Barret (1995).

Furthermore, it seems that the derivation of one's initial notion of self occurs because of the other. The other, in *developmental terms*, is a causal antecedent of these initial conceptions of the self. And, because in all accounts of shame, the self, unlike the notion of the actual or imagined other, is always considered to be a logically<sup>50</sup> and psychologically necessary condition of shame, one might wish to claim that the other is always necessarily (albeit indirectly) causally involved in all instances of shame.

However, that last claim is only a very weak one. In the *development* of primitive shame, we can agree that the other is causally necessary; and, later on, the other may sometimes be a causally sufficient condition of a more mature shame, (i.e., the other may be the trigger of shame). But while the causal chain may be traced back to an actual other, that is yet to say whether shame's *psychological* or *conceptual* antecedents also necessarily involve an actual or imagined other. For example, given that the sense in which the self is regarded is thought to radically change throughout the life-span of shame,<sup>51</sup> this will have implications for the role of the other too.

One point worth flagging here is that the content of primitive shame will be less cognitively 'rich' or 'complex' than, say a more mature form of shame. Consider, for example, the fear one experiences when an unexpected person is standing in the doorway, only to realise that that person is the friend we invited earlier. We might think that the initial reaction of fear is the result of a more 'simple' cognition, perhaps with non-propositional content, such as the perception of event, or a conditioned response to a potential threat. The recognition of one's friend, which is the latter 'richer' cognition, makes one aware that there is after all no 'threat' and that one's earlier fearful response was unwarranted.

It is reasonable to think that this more basic cognition may arise together with or before<sup>52</sup> the more 'complex' cognition in shame.<sup>53</sup> I shall say more about this in what I call the 'apprehension of negativity' below.

## A mature shame

Several accounts of shame may be captured by the following generalisation: shame arises when one's regard for oneself is lowered *before an other*. As the historical accounts of Aristotle,

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<sup>50</sup> It is logically necessary because the idea of an emotion without a subject of experience is incoherent.

<sup>51</sup> This is supported by the clinical findings of Tangney and Dearing (2005).

<sup>52</sup> A primitive shame affect may induce the complex emotion, such that it becomes part of the latter emotion's cause. This has also been described as shame's 'recursive' aspect by Scheff (1990).

<sup>53</sup> This section derives some support from the brain-sciences. It is claimed that different neural pathways intercede emotional stimuli and responses. The thalamic neural pathway yields immediate, imprecise and unfiltered emotional responses. The cortical pathway yields delayed, but more precise, recognition and prevention of inappropriate emotional responses. See, for example, LeDoux (1996) pp163-5.

Descartes, and Spinoza maintained, shame involves the opinion of others, and often issues before the seeing other.

Sartre is a proponent of the view that shame essentially involves the other, not just in causal terms, but in conceptual<sup>54</sup> ones. He maintains that shame, in its primary structure, is shame *before somebody*.<sup>55</sup> 'I recognise that I am as the Other sees me...I am ashamed of myself as I appear to the Other'.<sup>56</sup> And, these structures of oneself and the other are, as he puts it, 'inseparable'. Of course, Sartre has a detailed ontological story to tell about the structures of consciousness, where shame is cited as an example of something that shares that structure. We need not explore Sartre's reasons, however.

### Embarrassment

It is worth comparing a mature shame before the other, with embarrassment, because the two emotions are closely related. Sometimes shame and embarrassment are used synonymously;<sup>57</sup> sometimes, shame is regarded as a special case of embarrassment.<sup>58</sup> The reason for this close connection is because shame *before the other* and embarrassment can be seen to share the same structure, but there are some subtle differences that point towards a fairly clear distinction.

First, both emotions are 'self-conscious' requiring a degree of self-focus and self-awareness.<sup>59</sup> Second, both require an audience, but what distinguishes embarrassment from shame before another is that the audience in the former must be *actual* or believed to be actual.<sup>60</sup> For example, tripping over one's shoelaces while running for a bus full of watching people can be a source of embarrassment for as long as one is being watched, but not necessarily shame; while tripping over one's shoelaces in private, while not issuing in embarrassment or shame, can issue in feelings of clumsiness or stupidity.

Third, the objects of embarrassment can be the same as that of shame but, typically, the objects of one's embarrassment tend not to touch one's 'core' values, or reveal characterological shortcomings. In this respect, the objects of embarrassment are more closely related to guilt, insofar as embarrassment usually takes one's actions, as opposed to the self, as its object. That is not to deny, however, that one's public self-representation or public self-image cannot be the

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<sup>54</sup> Or, phenomenological terms. I do not take anything of any importance to turn on the difference in the *meaning* one derives from the use of conceptual or phenomenological terms.

<sup>55</sup> (1958) p.221.

<sup>56</sup> Sartre (1958) p.222.

<sup>57</sup> Scheler (1987).

<sup>58</sup> Scruton (1986). for example.

<sup>59</sup> As Nietzsche nicely puts it, 'If you are always profoundly occupied, you are beyond all embarrassment.' GS 254.

<sup>60</sup> Taylor (1985) p.69.

object of one's embarrassment. And this latter point should be borne in mind, for it will re-emerge in what is to come.

Finally, one of the most revealing differences between embarrassment and shame is to be found in its 'cure'. As Ho et al<sup>61</sup> put it, curing embarrassment requires no 'therapeutic intervention' - it simply goes away by itself after one regains one's composure; shame on the other hand, is extremely difficult to come to terms with; a consequence of the third point above. These points should suffice for our analysis of embarrassment.

In summary, this section on the Other has revealed a good degree of psychological and philosophical consensus in the literature on the essentially social nature of shame. However, and this needs to be emphasised, considerations in support of it have not appeared to be forthcoming. In the following chapter, we shall explore some possible reasons for positing the necessity of the other. Now, let us turn to the opposite side of our divide where the other is not a necessary feature in explanations of shame.

### 2.2.3 Self-worth

Hume, in this chapter's opening quotation, vividly characterises the phenomenological 'pain' and 'sting' of shame or 'impudence.'<sup>62</sup> There, he describes many of the features we have touched upon concerning the recognition of one's failure and failures, and the 'dampening' of one's aspirations. But, importantly, these thoughts can 'haunt' one's '*solitary hours*', and reveal, 'even to himself', the self in the most contemptible and odious colours. The sting of compunction, regret, guilt and, I take it, shame are felt '*secretly*'.

Many accounts of shame, while recognising that shame is sometimes usefully characterised as involving the actual or imagined other, maintain that shame should not be *understood* in that way.<sup>63</sup> Such accounts appear on the other side of our divide, the side where the actual or imagined other is inessential to the explanation of shame. This view derives support from clinical studies also, where shame has been found to occur independently of an audience.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> (2004) p.11.

<sup>62</sup> Sometimes called 'immodesty'.

<sup>63</sup> Stocker (1996) makes this point in reference to the accounts of Williams (1993) and Taylor (1985). p.219. Scheler (1987). maintains that 'Shame is not...exclusively a *social* feeling. The term shame can originally refer to having '*shame of one's own self*'...Even one's knowing oneself to be seen by someone else is not yet a condition for shame. p.15.. Aristotle makes the same claim: 'Shame may be defined as pain or disturbance in regard to bad things, whether present, past, or future, which seem likely to involve us in discredit...If this definition be granted, it follows that we feel shame at such bad things as we think are disgraceful to ourselves...' *Rhetoric* Bk.II:6

<sup>64</sup> Tangney & Dearing (2004) 'Although shame and guilt were *both* most often experienced in the presence of others (among children and adults), a substantial number of respondents reported shame experiences occurring alone – when

Further, where there was an audience, which was unaware of the shamed, shame was found to occur independently of a *judging* audience.<sup>65</sup>

In such accounts, definitions of shame may be generalised in the following way: shame arises with the *diminishment* of one's self-regard, self-worth or self-respect,<sup>66</sup> where the latter is thought of as shame's *psychological* antecedent. The 'other', note, is not necessarily implied as a *causal* antecedent in these accounts. It remains to be seen, however, whether the other is a crucial conceptual antecedent.<sup>67</sup> One's self-worth has more basic preconditions, such as a 'sense of self' and 'self-consciousness', notions which we shall consider later. For now, let us deal with 'self-worth' in fairly superficial terms.

Under the heading 'self-worth' I include the notions of self-respect (or self-esteem) and integrity. Each of these make reference to self-identifications or conceptions of the self, which I take to contribute to the notion of what I have been calling one's sense of self. On an archaic reading, 'respect' means 'to face' or 'to look at'. This is the anti-thesis of shame's associations with 'avoidance', and etymological source<sup>68</sup> found in the idea of 'hiding' or 'protection'. The idea of avoidance and of 'saving face' has a distinctive social element that most, if not all, historical accounts are characterised by. This social element, however, is only one side of what it means to value one's self; it is unreasonable to think that one's self-worth depends *only* on how one is perceived by others. Under this non-social construal, self-respect is intimately related to integrity.

### Self-respect and Integrity

Accounts of shame that emphasise self-respect tie shame to a *loss* of self-worth or respect.<sup>69</sup> Before the experience of shame, one must first possess a sense of one's value or worth as a person.<sup>70</sup> (This, recall, is one of the things that characterises the positive aspect of shame's 'dual' nature.) A life devoid of self-worth would inhibit our ability to derive meaning or to value ourselves as moral selves, interfering with our inter-personal relationships and severely limiting our intrapsychic well-being.

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*not* in the presence of others. More important, 'solitary' shame was about as prevalent as 'solitary' guilt. p.14. Furthermore, that autonomous shame exists where the other's *judgement* is not involved or conveyed is also supported in cases where an observer was present, but clearly unaware of the shamed respondents' behaviour, who knew that the observer was unaware.p.15.

<sup>65</sup> Tangney, Miller, et al. (1996).

<sup>66</sup> For example, Rawls (1999), Elster (1999), G.Taylor (1985), Isenberg (1949), Roberts (2003).

<sup>67</sup> Taylor (1985) supports O'Hear (1976) in the claim that an observer is not part of the *content* of the thought of the shamed. P.58.

<sup>68</sup> See Nathanson above. Etymological analysis is not always reliable but it is informative in the case of shame.

<sup>69</sup> See, for example, G. Taylor (1985) p.131, Rawls (1999) p.389.

<sup>70</sup> Rawls (1999) p.389.



The notion of self-respect figures prominently in Kant's ethics<sup>71</sup> and Rawls' *A Theory of Justice*. But there is much debate as to what self-respect or self-esteem<sup>72</sup> actually consists in. We need not analyse this complex phenomenon but we can, for our present purposes, settle with a general psychological characterisation: self-respect is an evaluative construct representing how one generally regards and evaluates the self over an extended period of time and across a range of situations.<sup>73</sup> Shame, in contrast, is an *emotion*, which is to say, a psychological (cognitive and affective) *state*. This state, on the reading marking the side of our divide where the other is inessential, involves a negative assessment of the self for a *specific* failure or transgression, at a particular instant.<sup>74</sup> Repeated incidents of shame can appear to erode one's self-esteem; and low self-esteem provides good ground for shame-feelings. There is not, however, a necessary and direct correspondence between one's overall level of self-esteem and shame-feelings. For example, some people who have high-self esteem may not have a great propensity towards feeling shame, and people with low self-esteem may rarely experience shame. The reason for this is that the relationship between shame and self-esteem is enhanced or diminished by numerous other social and psychological factors, such as oppressive or constructive personal relations, one's inabilities or abilities, or perceived positive attributes or defects, all of which may help form one's self-image or self-representations.

Through the demise of one's self-respect, shame is linked to integrity.<sup>75</sup> There is also disagreement as to what the notion of integrity involves but we can take integrity to be reflected in the way in which parts of one's internal psychological environment are mutually supported. Integrity is that which unites<sup>76</sup> one's self-conceptions, that is, a conception of one's ideals and aims combined with a belief about one's ability to realise them.<sup>77</sup> One might think that one's self-conception is constructed through *identifying* oneself with one's higher-order desires, aims or ideals from which some kind of well-being or 'flourishing' is then made possible.<sup>78</sup> As Taylor maintains, 'Lack of integrity does not mean lack of overall unity, of sets of identifications which all cohere with each other. It means the mutual undermining of identifications.'<sup>79</sup>

A lack of integrity, then, inhibits the development and flourishing of the self; desires conflict, there is dissonance and dissolution of those things that one identifies with one's higher-

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<sup>71</sup> *The Metaphysics of Morals* (1797) and *The Groundwork*.

<sup>72</sup> I follow Rawls (1999) and use these terms interchangeably.

<sup>73</sup> Tangney et al (2004) p.57.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> Taylor (1985). p.131.

<sup>76</sup> Not to be thought of as the perfect integration of every aspect of one's life in moralistic purity. For more. see Cox .La Caze and Levine (2003).

<sup>77</sup> Taylor (1985) p.131, Rawls (1999) p.389.

<sup>78</sup> Taylor (1985) p.129, Frankfurt (1987), p.39.

<sup>79</sup> Taylor (1985) p.129.

order desires.<sup>80</sup> This makes respecting or valuing one's self difficult. The object of one's self-respect, that is, some conception of the self<sup>81</sup>, needs to take a coherent form, the parts of which need to be sufficiently mutually supportive of one's value-attributions. We should also add that one who possesses integrity is thereby open to the possibility of shame. And, one might think, an absence of shame, given a loss of integrity, indicates a certain lack of integrity to begin with.<sup>82</sup>

But the experience of shame reveals that an actual loss of self-respect is not necessary for shame, such as when the mere or perceived threat to one's self-respect is sufficient to cause a shameful reaction. For example, we can feel shame even when no actual loss of self-respect has occurred or is warranted, such as when we do not sympathise with the opinion or the reasons of the 'other' or, when we know we could not have been or done otherwise. These are issues that we must reserve until the following chapter.

## 2.2.4 Self-assessment and negative evaluation

Shame is widely regarded as an emotion of *self-assessment*.<sup>83</sup> This is usually taken to mean, firstly, that the self, in some general, non-metaphysical sense, is the object of one's emotion; and secondly, that beliefs about the self are objects of one's evaluative assessment.<sup>84</sup> The latter are cognitive antecedents that pervade almost all accounts of shame: *a belief or a judgement about the self* or one's character.

Taylor illustrates the case for shame as an emotion of self-assessment (the title of her book) in which the imagined or actual other is unnecessary. She writes,

'[I]t is...not necessary for feeling shame that the agent believe or imagine there to be some observer who views him under some description. The actual or imagined observer may merely be the means of making the agent look at himself, he is in no way essential. What is essential is the shift in the agent's viewpoint *vis-à-vis* himself.'<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Rawls (1999) adds. 'Without [self-respect] nothing may seem worth doing, or if some things have value for us, we lack the will to strive for them. All desire and activity becomes empty and vain, and we sink into apathy and cynicism.' P.386

<sup>81</sup> I elaborate on this below.

<sup>82</sup> Cox, La Caze and Levine (2003) P.55.

<sup>83</sup> Taylor (1985), Rawls (1999), Sartre (1953) p.222. Velleman (2006). Scheff. (1990) p. 86. Lewis (1971). Tangney & Dearing (2005), Tangney and Fischer (1995),

<sup>84</sup> Taylor (1985) p.1.

<sup>85</sup> Taylor (1985) p.66. Taylor goes on to state that the notion of an audience is also necessary, but we are, for now, testing the possibility of an autonomous rendering of shame. In spite of that later claim, I follow Wollheim (1999) p.255n5. in maintaining that Taylor's account remains essentially 'autonomous'.

Numerous questions arise: What does this shift in one's point of view '*vis-à-vis* oneself' entail? One might think that a comparison between at least two distinctive elements within the self. But how are we to describe them? Taylor, for example, describes their *functions* as deriving from a critical assessor and the shamed, both functions of which can be fulfilled by the same individual.<sup>86</sup> These are questions we shall need to consider.

This self-assessing, *shaming* judgement shall be the topic of the following chapter. The notion of the self involved in one's shaming judgement will be explored in chapter 3. Let us round off this chapter with another important characteristic feature of shame.

## 2.2.5 Exposure and revelation

The notion of *exposure* is central to Bernard Williams' account of shame.<sup>87</sup> And, we can find the same dividing line present here too, marking out an essential reference to the other, or not. On the one hand, exposure is associated with visibility, hence its associations with 'the look' of the other in shame, where one's disvalue or discredit is brought into public view. But, on the other hand, one's awareness of the possibility of this visibility can elicit shame without the actual other, as things become 'visible' before one's self.

The latter claim ties in with the fact that exposure has a symbolic meaning also. The etymological root of 'expose' is to 'put out' or to 'place out'<sup>88</sup>. That shame can arise when something of worth is *displaced* beyond its normal context is a meaning that we should bear in mind for later. However exposure is to be defined though, it remains a relational term; one is always exposed with respect to some context. Only by specifying the transgressed boundaries of that context can something be understood as exposing.

The notion of *revelation* or realisation, closely bound with exposure, is a prominent theme in the biblical account of Adam's shame at disobedience to God. Adam and Eve, prior to eating from the 'tree of knowledge', were 'both naked, this man and his wife, and were not ashamed.'<sup>89</sup> After Adam's transgression, however, he became aware of his nakedness, and his shame revealed and exposed his new-found knowledge<sup>90</sup> through disobedience.

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<sup>86</sup> Taylor (1985) p.58.

<sup>87</sup> 'The root of shame lies in exposure...' Williams (1993), p220.

<sup>88</sup> *OED*.

<sup>89</sup> Genesis 3:7.

<sup>90</sup> Note the cognitive bias. Eating from the tree of 'passion' would have been more forgivable. See Heller (1985) p.29 on this point.

Insofar as shame involves the emergence of something of which one was previously unaware, or which went unacknowledged, the paradisaal account matches shame's phenomenology. Both Sartre<sup>91</sup> and Helen Lynd<sup>92</sup> maintain that the nature of the shameful reaction is one of revelation or recognition, where the self is brought before one's awareness. A painful self-realisation then ensues, and the revelation is of the form: this is what I *am*<sup>93</sup>; this is what I have *become*. It is not just that one has performed a wrongful action (like guilt) but that one lacks worth or is unworthy where one's character or person is irreversibly tainted as such. The notions of exposure and revelation will prove central to our positive characterisation of shame. We shall return to them later.

## 2.3 Summary

On one side of our divide, we found characterisations of shame maintaining that shame arises when one's self-regard is lowered *before an other*. On the opposite side of our divide, there were characterisations maintaining that shame arises when one's self-regard is diminished, independently of the other, or the other's internal relation to shame. There were no immediately obvious reasons for rejecting or dismissing characterisations on either side of the divide, making each side seem independently plausible. All of the characterisations, however, involved some cognitive component in a mature shame, an opinion, judgement or a belief, *about the self*. That component, for reasons linked to one's self-value, was painfully exposing and revelatory.

We said that shame's key intrapersonal and interpersonal function is that of self-protection. On an interpersonal level, this function manifests itself in behaviour aimed at, for example, avoidance of exposure or distancing oneself from a judging other. That 'other' might be represented in a number of ways that we shall discuss below, for instance, by an actual other, a group of people or, perhaps, an institution. But on an intrapersonal level, an external other, plays no direct role, and, by this fact, does not seem to be a necessary part in the explanation of shame as functioning to protect the intrapersonal realm, that is, one's self-esteem or self-value in its distinctly *self*-focused guise. This is because shame is now protecting aspects of the self, not from an other, but from other aspects of the same self, or so it would seem. From here on, the discussion becomes more complex and we still have not introduced the conceptual resources

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<sup>91</sup> 'Shame is by nature recognition. I recognise that I am as the Other sees me.' Sartre (1958) p.222.

<sup>92</sup> (1999) Chapter 2. Indeed, Lynd maintains that exposure need not involve others but may be just before 'one's own eyes.' p.28.

<sup>93</sup> 'Shame reveals to me that I am this being.' Ibid. p.262.

necessary to tackle these issues right now (even though, more often than not, they are introduced on the back of a 'folk' psychology, deriving from psychoanalysis).

We can, however, indicate this much: if we think that the other, in some form or capacity, is conceptually necessary, we will need to find a way of speaking about the other at the intrapersonal level. One way is by appealing to a partitive model of the mind or the self in which to include some conception of the 'other'<sup>94</sup>. This could mean that the other now appears in the form of an internal figure, a more generalised notion of the superego of psychoanalysis, such that shame protects the self from transgressions against the dictates of one's internalised authority figure or judging aspect of the self.

But the essential problem - the same problem addressed by this thesis, occurs before the jump to such broadly psychoanalytic explanations. It is bound to the philosophical question, which must first be asked: *must we posit the other, and in particular, the other's judgement, in an explanation of shame?* To help answer this question we may begin by identifying the specific role the other plays in the shaming judgement, and whether it is necessary. This will be the topic of the following chapter on heteronomy and autonomy.

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<sup>94</sup> The importance and need for such a conception is argued, for example, by Wollheim (1999) Lecture 3.

### 3 Heteronomy and Autonomy in Shame

Let us suppose that one's action issues in shame.<sup>95</sup> Do I feel shame merely because the other sees me in a bad light and judges me adversely? Is my shame, in other words, wholly dependent on the other's negative judgement of me, without which I would feel no shame? To put the point differently: Do I feel diminished only before the other? Does the good condition of my self-value, my self-esteem or self-worth, primarily depend on how others judge me? Affirmative answers to these questions fall under what we may call the 'heteronomy' of shame. Negative answers, fall under what we may call the 'autonomy' of shame.

Let us get some grip on the two key terms in this discussion. I provide working definitions to begin with, to be filled out as we proceed. 'Heteronomy', literally means, 'other-rule'. On a Kantian view<sup>96</sup>, heteronomy refers to a will that has been determined by external, 'impure' or non-rational powers or means.

For our purposes, when shame (or its cognates) are said to be heteronomous, it will be taken to mean, roughly, that the agent *is* subject to an external force or to the views of another being. In his *Shame and Necessity*, Bernard Williams regards 'heteronomous shame' (deriving from the Kantian usage of heteronomy)<sup>97</sup> as essentially dependent on what others think of one.<sup>98</sup> One might think that this idea of heteronomy is at work in shaming judgements which do not match one's inner convictions, or in the violation of standards which one does not seek to maintain, for any other reason than the prospect of being viewed negatively *by others*.<sup>99</sup> Under this aspect, shame and its constitutive values would seem to lack a certain depth; they can appear to be somewhat superficial and related only to 'saving face' before the social other. That is not to say, of course, that the prospect of this kind of 'social shame' cannot be a very powerful and overriding reason for action. Heteronomous shame will be thought of as tracking one's *social-esteem*.

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<sup>95</sup> For now, I put aside the *threat* of being caught in a shameful position. This is just the threat of an adverse judgement, which is the recognition of the *possibility* of injury. The account which follows applies in the same way for what is perceived as possible.

<sup>96</sup> I do not mean to imply that Kant's own view of heteronomy and autonomy was as clear-cut as these simplified definitions suggest. For interesting debate, see Hill, T. in Christman (1989), pp.91-105.

<sup>97</sup> Williams does so to draw the link between a 'narrow' conception of *morality*, that has its roots in a Kantian morality of duty, focused on action, reparation and guilt, as distinct from a more encompassing *ethic*, once embraced by the ancient Greeks, focused more on the self, character and shame.

<sup>98</sup> Williams (1993) p.81. Wollheim (1999) also uses the terms heteronomy and autonomy, but with slightly different meanings, relying more on the traditionally associated notion of authority as a defining characteristic.

<sup>99</sup> These themes will be explored below.

'Autonomy', on the other hand, literally, means 'self-rule' or 'self-legislating'. On a Kantian view, autonomy refers to the freedom of the will to govern itself through rationality (the correct ground of moral obligation) apart from the 'contaminating' influence of inclination or desire.

For our purposes, when shame (or its cognates) are said to be autonomous, it will be taken to mean that the agent is *not* subject to some external force or to the views and judgements of another being. Attached to this notion of autonomy is the idea that one's values are one's own; one finds the objects of one's values or standards worthwhile in themselves, by which is meant, independently of whether others disvalue those same objects.<sup>100</sup> In this way, autonomy is linked with a certain kind of authority: one is diminished in a very real sense because of the importance placed on how or what one regards oneself as *being* (as opposed to merely being seen) before that diminishment. In the course of maintaining one's self-regard or self-esteem, one must also be able to exercise control over one's desires and actions. An inner, autonomous shame arises, quite apart from the question of whether external, social constraints are in force. Autonomous shame will be thought of as tracking one's 'deeply held' convictions, or distinctive *self-esteem*, independently of heteronomous constraint.

The interesting questions centre around how the notions of the *other* and the *self* are to be interpreted and, given those interpretations, what should constitute 'heteronomy' and 'autonomy'. Answers to these questions will ultimately determine the way in which shame is characterised. To begin with, a simple way of capturing whether heteronomy and autonomy is characteristic of shame is by asking two questions about what I call the *shaming judgement*. The shaming judgement, recall, is shame's *cognitive* antecedent, and it involves a belief about one's sense of self (the latter of which may be comprised of one's self-image or self-representations). These questions are as follows:

1. Does the shaming judgement derive from an *actual* other? In other words, is an '*other-shaming judgement*' involved? And,
2. Does one concur with that shaming judgement?

We may say, as a first approximation, that answering 'yes' to the first question ('an *other-shaming judgement*') and 'no' to the second ('shaming *non-concurrence*'), gives us heteronomous

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<sup>100</sup> What we are calling 'autonomous' has been labelled 'intrinsic' by Roberts (2003) p.229.

shame. The problem for us, in this case, is in explaining what happens when our opinions and values diverge from that of the other, and shame is nonetheless experienced.

Answering 'no' to the first question (a '*self*-shaming judgement'), and 'yes' to the second ('shaming *concurrency*'), gives us autonomous shame.

But on which side (autonomous or heteronomous) does shame fall when we concur with an *other*-shaming judgement? Or, when we do not concur with a *self*-shaming judgement? It seems that our bi-polar characterisation is either too primitive or has omitted something.

As will have been observed, the case has been oversimplified by restricting the other to the domain of the actual. As we shall see, the story becomes increasingly complex as we widen the domain to include notions of the *imagined* and *internalised* other, the concept of the other and, the shaming judgements associated with these things.

Without further ado, let us outline our problem. This will be followed by specifying the various dimensions in which the notions of heteronomy and autonomy can be found to occur within shame. Exploring shame through these distinctions will structure our discussion.

### 3.1 The problem

Let us use some examples to outline the tension that emerges between autonomous and heteronomous *explanations* of shame. Let us begin with a 'primitive'<sup>101</sup> example of heteronomous shame. Think of being seen naked by a stranger. Nakedness as such is not an occasion for shame.<sup>102</sup> But nakedness before a stranger in a given context can elicit shame. Let us stress that shame is not caused simply in virtue of being seen. Rather, it is being seen given certain conditions; our explanation of shame essentially involves the other given a particular normative context<sup>103</sup> without which one would feel no shame. Notice that shame at nakedness does not seem to require the other's judgement.<sup>104</sup>

Or, less 'primitively', consider an act of voyeurism in which a man is wholly absorbed with the events behind the door, and therefore, is explicitly unaware of himself. He then becomes

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<sup>101</sup> It is 'primitive' because the *reasons* for one's shame are often hidden and deeply embedded in one's psychological make-up, something dealt with in the following chapter. It is not 'primitive' in the sense that its *structure* necessarily pervades 'non-primitive' instances of shame.

<sup>102</sup> Shame at one's own nakedness as such may be pathological, as Williams' (1993) maintains. p.82.

<sup>103</sup> One has only to consider the inherent absence of shame at nakedness in, for example, public baths, strip-bars, on beaches or amongst non-Western natives, to see heteronomous shame's essentially normative component.

<sup>104</sup> It is worth distinguishing this primitive or 'bodily' shame present in all human-beings, which does not seem to presuppose the *person*, from a more 'psychic' shame, present only at higher levels of development, presupposing the person. See Scheler (1987) for more. It follows that autonomous shame does not exist in its bodily variation (unless pathologically).



aware that another individual is watching him, and a particular, explicit self-realisation ensues. The man is overcome with shame.

Now, one explanation of shame in these examples, marking the first side of this tension, cites the presence of an actual other as an essential feature in that explanation. The other is necessary to make one realise one's nakedness, or to make this man realise just what or who he has become. In the first case, nakedness in that context is exposing merely in virtue of another's brute presence. In the second case, a shaming judgement is conveyed by the look, leading to this man's 'fall' and shame. These two examples of shame may be thought of as being essentially heteronomous.

But now the contrary thought emerges, because we can explain some instances of shame by merely citing a fall in *one's own assessment*, where that is sufficient for shame. Let us give an example of something that one may regard as essentially shameful, independently of an actual other or, an other's judgement. Consider a situation where I am secretly rummaging through the very personal and private belongings of a distant relative, now deceased. I discover a diary, the content of which shames the deceased, demolishing the respect that I or anyone else could possibly have for him. I burn the diary. Yet, I feel shame. I feel shame at my discovery, which is a violation of that person's privacy, a transgression against a certain respect that I feel is somehow owed to the dead, in spite of the fact, that no other will ever discover the diary, or know of my actions.<sup>105</sup>

Or, consider a Violinist with unachievable musical ideals.<sup>106</sup> He wishes to play, for none other than himself, Paganini's first concerto. But he wishes to do so at an increased tempo, a feat that Paganini himself could not achieve.<sup>107</sup> Playing these musical passages at such tempo is not humanly possible, yet our violinist is overcome with frustration, dismay and, as some have maintained, shame at his failure. His judgement is relative, not to any other, nor through the 'eyes of the other', but relative to his own abilities.

Or, finally, consider Williams' example of autonomous shame. One feels shame for posting a letter, which was a petty response to a trivial slight.<sup>108</sup> But upon learning that the letter was not delivered, one's shame is only slightly alleviated.

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<sup>105</sup> I may also feel shame, in a vicarious sense, *for* another person's wrongs, or his shameful, hypocritical character. But we shall not explore this interesting possibility.

<sup>106</sup> O'Hear (1976), Taylor (1985) and Roberts (2003) support the case for failing to produce a masterpiece as an example of autonomous shame, as I am using the term.

<sup>107</sup> I thank Jerry Valberg for this example.

<sup>108</sup> Williams (1993) p.93.

These examples mark the second aspect to this tension, where the actual other, or another's judgement, does not seem to be a necessary component in our explanation of shame. The fear of social disfavour simply does not figure.

Now the problem is: how do we reconcile these latter explanations of shame, occurring essentially within one's own mind's in which one just does not hypothesise the other or an audience, or even, their judgement, with the explanation in the former case, occurring *because* of the seeing other? We began with the claim that a vulgar gesture, as such, provides insufficient grounds for shame. Yet, suddenly, the suspicion that an other is, was, or could have been there, gives rise to shame. In other words, the vulgar gesture becomes an explication of shame once certain conditions have been granted (such as norms of privacy or exposure or, wrongful acts or the possession wrongful dispositions.)<sup>109</sup>

But then, on the other hand, we have examples of shame that seem to show that the other is not essential. One feels oneself to be diminished within one's own mind or, in one's own eyes (as opposed to the real or imagined eyes of the other) which is to say, essentially autonomously. This diminishment of self is apprehended through the shame that one feels.

The question, then, is this: how can the other be, or seem to be, essential in some cases of shame yet not to others? Just to make clear, it is not the case that there is a general conflict between autonomous and heteronomous *emotionality*, because there are clearly, emotions which do not necessarily involve the other, or the thought of the other, as with fear, anger or regret. Rather, it is that, *in the case of shame*, it looks like shame is essentially heteronomous, yet we have these compelling examples which suggest that shame is essentially autonomous. In this way, a tension, and perhaps, contradiction, emerges.

## Clarification

Before the discussion, let us mark out some approximate boundaries. To begin with, I take a *radically* heteronomous construal of shame to be one in which it is impossible for one to feel shame if there is not in fact an *actual* other present. The evidence for this radically heteronomous construal, however, is only to be found, it will emerge, in the more primitive instances of shame, as with an apparent shame at nakedness. For other, non-primitive instances, we can point to circumstances in which shame is elicited or triggered, which involves the other in *some* way, which may be true of all emotions, but that, in and of itself, is not ground for positing the necessity of the actual other. Let us explain why.

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<sup>109</sup> Instances in which highly developed norms are not involved is when the other operates on one pre-cognitively, as with young infants experiencing the face of the caregiver. I say more on this below.

For example, we have seen that many accounts of shame attribute heteronomy because, often, shame arises in and is conditioned by interpersonal situations, it is *triggered* by other individuals and, it is born of intersubjective interaction.<sup>110</sup> To speak of shame as being an heteronomous emotion on such grounds, however, is to make a series of relatively weak and uninteresting claims. First, if the question of the heteronomy of shame is supposed to connect with its essentially social nature, then it appears that we should want to cash that out in different terms, not merely through the circumstances and conditions in which it arises, for the social context in which people, and their emotions are embedded makes it trivially true that emotions are in some sense social; and so too, with shame.

Secondly, the question of shame's heteronomy cannot adequately be answered by saying that it can be triggered by an actual other or an actual other's judgement, simply because, it is quite clear, that it may be triggered in all kinds of ways which do not involve an actual other. Further, that a significant part of one's emotional makeup develops through early interactions with actual others makes it, in that sense, a necessarily social phenomena, but that need not impinge on the possibility of a mature and autonomous shame that does not essentially involve the other (or the other's judgement).

This means that we may narrow our focus in the following ways. That shame is heteronomous in its genesis is uncontroversial; that the *historical* psychological antecedents of the emotion of shame are social, and no doubt necessarily so, is well supported by the clinical and psychological literature. But this does not, I am suggesting, impinge on the *conceptual* question of whether the developed emotion of shame is necessarily heteronomous in all of its instances. Given this, shame's more immediate heteronomous antecedents or triggers, as I have been calling them, need not necessarily impinge on the answer to that conceptual question either. So, for the purposes of this thesis, I do *not* count the heteronomous efficient cause or emotional trigger, as constituting a *wholly* heteronomous version of shame because, as we shall see, the possibility that shame's content, and perhaps its structure, may still remain autonomous. Shame's distinctly social and intra-personal functions I take to be uncontroversial, and may shed some light on the more interesting questions which arise with respect to shame's *content* (which is the self) and shame's structure; the latter two of which, therefore, shall be our primary focus henceforth.

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<sup>110</sup> Tangney (1995) p.114.

## 3.2 The shaming judgement

A seemingly natural objection immediately arises. In the heteronomous case, the thought might be that unless one concurs with the other's shaming judgement of one, that is, unless one *identifies* with the other's judgement, one will not experience shame.

If the position from which one makes that identification, one's own values or standards, is autonomous, which is to say, is believed in and aspired to not because of social pressure, or because of the will of another, but because it is genuinely valued in and of itself through, say, one's considered convictions, then the requirement for that identification seems to make shame partially autonomous and partially heteronomous: our inner convictions should align with the external standards.

If we are to follow through with this thought, it would appear that *both* a fall in one's social standing *and* a corresponding fall in one's own assessment, are jointly necessary for shame: neither is independently sufficient. But, as we have just seen, the wholly autonomous examples and the wholly heteronomous examples, count as evidence against this joint-necessity claim, but we shall need to find some further support for these examples.

Let us begin, then, by distinguishing between two *sources* from which the shaming judgement may issue. First, is a heteronomous source, deriving from the *actual* other.<sup>111</sup> Second, an autonomous source, deriving from none other than one's self. Taking first, a shaming judgement issuing from a *heteronomous* source, the ways in which one may deal with that judgement are as follows:

*Either,*

(1)(a) one identifies with that which is conveyed by the look of an actual other, by acceding to the content of the judgement, which negatively reflects on one's view of oneself.

*Or,*

(2)(a) one does not identify with that which is conveyed, either by rejecting the *content* of the other's judgement (i) *simpliciter*, perhaps because one is unable or unwilling to accept it without upsetting one's sense of integrity or, (ii) through radically reinterpreting the content of the other's judgement, for example, by construing the content as something other than it really is and in such a way that it no longer corresponds with one's self-image. (It seems here that the essence of the *content* of the now reinterpreted judgement is not actually conveyed by the other, but is supplied by the individual. Let us note that (ii) has been categorised under heteronomy for now because of

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<sup>111</sup> For now, I overlook the complication that it is my conception of the other's judgement.

its source, It is, however, immediately unclear whether it should remain there as far as its content is concerned, seemingly operating on the border between heteronomy and autonomy. More shall be said about this below.)

Now, take a judgement issuing from an *autonomous* source:

*Either*

(1)(b) one identifies with one's own interpretation of events by acceding to the content of one's self-directed judgement.

*Or,*

(2)(b) one does not identify with one's own interpretation of events.

Yet in all of these autonomous and heteronomous instances one can experience shame.<sup>112</sup> The following questions now arise: How can we explain one's shame, and the very real and penetrating impact of one's diminishment, without acceding to the shaming judgement, or to the reasons grounding them? Further, how can one feel shame without the social standard aligning with one's inner convictions? Let us try to answer these questions now. They will help us to understand the nature of our problem.

### 3.2.1 The problem of authority in heteronomous shame

Simply being seen, in the right conditions, can essentially constitute shame, as with exposure at nakedness. But being seen by an other *with a particular opinion* can also constitute shame, even if that opinion is uncritical.<sup>113</sup> It is easier to see how one identifies with the content of a critical opinion expressed through an actual other's shaming judgement (1.a) above. In such cases, it is simply a question of recognising in the other's look of disapproval that which exposes some flaw or failing in one.

However, shame in which the content of the judgement is rejected or uncritical (2.a) does not quite fit that explanation; the thought is that if one does not agree with the shaming judgement, or if the other's judgement is uncritical or approving of one, one's sense of self, a notion I elaborate on below, should remain undiminished. For example, when one is harshly accused of a crime one did not commit, one can nonetheless experience shame or guilt, irrespective of the fact that one's shame or guilt feelings are unwarranted and inappropriate.

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<sup>112</sup> This much is supported by Wollheim (1999) Lecture 3, Taylor (1985) p.58. and Deigh (1996) p.234.

<sup>113</sup> Williams (1999) supports this point p.82.

The challenge for heteronomous explanations of shame is to explain how a judgement with which we do not concur (or a judgement from one whom we do not respect) has the 'authority' or the shaming efficacy<sup>114</sup> that it does. This challenge does not arise for autonomous explanations of shame for reasons which will become clear. The key and general question, mentioned above, is how one's own views relate to the shaming judgement. The further question (the one I shall answer here) is how one's views relate to the other's shaming judgement, as Wollheim puts it, 'even as [one] submits to them'.<sup>115</sup> That is, the question of how one submits, or defers to the apparent authority of the other's judgement, with the shame that this brings, even though one may not accept that judgement.

The reason why this question sounds odd is connected with the following view: A fall in one's self-assessment or self-esteem can *only* occur when we agree with the shaming judgement; otherwise, the shaming judgement might well be unwarranted or indiscriminate and why should that cause shame? The reason why this view arises so naturally is because of a certain force or authority that an independence of judgement naturally carries. There is something about one's self-derived regard, which exercises a certain power over one. One attaches meaning and significance to one's considered, independent judgements, setting them apart from the dogmatic acceptance of social norms or conventions. In any judgement of importance, such as a judgement in which one's self-worth or one's life as it is lived, is at stake, our ultimate decision, if it is to be trusted as being free from coercion or manipulation, needs to derive from an autonomous source. This is to be distinguished from the wish that such judgements derive from an autonomous source,<sup>116</sup> by which is meant, that one desires that one's judgment is self-determined and not the result of manipulation, constraint or coercion (something that is often associated with the *right* to autonomy, as opposed to the psychological capacity for autonomy).

Let us try to clarify what is involved in this autonomous source. Calling on a *psychological* concept of autonomy, somewhat different from the Kantian conception mentioned previously, will help us here.<sup>117</sup> 'Autonomy' has also been defined as the *psychological capacity for self-assessment*. Ronald Dworkin, for example, maintains, that this kind of autonomy is,

'[A] second-order capacity to reflect critically upon one's first-order preferences and desires, and the ability either to identify with these or to change them in light of higher-

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<sup>114</sup> Through a threat or attack upon one's sense of self.

<sup>115</sup> Wollheim (1999) p.153.

<sup>116</sup> The idea that a person will usually desire to exercise independent control over his or her life can be more clearly seen when one's freedom to choose one's life plan is deferred to an omniscient paternalism. Most would forfeit the 'best' pre-determined life for the ability to choose one's own life, for better or for worse.

<sup>117</sup> What makes it essentially different is that a psychological capacity is empirically identifiable, as opposed to relying on the a priori.

order preferences and values. By exercising such a capacity we define our nature, give meaning and coherence to our lives, and take responsibility for the kind of person we are.<sup>118</sup>

In other words, autonomy, on this alternative but related construal to the one we are employing, refers to a capacity for critical (rational) self-analysis, which may include reflecting on, and the endorsement of, our mental states and attitudes, values and commitments.

Such reflection and endorsement is carried out by (or one seems to fall back on) something like one's 'conscience',<sup>119</sup> understood as that inner faculty which pronounces upon questions of a broadly moral or pragmatic nature. Such things often serve the function of the 'final arbiter' in important decisions that we make.

The relation between the capacity for self-assessment and *autonomous* shame can be seen when we consider that autonomous shame is an expression of one's personal or deeply held convictions, as opposed to a mere concern for social standards, as with heteronomous shame. If not that, at least, one's inner convictions help mediate acceptance of external, heteronomous judgements. For, it is natural to think that it is only after some self-reflection on our desires and values that one can be in a position to genuinely aspire to *be* that self-respecting person or, to put the point negatively, *not to be* that shameful person who we are revealed as being, rather than merely *appearing* to fulfil (mere) social expectations before the other.

Now, the further question mentioned above, concerning where heteronomous judgements derive that authority, seems to demand that the authority that goes hand in hand with autonomy is no longer thought of as being limited to it, but somehow extends to heteronomy as well. Let us illustrate these points with some examples; this will help secure a grip on the issue here.

### Example 1

Take a heteronomous instance of shame in which a person does not value the standard in which he falls short of. Say some social norm, such as picking one's nose at a formal dinner. That action, our dinner guest (call him Tom) might generally think, is a little out of place, should he be seen, but it is not anything to be excessively scrupulous about. The looks of disapproval from the other guests draw his attention to a fall in his social standing, and Tom experiences shame. But the question is: how do we explain the shame Tom feels if he does not really concur

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<sup>118</sup> Dworkin. (1988), p.108.

<sup>119</sup> On an early Freudian reading (Freud later abandoned the construct of the ego-ideal), conscience was equated with the superego, where opposition between the ego and superego resulted in guilt; and where the opposition between the ego and ego-ideal (or the ideal-, moral-self rooted in anxieties linked with abandonment, loss of love and inferiority) resulted in shame. These themes were picked up by Piers & Singer (1953), then H.B.Lewis (1971).

with the negative judgements of the other guests, guests he perhaps regards as maintaining somewhat prudish standards.

We could try and give the following explanation. First, we could insist that Tom does in fact share some common standard, or has some bond of association, however tenuous. Shame, as we have seen, can take a range of objects potentially very wide in scope. For example, shame is capable of bridging immense gaps, ones that extend beyond such things as intention and causal responsibility, like shame felt for the atrocities of one's forefathers. The fact that Tom is occupying the same public forum, and is aware of certain rules of decorum, might be commonality enough.

Secondly, we could make the point that to think that one is not vulnerable to shame if one does not agree with the judgement is to overlook the importance of a shared and *general outlook* in shame. It is often maintained that a belief in a shared outlook and a sense of disapproval are necessary conditions for shame. Thus, a shared, general outlook, as opposed to a particular and specific judgement, may really be doing the work of shaming one.

But still, one might think that a shared social space and a general outlook can only do that work when the other, as a person, or the other's general opinion, is held in some esteem.<sup>120</sup> Reflect for one moment on a shameful experience in which one has been held in low regard by another whose status and general opinion one values. Shame may issue even though one knows the content of the respected other's shaming judgement, that thing for which the other shames me for, is nothing for which I am to blame. The fact that one is held in disfavour by a respected other is what constitutes one's shame; the content of the actual judgement is playing only a limited role. Let us hold onto this idea, it will re-emerge in what follows.

However, Tom seems to hold the others more in contempt than he does in esteem. For such instances of shame to remain intelligible, must we say that the shaming judgement is after all recognised as being true of him? The fact that it derives from an other who is not respected can even serve to compound the impact of that judgement, the truth of which, the shamed may feel, is evident even to people one dislikes, one's 'enemies', as it were, bringing with it humiliation and defeat. But again, this answer strikes us as somewhat inadequate. There is something to this example that we are still unable to fully appreciate and explain, something I shall attempt to do in the following chapter. Let us now consider another example.

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<sup>120</sup> Or, perhaps, an other who, while not respecting, one wishes to impress for purely egoistic reasons.



## Example 2

A model, after a long and shameless period of posing naked for an artist, becomes aware that the artist's disinterested gaze has turned to one of sexual interest. Upon recognition of this she feels shame.<sup>121</sup> How are we to understand the model's shame at the artist's gaze given that she does not share the artist's outlook or acknowledge any disapproval?

One might immediately think that the artist's gaze draws out the model's deeper moral concerns; perhaps the model is already fostering anxieties about her role as an object of sexuality; but we should put these additional reasons aside. The model does not wish to be regarded sexually and, for the sake of the example, we should be confident that her posing was not a conscious (or unconscious) appeal for sexual admiration.

The model's case of shame is different from that of Tom's: the shaming judgement directed at Tom is negative and disapproving, whereas the judgement directed at the model is uncritical and not disapproving or negative. But both feel diminished in the face of a shaming judgement (seemingly *other*-derived for Tom; and seemingly *self*-derived, for the model) that they do not concur with, or a judgement that conflicts with, say, their self-image or self-representation.

First, we must separate the model's nakedness from the nakedness of a primitive shame; her exposure does not consist in merely being seen, but, more subtly, by being seen in a particular way, by an observer with a particular view. It is an exposure that is diminishing, we might suggest, because she is being represented as something she does not wish, intend or implicitly agree to be represented as, namely, a sexual object. We shall need to defer our explanation of the model's shame until the next chapter. But let us raise one final point. If we wish to maintain that a negative judgement is a necessary condition of shame, it can no longer derive from the observer, but from the model herself. The look or the gaze, therefore, no longer serves the function of conveying the *shaming* judgement, and it becomes peripheral to our explanation. It is natural, therefore, to turn to the model's psychology as providing that shaming judgement.

## Weak Heteronomy or Autonomy?

Before turning to the model's psychology, let us consider how we should categorise her shame. When the *content* of the model's shame is supplied by the model herself (2.a.i), her shame is susceptible to a much weaker heteronomous, if not autonomous, characterisation. The same can be said of the voyeur's shame upon hearing footsteps in the corridor (but not when he is actually being observed).

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<sup>121</sup> This is a famous example of Max Scheler.

These cases immediately strike one as being heteronomous: without the footsteps representative of the other and without the artist, the voyeur and the model would not feel shame, the other being an essential component in these explanations. But these examples can be described in a way that emphasise the subject's self-imputed judgements of shame. On the surface at least, these examples imply a rather weak heteronomy, especially in the light of an imagined other (in the form of footsteps) or an imagined judgement (in the form of the mere and benign gaze). There are two reasons for regarding these examples as weakly heteronomous. They are weak insofar as the 'other' can be seen to serve as nothing more than an heteronomous *function* and, second, an heteronomous *trigger*, while the *content* of the shaming judgement derives, it seems, from an altogether more autonomous source. Let us explain.

Firstly, in the case of the voyeur, an *imagined* or represented other serves the same role as an actual other. So, one might think, unless there is an imagined other, in the role of an audience or observer, shame will not arise. What role, then, is the imagined other serving? Its function is that of conveying a negative judgement on one. Insofar as it does that, it is fulfilling the role of an actual, observing other. This is what marks this example as distinctly heteronomous. But when we press further, and ask what function the imagined other, in turn, serves, we see that it serves as part of the means of self-assessment.

But then, if the imagined other essentially serves no other function than that, it becomes contingent: if a change in self-assessment is ultimately what shame involves, then it need not rely on an actual or imagined other in order to initiate the reflexive attitude, as the wholly autonomous examples at the beginning of this chapter seemed to show. One's view can be reflexive and the content of shame need not *effectively* involve the other. Thus, we can think of this particular example as serving functions which are only contingently and, therefore, weakly heteronomous.

One might wish to object at this point: Does not the reflexive attitude *itself* involve the concept of the other, perhaps at some deeper level? Let us be clear that there is nothing in the meaning of the term, 'reflexivity', that is, a turning back upon, or a relation which holds between the self and itself, that can help us answer that question. Rather, it may be answered by considering the *objects* of the reflexive attitude. A particular range of such objects will be constituted by self-representations and self-images, which may essentially involve the other, but there will also be a range of objects that will not. How this pans out for our account of shame will be dealt with in the following chapter, which will cover the different *senses of self* that may be the objects of this reflexive attitude.

Secondly, shame may be considered to be weakly heteronomous in these cases because the self is diminished after the other merely *triggers* an episode of self-evaluation or criticism.

The other, in this case, serves as a causal antecedent or elicitor of shame. So the footsteps merely trigger a spate of self-assessment as does, the admiring, non-critical gaze of the artist. But in neither case is that which represents the other, or the artist's gaze, itself critical or pertaining to an *other's* negative judgement. In the case of Scheler's model, there is no negative judgement deriving from the artist whatsoever; and what would otherwise be described as disapproval in a standard account of shame is replaced with the look of desire or sexual admiration. The content of the negative shaming judgement, therefore, does not obviously entail the other. However, whether the model is viewing herself from the *perspective* of the other, and whether the content of this third-personal perspective should suffice for shame's heteronomy is a question we shall need to consider. At any rate, an actual other is not necessary for a change in self-assessment. Before returning to the question of where the model's shaming judgement derives and to the model's psychology, let us touch upon the shaming judgement in autonomous shame. It will help to answer the question of where the model's shaming judgement derives.

### **The shaming Judgement in Autonomous Shame**

Arnold Isenberg calls for recognising the existence of an autonomous conscience, to make room 'for the fact that a man may feel himself disgraced by something that is unworthy in his own eyes and apart from any judgement but his own.'<sup>122</sup> This is precisely the shaming judgement that characterises our notion of autonomous shame. Consider, for example, the shame I feel for things that, in fact, are not adversely judged by any other. I may be ashamed of my intellectual abilities, my physical appearance, my skills, or the way in which I walk or speak. Yet no other person may judge me in such ways. These things, as Isenberg points out, indicate sources of shame that exist independently of the social other or social standards,<sup>123</sup> which is to say, autonomously.

Furthermore, Isenberg writes,

'[I]f we stigmatize ourselves more severely than others do and impute that judgement to them, if in Spinoza's terms we can "imagine others to blame us"<sup>124</sup> more harshly than they do, there must be a spontaneous and factitious element in our sense of disgrace.'<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Isenberg (1949) p.11.

<sup>123</sup> One might point out that these examples essentially involve the idea of comparison, and therefore an other. But there is a sense of shame in which one's failure is non-comparative, where one's view of oneself is not relative to the other, or another's imagined or real judgement, one's failure is, as Isenberg (p.12) and Taylor (1985) p.68, put it, 'absolute'; the final shaming judgement does not essentially depend on the other.

<sup>124</sup> 'Shame [pudor] is pain accompanied by the idea of some action of our own which we imagine others to blame...'

<sup>125</sup> Isenberg (1949) p.11-12.

That 'factitious element' within shame, I am suggesting, is a product of that autonomous conscience that Isenberg wants us to recognise. (I do not, however, take factitiousness to imply that such instances of shame are inauthentic, insincere or contrived.) The essential point that Isenberg is making is that the shame we sometimes undergo is of our very own making. How we should cash out this conception of conscience is an important question. Some psychologists and philosophers have cashed this out in terms of an internalised other or an internal figure. What this means is that when one is unworthy in one's 'own eyes' and apart from any judgement but one's 'own', the other, is in some form, already within the gates of the 'autonomous self'.<sup>126</sup>

### **Internalisation of the other**

In regarding the model's psychology, it is tempting to hypothesize an imagined other (or a phantasised other) within a divided self. Appeal to such things appears explanatorily promising in such cases, because, at first sight, it allows us to preserve the conditions of disapproval and the observing other by identifying not an external source of disapproval, but an internal one, emanating from the shamed individual herself. Now, the artist's gaze fulfils *for the model* an entirely different function to that of sexual admiration; it helps instead to make the model an object of disapproval. And the 'observer' becomes internal to the model, while separate from that shamed part of her self that is disapproved of by the now internal observer or 'other'. But seeking to resolve our problem in this way is not as straightforward as it may seem. We shall need to say more about this internal other. Should the internal other still be regarded in heteronomous terms? Does it compromise one's authority, insofar as one is now under the critical scrutiny of this separate, though still internal, agency? And, furthermore, what grants the internal other its authority?

Let us endeavour to answer these questions, and to see if the notion of an internal other is necessary or helpful in explaining shame.

When an actual other *makes* an act shameful we give an heteronomous explanation. The actual other, recall, is a necessary condition of primitive shame. But when the other merely triggers shame for that which one ought to feel shame, such as peeking through a keyhole, the question is: should we still provide a broadly heteronomous explanation of the shame that one undergoes? Should we, in other words, understand the significance of the actual other as primary when explaining instances of shame in which the other is imagined or hypothesised?

In the outline of our problem we saw how the look and the actual other critically feature in some explanations of shame yet not in others. This presented us with an explanatory conflict.

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<sup>126</sup> For example, for Williams (1993) and Wollheim (1999).

An immediate response or solution to this problem is to take the first case of shame, the one where the actual other essentially features, and to retain its structure. This is done by building into the second account the notion, not of an actual other, but an imagined *other*. So, as this 'solution' would have it, in what we have been describing as 'autonomous' shame (instances in which the other is not an essential part of the explanation), we would now introduce the notion of an internal other. This would mean that a heteronomous structure pervades what we have been calling an autonomous shame, even though, as we just showed in the previous sub-section, the content, in such instances, is derived from the shamed individual themselves.

But this 'solution' presupposes something that we should not take for granted. It gives primacy to what appears to be the more primitive instances of shame, insofar as these instances clearly involve an actual other, if not, more primitively still, the look of an actual other.<sup>127</sup> Connected to this presupposition is another concerning the authority of that shaming judgement that we shall also need to consider.

The reason why we should not automatically presuppose the primacy of the role of the actual other is because it presents us with problems for instances of shame which are not primitive. Let us now show why this is so. In the non-primitive cases of the model and the voyeur, in the absence of an actual other, the *imaginary* other is its most likely substitute. In our broadly 'heteronomous' explanation, then, the shame felt through the imaginary other is understood through the shame one would otherwise feel if the other were actual. Thus, we would say, footsteps trigger the thought of an imagined other in the same way that the admiring gaze of the artist triggers the thought of a critical other passing a negative judgement on one. One then feels shame before this imaginary gaze, the force of which, we might think, derives from the idea of an actual other occupying that very space.

But what should we make of this force or shaming efficacy? If we think it is the same kind of force that arises in a primitive shame we shall be misled. This is because, I am claiming, in the primitive case, shame does not attach itself to the nature of the act, but to the act as it *becomes under observation* (i.e., as it is before the gaze of the other). In the more developed instances of shame, by contrast, the force of being observed is second only to the nature of the act, which is shameful in itself. Thus, the imagined observer shames the voyeur and the model, not in virtue of the shame that the act becomes *because* it is imagined as being observed, but in virtue of the shamed coming to realise what the act is, that is, independently shameful. The footsteps and the artist's benign gaze bring to bear the shame of an implicitly shameful situation - implicit that is, for the shamed.

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<sup>127</sup> Early childhood (and, perhaps, infancy) shameful experiences may be called upon here.

## Externalisation (projection) of the Internal Other

All of what we have just said means that the voyeur and the model have, in effect, implicitly prejudged their acts as shameful. According to this explanation, they must potentially concur with the content of the shaming judgement that is to emerge, which is not carried in the footsteps or in the artist's gaze, but ascribed to them by themselves. Even if, to take the case of the voyeur, he identifies the footsteps with an actual other, the shame that the footsteps bring, although apparently deriving from the actual other, do not. Instead, the voyeur's shame can be traced to an identification with the content of that prejudgement, or, we could say, in a more general, psychologised way, the internal other is projected onto the footsteps. The footsteps become nothing more than the catalyst for the voyeur's painful self-realisation, bringing to his direct attention what is implicitly known. The role of the actual other, therefore, becomes secondary.

Now if what we have said is along the right lines, and the actual other is in fact secondary, we should resist thinking of the actual other as providing the imaginary other or the internal other with that authority or shaming efficacy. From where does this force derive? It seems that it must derive from an existing source, and the individual's psychology is the only remaining place to look. For this we would need to turn to a historicised, psychological account of the self. To cut a long and complex story short, the authority of the internal other needs to be provided by the individual in the early stages of internalisation. In psychological terms, when the significant, real other is introjected, it is introjected as already possessing that authority.<sup>128</sup>

But now we see that our initial characterisation, between autonomous and heteronomous shame is not quite as clear-cut as we have made out. Even if the actual other does not feature in the explanation of autonomous shame we are still left with an internal other and a heteronomous *structure*. But that is not all because the idea of an internal other commits us to a partitioned conception of the self, which, as we shall show, is not without its problems.<sup>129</sup>

Regardless, appealing to the internal other is just one explanation of shame. It is possible to explain shame without appealing to what resembles, in one form or another, the mental apparatus of psychoanalysis. Let us now provide that explanation. Thus far, we have devoted our attention to the place of the *other* in various forms. Let us now focus on the *self* to see where that may lead us.

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<sup>128</sup> See, for example, Lear (1990) pp204, and Wollheim chapter 3, on this point.

<sup>129</sup> For instance, the *transformation* between direct 'heteronomous' internalisations of the norms of caregivers and, the final, 'autonomous' values that are held by the adult, is problematic. See Lear (1990). p.205 on this point.

## 4 Towards a Resolution

'The chief danger to philosophy, apart from laziness and wooliness, is scholasticism, the essence of which is treating what is vague as if it were precise and trying to fit it into an exact logical category.' F.P.Ramsey. *The Foundations of Mathematics and Other Logical Essays*,

Max Scheler<sup>130</sup> has the makings of an answer to our central problem. He claims that shame is characterised by a sudden 'turning back of observation' upon ourselves.<sup>131</sup> Scheler, at this point, calls upon a particular structure of human experience, divided into the opposing spheres of the divine<sup>132</sup> and animality<sup>133</sup>, with man precariously caught between these spheres.<sup>134</sup> In his act of observation, man turns from the spiritual to the animal. Shame is conjoined with this act, in which an 'imbalance' and 'disharmony' occurs between the claims of the 'spirit' and the needs of the 'flesh', or, more generally, between 'essence' and 'existence'.

We need not, however, follow Scheler in his characterisation of the spheres of human experience. The crucial feature that Scheler points us to in shame is that it involves a particular *change*<sup>135</sup> of attentional focus, in which shame acts as a 'bridge' or 'transition' between two spheres of being.<sup>136</sup> For our present purposes, we can suggest that these spheres are replaced by different domains, conceptions and *aspects* of the self and, between different degrees of awareness.

In this chapter, we shall introduce our own structure of the self to form the spheres between which that change of attentional focus is to occur. Then, using that structure, we shall work through the previous examples of shame. But we shall do so in a way that explains away the tension that emerges between autonomous and heteronomous characterisations of shame. In the process, I shall develop the positive thesis, culminating in a final characterisation of shame. Before tackling the notion of the *self* in shame, let us endeavour to answer a problem of the previous chapter about authority in heteronomous shame.

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<sup>130</sup> Scheler (1987).

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., p.4.

<sup>132</sup> Or the spiritual, involving 'the quintessence of all supra-animal or mental acts such as thinking, intuiting, willing, loving, and their forms of existence, the "person"'. Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Or, the 'drive-life' and the feelings of life which differ only by degrees from those of animals.' Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid. p.3.

<sup>135</sup> Between higher-orders of consciousness and biological centres.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.p.6.

## 4.1 The problem of authority in heteronomous shame revisited

We needed a way of explaining how a heteronomous shaming judgement with which we do not concur can have the authority and shaming efficacy that it does. I will suggest two ways of explaining this: firstly, through what I call the notion of a ‘conditional shaming judgement’ and, secondly, through the ‘apprehension of negativity’. Let us pick up the previous example with our subject, Tom, who is attending a dinner-party with guests he does not care to indulge, nor respect in their particular rules of etiquette, yet, nonetheless, feels shame at what others regard as his transgression.

### The conditional shaming judgement and moral sensitivity

We could explain Tom’s shame by saying this: He apprehends, in the looks that he receives, how he appears before them. That is, he is now able to form an opinion of himself as he would *if he acceded* to those judgements, or accepted or valued those standards more highly. Let us call that opinion Tom has of himself if he acceded to those judgements the ‘conditional judgement’<sup>137</sup>. It is conditional because it involves a belief involving the *possibility* of shame and its conditions. But does the fact that Tom envisions how he would appear if he was of the same opinion as his fellow guests, suffice for shame? I suggest that it can, for two reasons: first, due to the uncertainty that may arise with any decision of a broadly ethical or pragmatic nature; and second, in virtue of the respect, or, at least, acknowledgment that one feels is owed to other moral beings that one interacts with, just *because* they are a moral beings.

That a conditional judgement can suffice for an actual act of accedence is consistent with the phenomenology of this and similarly shameful situations. This can be seen more easily in situations in which one’s convictions waiver or in which one lacks complete confidence in one’s decisions. Here the belief involved in the judgement which induces shame, is not in the mode of certainty, but rather, of rational possibility. That belief may take numerous forms. I may feel shame, for example, when the other has judged me adversely, and I recognise that I have been judged as that for which I fear or suspect I really am. That fear and suspicion is related to an awareness of the possibility of being wrong or harbouring a wrongful disposition or trait of character. All of this can be seen as part of the wider claim that any interaction in a social milieu involves a possible risk to the self, a claim that we shall explore below.

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<sup>137</sup> It is conditional because it is of the form, *if P (then) Q*. where, P is a belief about what is appropriate by some standard, and Q is the belief involved in the judgement which shame’s one.



However, such situations are not the only ones. Indeed, one might think that shame is an unavoidable consequence of living a moral life that is sensitive to the moral demands that others make on one. Part of that sensitivity not only involves making space for the possibility of being wrong,<sup>138</sup> it also involves making space for an acknowledgment of, or a respect for, the beliefs and values of others, which may not always be entirely understood or appreciated. It is part of the dignity afforded to other persons where, as Kant put it (albeit in virtue of his notion of the autonomy of rational human-beings), they are treated as ends in themselves<sup>139</sup> or are attributed worth because of their essential nature.<sup>140</sup> Shame often takes its hold within such spaces.

That moral sensitivity is bound with shame finds support in what we have called a 'sensitivity towards shame'. Recall shame's dual nature, highlighted in the introduction. Aside from shame's debilitating effects, it can have positive moral consequences, such as deterring morally bad (shameful) behaviour and, positive, first-personal antecedents, such as integrity, self-respect, and, of course, moral sensitivity, all of which help to form a sensitivity towards shame. As mentioned earlier, the capacity for shame can be seen as a necessary component of moral sensitivity when compared with an absence of shame in the face of a moral wrong.<sup>141</sup> Tom's shame shows that he is not beyond the socio-moral pale in which he finds himself (which would be to lack a sensitivity toward shame or to be 'shameless'), and that he exhibits a degree of moral sensitivity, even though he does not buy into those standards wholeheartedly.

### **The apprehension of negativity**

There is another, more primitive explanation of Tom's heteronomous, 'non-concurring' shame. The claim I wish to make is that what is significantly doing the work of shaming Tom is simply the fact *that* he is viewed negatively. That is, there are times when we apprehend the other's look in its *negativity* and no more. This occurs, not so much in the apprehension of the content of any judgement conveyed by the look, but rather, in the apprehension of that which immediately characterises the look as one of negativity. This, I am suggesting, is what happens, not only in primitive instances of shame, one's that are pre-verbal or non-propositional in form (and in early learning in infancy, where we come to appreciate the meaning of negative reactions towards our behaviours), but in cases in which we do not accede to the shaming judgement or respect its source, which may be a particular person or their character.

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<sup>138</sup> Between one's deliberations and actions, one inevitably faces the possibility of misunderstanding something, of being misunderstood, misinformed, morally blinded or weak, unintentionally cruel; moral life, after all, is often hard and unyielding.

<sup>139</sup> *The Groundwork*, 107.

<sup>140</sup> This is how Deigh (1996) captures a similar point. p.243.

<sup>141</sup> As Solomon (2004) points out, Aristotle, regarded shame as a 'quasi-virtue' for a related reason. p.97.

In many face-to-face, human interactions, certain visual cues, such as another's demeanour, gestures and facial expressions, communicate information which is identified well before another's utterance has been processed and understood. Often these things radically colour the content of what is asserted. How often does one form a judgement of another sometimes even before his or her utterance has commenced?

This primitive component can work alongside, and can even, as was suggested in chapter 1, become the causal antecedents of our more complex emotional states. For example, imagine that one is at a social gathering, engaged in a conversation. Against the background noise one hears one's name mentioned. One's name is all one hears, there is no further propositional content, but the tone in which one's name was uttered is recognised as being negative and critical. It is not unreasonable to think that the apprehension of negative criticism that is without content (perhaps coupled with an anxiety at that) can serve as causal antecedents of one's more complex, guilt- or shame-inducing judgement.<sup>142</sup>

However, one might rightly think that the apprehension of 'negativity' does not, as it stands, explain instances of shame in which the apparent elicitor of shame is uncritical and not negative. We can respond by saying that in the apprehension of negativity there is a significant degree of interpretative leeway. So for example, one may misinterpret another's tone of voice, demeanour or look as being negative, or we may interpret a look of disdain as being harsher than it really is. Further still, we may react negatively to a non-critical look, or to a look of admiration. In each case, the individual on the verge of shame can compliment, or radically alter the look, its content and its meaning, with his or her own apprehension or judgement. This interpretative gap is part of what Isenburg called the 'factitious' element in shame, and it need not, as far as shame's content is concerned, essentially involve the *other's* judgement. What this means is that any 'negativity' or brute impact of the look of the other can also be self-attributed as it is 'apprehended'. Let us turn now to the 'self' in shame.

## 4.2 The self

The metaphysical notion of the 'self' has been a perennial topic of controversy and debate in philosophy at least since Descartes. Given the notorious difficulty in trying to pin down the 'self', we should not be surprised to find that many psychological and philosophical discussions of 'self-conscious' or 'self-assessing' *emotions* make only limited attempts at defining the 'self'. But any

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<sup>142</sup> Empirical psychology, furthermore, recognises that perceptual and sensory antecedents can induce emotions.

abstract definition of the 'self' as such, whether metaphysical or ontological, will not, at any rate, help us here. This is because in shame, we do not conceive of the self in theoretical abstraction or, in a deeply philosophical way. Rather, the self appears to us as something that we have quite an unproblematic and intuitive grasp of (until that is, we try to describe it).

Descriptive problems aside, in our everyday discourse, and in our inwardly directed attentions, we are nonetheless aware of our subjectivity or first-personal perspective – the 'I' seems to be a necessary condition of any mental event. Even Hume, who denied that there was any such thing as a 'self', implicitly presupposed the subjective 'I' in his arguments.<sup>143</sup> After all, we recognise our behaviours and intentions as originating and belonging to our 'selves' as distinct from others; we can hear our own utterances and introspect on our thoughts and feelings, representations, self-concepts<sup>144</sup> and self-images. The reflexive *process* of reflecting on these things I take to result in what I call here, *a sense of self*.<sup>145</sup> Thus, for our present purposes, we can avoid the perils of trying to define the 'self' as such. It will suffice to regard it as an organising, reflexive centre out of which a sense of self emanates.

Furthermore, this intuitive or commonsensical rendering of one's 'sense of self' is all that is meant, indeed, if that is meant, in most accounts of the *self*-assessing emotions. What we are calling a 'sense of self', a notion that we shall refine now, is, in these accounts, normally just called, the *self*, and is not defined but simply assumed as something that we have an implicit understanding of. What, then, marks this implicit understanding?

I take it that it concerns the way in which one relates to oneself, encompassing such things as one's values and commitments, one's sense of self-worth and self-respect. Additionally, we could appeal to something like Wollheim's view that a sense of self directly involves the awareness that I have of myself as an ongoing person, with a history, living in the present and concerned with my future.<sup>146</sup>

The previous chapter revealed a tension in the way we understand and characterise shame. That problem, I am now claiming, arises because of the way we understand the self involved in shame. My central claim is that the tension between autonomy and heteronomy arises because the

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<sup>143</sup> When Hume, in his famous passage in the *Treatise*, reflected on his phenomenal perceptions, he failed to find the self from which those perceptions emerge. But he seems to contradict himself - to what or to whom is the *I* referring when he says '*I* never catch myself...*I* always stumble...'? Hospers (1978) raises the same objection. p.409.

<sup>144</sup> I follow Jopling (2000) in his definition of a self-concept which is '...a schematic and an adaptive set of beliefs about the self that is used to represent to the person whose self it is, and to others, the character traits, values, moral feelings, desires, and commitments that are considered to define the self...' p.45.

<sup>145</sup> Velleman (2006) defines the 'self', or what I call a 'sense of self' in much the same way. Chapter 14. Where 'sense' is taken to be 'A consciousness or recognition of (some quality, condition, etc.) as attaching to oneself; especially, such as is accompanied by inward feeling or emotion, or acts as a motive for conduct.' *OED Online* retrieved 20<sup>th</sup> February 2007.

<sup>146</sup> Wollheim (1999) p.151.

'self' is underspecified in accounts of the *self*-assessing emotions.

Yet, that fuller specification of the self need not draw upon any further psychological theoretic. Remaining at the level of commonsense explanations may mean that other, more sophisticated psychological theories may possibly compliment this characterisation. I limit this characterisation, therefore, to two of the most uncontroversial, pre-philosophical ways of construing *aspects* of one's sense of self. The first is what may be called a 'social' or '*outer*' part of the self, the second, the 'intimate' or '*inner*' part of the self. Let us turn to this now.

#### 4.2.1 Aspects of the self

The notion that there are different aspects of the self is an old one. This is the idea that there are many facets to one's self or person, each of which, it is supposed, can be distinctively represented. One might trace the origin of this idea to the Latin term, *persona*, meaning a theatrical 'mask'.<sup>147</sup> Let us follow through with a helpful analogy. Just as a player on a stage wears a mask to disguise his actual self while presenting another, so we, as 'players' on, say, the 'social stage', may use a persona or an aspect of ourselves as a means of disguising or hiding our intimate thoughts and feelings, perhaps by presenting a self that coheres with socio-moral norms and expectations.<sup>148</sup> Following Nietzsche, we might add that a sensibility towards shame generates the (continual) formation of a mask that adapts to the vicissitudes of social life.<sup>149</sup> This protects our intimate thoughts and feelings from vulnerability to exposure from the public or outer-domain.

Hiding such thoughts and feelings serves the function, not only of *self*-protection<sup>150</sup> (by not presenting a sensitive target for criticism and attack) but protection for the other when the expression of one's innermost feelings would intrude into another's intimate sphere. Consider, for example, the discomfort one may feel when a perfect stranger 'unloads' his intimate problems upon one. Often, it is to spare another that same discomfort and intrusion that one does not take such opportunities to 'unload' one's own most personal of problems.

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<sup>147</sup> Nietzsche (2003) connects the mask with shame (*BGE* 40). 'A man with something profound in his shame...wants and encourages a mask...'p.38.

<sup>148</sup> Goffman (1980) provides an extended analogy of the performance with respect to the different 'presentations of the self'. pp.241-7.

<sup>149</sup> *BGE* 40.

<sup>150</sup> In the form of avoidance, retaliation or regulation.

But in hiding or protecting what is often called the ‘intimate’ self the possibility<sup>151</sup> of a tension emerges between that and our ‘social’ selves. Such tension was famously discussed by Jung,<sup>152</sup> who maintained that the persona is merely a compromise between private and social needs and, therefore, essentially characterised by conflict.

There are, then, different domains, marking out various aspects of the self, that can be (and have been) specified.<sup>153</sup> It will be sufficient for our purposes to regard two commonsensical yet plausible *aspects* of one’s sense of the self, and we shall do this now.

That a sense of self is a necessary condition for the experience of shame and other self-conscious emotions is uncontroversial.<sup>154</sup> That *variant aspects* of a sense of self should be posited to best explain shame will become this thesis’s central claim, and what I take to be a much-needed refinement of the latter.

#### 4.2.2 Inner and outer aspects of one’s sense of self

In our everyday thoughts, we all draw distinctions between how others see us and, how we see ourselves. We all, therefore, maintain conceptions, images and representations of how one takes others to see one, in distinction to how one sees oneself. I will group these conceptions under one of two headings: the ‘inner-self’ or the ‘outer-self’, where the ‘self’, henceforth, refers to one’s *sense of self*. I use the terms ‘inner-self’ and ‘outer-self’ as short-hand for the ‘inner-aspects of one’s sense of self’ and, the ‘outer-aspects of one’s sense of self.’

Understanding the perfectly ordinary relationship between these inner- and outer- selves will help us to understand more about shame. Before stipulating what is meant by these terms, which I take to be intuitive and commonsensical, let us comment on that important relationship.

##### Separation, vulnerability and exposure

The sense of *separation* between our inner- and outer-selves, between the public and the private, is as Iris Murdoch puts it, one of our deepest experiences.<sup>155</sup> Thomas Nagel echoes the

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<sup>151</sup> I am maintaining that it is a possibility because I do not wish to make the assumption that our closely held ideals must necessarily diverge from socio-moral ones. This is an assumption that Freudian theory tends to make by regarding morality as arising through the repression of the instincts.

<sup>152</sup> (1928) paragraph. 246 *The relations between the ego and the unconscious. Ch.7*

<sup>153</sup> For example, James (1890/1948) posited the self-domains of the ‘spiritual’ ‘material, ‘social’ and ‘pure Ego’. p.297.

<sup>154</sup> For example. M. Lewis et al (1989) Tangney & Dearing (2004), Taylor (1985), Wollheim (1999) to name but a few. Part of this claim can be traced to William James (1890/1948) who was amongst the first to relate shame to the way in which the self is regarded. He characterises a *primitive* or ‘reflex’ shame with an absence of a ‘particular self regarded at all by the mind’ pp.322-3

<sup>155</sup> Murdoch (2003) p.280.

same point, claiming that the boundary between the inner and the outer, between what is revealed and what is not, and our control over these things, are amongst the most important attributes of our humanity.<sup>156</sup> If we acknowledge that relationships with others need precise limits on what are legitimate objects of mutual concern, we can see how these limits may operate through the dialectic of the hidden and the revealed and may be governed by norms of exclusion and inclusion. To give a very general example, intimate relations exclude everyone else but include the sharing of one's deeply held thoughts and feelings with a select few. On the other hand, interpersonal relations of a more superficial kind may include potentially everyone but typically exclude the sharing of one's deepest concerns.

From here, the thought that much of human experience can be crucially characterised by that sense of separation that arises between the inner-self and the outer-self emerges quite naturally. Carl Schneider, for example, quotes Bachelard in his characterisation of a person as 'a half-open being, partly covered and partly exposed.'<sup>157</sup> And, we can begin to form a picture of how the notions of the inner and the outer, of the hidden and revealed, are central in our lives for the reason that all of human experience is potentially vulnerable to violation and exposure.<sup>158</sup> This is the precise reason why Erving Goffman, for instance, holds that all social interaction involves the possibility of risk to the self.<sup>159</sup>

This sense of separation, then, goes hand in hand with our vulnerability. And nowhere else is that sense of separation made as painfully apparent as it is in shame, where, I will maintain, the inner and outer domains are brought into stark contrast with one another, the very expression of our vulnerability. My central claim, following on from what has just been said, is that shame is best explained by appealing to these two different aspects of one's sense of self. Let us begin, then, with a commonsense rendering of the *outer* and the *inner* aspects of the self.

## Outer-self and Inner-self

First, let us consider the *'outer-self'*. This is my view of the way others view me; it is *what I think others see*, when they see me. In other words, it is my conception of my self as it is conceived of by the other, and a self that exists in relation to the other.<sup>160</sup> It is a self that is *revealed*.

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<sup>156</sup> Nagel (1998) p.4

<sup>157</sup> (1977) p.38.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> (2003) pp.227-228.

<sup>160</sup> A 'self-with-other', as cognitive psychology sometimes labels it.

Of course, my outer-self does not necessarily correspond with how I am *actually* seen by the other, but the latter, at any rate, is unimportant for our phenomenological purposes. What is important is that how (I think) the other sees me is something over which I think or feel I have no direct control. The limited way in which I have indirect control over my *outer-self* is through that which I choose to reveal, through what I choose to do or say.

The '*inner-self*', by contrast, is my view of myself *independently* of the way others view me. I know the inner-self in a way in which no other can know. That is not to say, however, that the other cannot acquire limited knowledge of my inner-self, or make true<sup>161</sup> inferences about it. It is, at any rate, the aspect of my self that is not normally revealed. The inner-domain is that region of being which legitimately excludes the other; we shall return to this below. The inner-self, though, includes all of the desires and impulses on which one chooses *not* to act or to entertain. Thus, there always appears to be more to the inner-self than can be represented or known by another at any one time.

So, on the one hand there is the observable, outer-self, the 'I' that everyone can know; on the other hand, there is the introspectable,<sup>162</sup> inner-self, the 'Me' that no other can know as I know it. The inner-self is what one turns to in turning away from the outer-self, for example, when an other's view of one diverges from one's own critical view. It is worth emphasising that I do not mean to deny that these 'self-aspects' are borne of social interaction and a 'public' language; that the genesis of one's sense of self arises in a social context I take to be trivially true and unimportant for our purposes.<sup>163</sup> I take the inner-self to be something of an achievement, rather than a given.

I will speak of 'occupying' or being explicitly aware of either inner- or outer-domains of the self. One does the former by focusing one's awareness on the inner 'Me' during introspection. One 'occupies' the latter, outer 'I' by having in one's mind the attributes of the outer-self, such as its roles, what is socially expected of it and how it does or must appear to others.

I am claiming that the object of one's shame usually involves *both* aspects of the self: the 'I' that is portrayed, witnessed and observed by the other. And, the 'Me' that only I can know independently of the observable 'I'. From here, it is tempting to think that heteronomous instances of shame target the outer-self, and autonomous instances of shame target the inner-self.

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<sup>161</sup> I take 'truth' to mean a correspondence between one's beliefs and what is the case, which, here, are the characterological or behavioural attributes of the shamed.

<sup>162</sup> I am using the term in an ordinary way, presupposing no particular conception of introspection, for example, as 'inner observation' analogous with visual observation.

<sup>163</sup> The reasons found in §3.1. 'Clarification' apply here also.

But before putting that thought to the test, we shall need to face an objection and appease a definitional concern.

### The Other and the inner-self

That heteronomous shame targets *only* the outer-self may be objected to on phenomenological grounds. This is because some heteronomous experiences of shame seem to take the *inner-self* as the object of shame; in other words, the actual other sometimes seems able to target the inner-self. It is as if the other had directly accessed my inner-self by seeing me as I *really* am, in all my authenticity. If we are to accept the phenomenology together with the way we have set up these different senses of self, the apparent problem is in explaining how the other can really access the 'Me' of the inner-self. After all, isn't the inner-self that which is only knowable introspectively? The problem seems to be an epistemic one about how to explain the other's intrusion into the inner-domain of the self, exemplified by the debilitating shame that accompanies being painfully touched to the core by an actual other.

We said that another cannot know my inner-self as I know it. That is not to say, however, that the other cannot have an albeit limited, but sometimes, more discriminating understanding of my inner-self, or make true inferences about it, or hold beliefs which correspond to its actual nature. An other's knowledge of my inner-self becomes apparent to me when I take his inferences (or the possibility of them) to correspond with the attributes of my inner-self.

Others may be *permitted* to see limited parts of the inner self, for example, through confession, therapy or other intimate relations where intimacy is legitimised. Or, they may be perceived to *transgress* its boundary when, for example, I become explicitly aware of the fact the other is or may be, without my consent, conveying something negative about my character that he infers through my actions or utterances. However, the other does not have access, *beyond such forms of correspondence*, to my inner-self. A little reflection should show that that correspondence can adequately serve the function of the shaming judgement.

But the question arises: what we are to call such corresponding beliefs marking out attributes of our inner-selves? The worry is that if the other holds true beliefs about attributes of my inner-self, then does that not become something I know that others know and, therefore, part of the outer-self? This much follows from our definition of these senses of self. And one might think that this presents a problem for our characterisation because the boundary marking out the inner-self seems to fade once one undergoes shame. But this is not anything to be overly worried about. What we are concerned with is the occurrent *state* of shame. Like all emotions (as



opposed to persistent moods or dispositions), shame is a state of relatively brief duration, and, as I will go on to show, that state is *transitional* and *unstable*. It arises during exposure, which is itself, typically, short-lived. As such, our initial definitions, whilst appearing somewhat static, may still apply without generating problems for this characterisation of the heteronomous state of shame. Attributes of the inner-self *after* they have been exposed, may, nonetheless, be called attributes of the outer-self.

However, and this needs to be stressed, we should resist the urge to *immediately* reclassify attributes of inner-self, now as those of the outer-self, when they are suddenly, and to speak metaphorically, displaced in the outer-domain. This is because the inner-self, in that transitional period that is shame, still retains its ties to the inner-domain, the private and intimate aspects of one's sense of self. In fact, those very ties help constitute shame. As Tomkins observes, there is in shame an 'unwillingness of the self to renounce the object. In this respect [shame] is not unlike mourning, in which I become exquisitely aware of the self just because I will not surrender the love object which must be surrendered.'<sup>164</sup> Similarly, for example, the voyeur does not *entirely* abandon his desire to peek, it still characterises part of his uninhibited, inner-self. For as long as the inner-self is marked by that desire, the voyeur remains liable to shame. As long as those desires are exposed, their disqualifying and diminishing character constitutes one's shame. Shame involves the exposure of what was hidden or masked, or the acute awareness of what previously went unrecognised or unacknowledged. The object of shame, for it to remain an object of shame, needs to retain, in some way or another, its intimate or private status for it to constitute 'revelation' or 'exposure'.

### The Imagined Other and the Inner-self

It is easy to see how an other's judgement of one, that is, of one's outer-self, can also be performed by an *imagined* other. For example, the imagined other can reinforce my beliefs about what I think the other knows about me. Visualising an imagined other can help to colour my self-image by providing an *indication* of how others might view me, and through that, inform my opinion of how I suspect actual others view me, thus comprising my outer-self representation or image. Equally, the imagined other can help inform my opinion of the possible judgements that actual others may make about me, opinions that again, help constitute my outer-self image. But how does the imagined other feature within the inner domain of the self? In particular, what function does it serve in autonomous shame? Bearing in mind that shame is characterised by

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<sup>164</sup> (1963) p.137.

exposure and revelation, what is there for an imagined other not to see in order to *expose*? Is not the imaginary other superfluous here?

I shall not extend the role of the imaginary other, in some form or other, into the inner-domain of the self, for reasons stated in the next paragraph. This would be to regard the 'other' as already part of the very structure of *autonomous* shame.<sup>165</sup> Regarding shame in this way would mean that the notion of the imagined other (in autonomous shame) entirely *replaces* the role served by the actual other (of an heteronomous shame), only now without the epistemic limitations of the latter. As such, the imagined other would already be within the gates of the self, so to speak, and therefore, free to directly observe all aspects of my inner-self, even the shameful ones. But that freedom generates a problem about how to explain the idea of exposure and revelation that seems essential to shame.

The imagined other, conceived of as *within the autonomous domain of the inner-self*, generates the need for additional explanatory components within the structures of the self in shame. The problem with resorting to the notion of an imagined other within the inner-self is that we must introduce a further mechanism to explain how the imaginary other *comes to see* the shamed, exposed, 'naked' 'Me', as distinct from the once 'covered', pre-shameful 'Me'. That mechanism must be one which mediates between the imaginary other and the 'Me', effectively censoring what is hidden from what is then shamefully revealed.

An appeal to a Freudian structure of the mind is the obvious and glaring choice at this point. I will not, however, make such an appeal, not only in the interests of explanatory economy, but for another reason, found in a generalised Sartrean objection to Freudian metapsychology.<sup>166</sup> According to this objection, the 'censor mechanism' introduces a regress, if not contradiction. This is because the *censor* must be both aware and not aware of what is occurring within the partitioned mind.<sup>167</sup> This means that the censor must itself be divided into that which is aware and simultaneously unaware of the intrapsychic activities occurring between the unconscious and conscious parts of the self. Or else, there is a division and tension that remains unexplained.<sup>168</sup>

We cannot do justice to the intricacies, nor required defence, of Freudian theory here. I take it, however, that the Sartrean objection, in very general terms, stands.<sup>169</sup> Freudian mechanistic reductions are at any rate something we can do without, I will go onto show, in order

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<sup>165</sup> But not, of course, heteronomous shame, which is essentially constituted by the thought of the other.

<sup>166</sup> See Sartre (1953) pp.52-53.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> As Sartre puts it, '[T]he censor in order to apply its activity with discernment must know what it is repressing...But it is not sufficient that it discern the condemned drives: it must also apprehend them as to be repressed...[But], how could the censor discern the impulses needing to be repressed without being conscious of discerning them? How can we conceive of a knowledge which is ignorant of itself? pp.52-53.

<sup>169</sup> Gardner (1993) supports this point. See Chapter 2 for more.

to explain an autonomous shame that targets the inner-self. We can agree that the idea of the imagined other can generate the fear of *heteronomous* shame, and can forewarn us of its possibility, but the imagined other, given its unlimited view of the inner-self cannot *expose* the inner-self, at least not without positing some quite extensive and additional mental apparatus. (Just to make clear, the imagined other is 'inner' in the trivial sense that he is part of one's awareness and is not a part of the actual world. But the imagined other, while within one's awareness is not 'within' or part of the characteristic features of the *inner-self*.)

For our purposes, however, all that we need postulate are two different degrees of awareness, things that are anyway required and implicit in the idea that shame arises with revelation and exposure, in both its autonomous and heteronomous manifestations. We shall deal with this in the following subsection.

One might also question whether these degrees of awareness can make sense of the notion of exposure within an autonomous shame. But that question arises because 'exposure' is often associated with a state of public exhibition and as such, most suited to an heteronomous characterisation of shame. There is another sense in which exposure can be thought of, one that does not make essential reference to the other; that is, an uncovering of what was once hidden, a *revelation* but of a reflexive kind. For example, reflecting on one's ignorant behaviour after the event may bring with it the sting of regret and shame as one comes to realise an undesirable trait or aspect of oneself that had, until now, passed unnoticed. Introspective awareness, and the knowledge that this may yield, is not without its obstacles.<sup>170</sup> Indeed, arriving at a conception of what one is really like, and not just what one thinks one is like, can be extremely difficult, not to mention painful, requiring time, hard work and experience.

### **Degrees of awareness in shame**

In addition to the contrast between the inner and the outer-self, we need another distinction in our characterisation of shame, one that is anyway implicit in most, if not all, characterisations of shame. That distinction is between different degrees of awareness.

Two kinds of awareness are necessary for shame: one implicit, the other, explicit. A good example of this transition between these different kinds of awareness occurs when one is

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<sup>170</sup> This ties in with what Peter Goldie (2004) calls the opacity of introspection. pp.95-98. Quoting Kant, 'For it is not possible to man to see so far into the depth of his own heart that he could ever be thoroughly certain of the purity of his moral purpose and the sincerity of his mind even in one single action, although he has no doubt about the legality of it.... How much of the element of pure morality in their mental disposition may have belonged to each deed remains hidden even from themselves.' *Metaphysics of Morals* VI 1(b) [392].

completely immersed in some creative activity: one 'inhabits' the act, so to speak, in which one is not explicitly aware of the 'I' or the 'Me'. Then, perhaps very suddenly, one's attention is brought back to this moment, these surroundings and this lived body.

In experiencing shame, one *becomes* aware of that observing other, or of this loss of self-esteem. For our characterisation of shame, we may say that in the former state of awareness, one is minimally or implicitly aware of certain aspects of the self; in the second state, one is explicitly aware. In shame, one always shifts from a low to high state of awareness.

If the distinction between the inner and the outer can be captured by reference to the 'direction' of attentional focus, which may be 'inwardly' towards the introspectable, 'inner', 'Me' or, 'outwardly' towards the self in relation to the 'outer', 'I', then, degrees of awareness may be captured by reference to the *kind* of attentional focus: implicit or explicit.

Now, let us turn to some of the instances of shame that had troubled us previously. They will be explained in terms of our new distinction between aspects of one's sense of self. This should clear up any issues to do with their heteronomous or autonomous characterisation. Along the way we shall distinguish, albeit in a limited way, between the structure and the meaning of the experience of shame.

### **Example 1**

Let us take what we have been regarding as shame at nakedness before an actual other. Scheler gives the following example. When a mother saving her child from a burning house runs naked into the street she will feel no shame. Yet, once the child is saved she will become conscious and ashamed of her nakedness. There are two parts to this example.

*First*, rescue is an extension of her care, and an expression of her inner-self and its values. In the rescue attempt, the woman is implicitly aware of nothing but the inner domain and her impulses, saving her cherished one is, naturally, all that she can think of. But she is explicitly unaware of any further aspect of her inner- or outer-self. But now the baby is no longer in danger, and she becomes aware (*secondly*) that she has, might have been, or will be, observed. Her attention, independently of her will, moves from an implicit awareness of her inner-self, the moral preoccupation with rescue, to an explicit awareness of the outer-self, which manifests itself as a concern for her nakedness before the neighbours, which is now the socially appropriate concern.

But in the second part we reach a limit to our *structural* explanation about the involuntary transition of attention between aspects of the self. The content of the woman's concern is normatively but very deeply grounded and beyond the universal structure that we are attributing

to shame. It is relative to particular socio-moral norms concerning nakedness in public. In providing a reason for this woman's normative concerns, and an explanation of why she feels shame at nakedness, we end up presupposing much about the substantive features of the ethical world in which our subject experiences shame. Let us explain.

### Shame-making features

It is sometimes possible to abstract from such historical and socio-moral contingency in the attempt to move towards the more universal, non-specific, structural features of shame. But in so doing we will usually fail to fully appreciate what *makes* an act shameful. For example, when a tribeswoman, against her social norms, is made to cover her sexual parts by a missionary, she runs and hides with all the manifestations of shame.<sup>171</sup> We may try to understand the tribeswoman's (lack of the) concept of nakedness and, we may be aware of how she experiences shame just from the phenomenology of shame-feelings in general, but we cannot entirely appreciate what *makes* clothing shameful for her or quite grasp the *meaning* of her shame when she is made to clothe herself. We could try to give a rationalisation by saying that her exposure derives from her clothing, which draws the unwarranted attention of others' to her sexual parts, an explanation we can appreciate given that the 'shameful parts' is an obsolete expression for the sexual parts. Her bare skin, paradoxically to us, must then be that which 'covers' and 'clothes' her in that society. But to make sense of that, we still need to appreciate the cultural context surrounding these sexual norms, and perhaps more, such as living and being a part of that culture. We need to bear in mind that such norms may not always be obvious, and such appreciation may not always be possible. This applies not only cross-culturally, but in between the potentially immense diversity of individuals' psychologies; what shame's one person, because, say, of some childhood trauma, may not necessarily shame another.

The boundary conditions between the structure of shame and what we may call, the *shame-making* features can vary, then, between variants of shame. For example, more primitive instances of shame, that is, shame which is caused by reasons that are not transparent to the subject, like shame at nakedness, usually appear to have much less ethical content: they do not, for example, typically involve *self*-ascribed characterlogical judgements, or make direct reference to one's inner- sense of self, but that is not to say that norms of nakedness cannot be very complex. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that that any ethical content in these seemingly more

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<sup>171</sup> Scheler (1987) cites this example. P.13

primitive cases figures too deeply, perhaps pre-rationally, or is too engrained in our psychologies to be made rational sense of, all of the time.

There are, naturally, many things about our ways of being, our thoughts, motives, intentions, values and commitments that we want or need to hide. With things that are regarded as morally contemptible, or less than appropriate, the reason why they warrant protection, concealment and issue in shame when exposed, is often built into them. However, these reasons are less clear when dealing with shame at nakedness because these reasons are often obscure and deeply embedded within our psychological histories. All that we can say is that nakedness is a form of exposure and, what *makes* that exposure shameful is to be found in normative and psychological conditions often beneath the level of reasons that can normally be attributed.

As far as we can comment on this mother's shame, her nakedness exposes her to degradation (first) from the public domain and (possibly second) from herself. First, she may be exposed to the judgements of others; judgements that she may apprehend in any number of ways. That apprehension leaves open the possibility that her inner-self (secondly) is indirectly implicated in the hostile and demeaning interpretations that others place on her nakedness.<sup>172</sup>

So, this woman's social status (her outer-self image or representation) is diminished by her contravention of accepted and acceptable norms; this much is fairly clear. But through that social contravention, we can do no more than assume that she may also, in some, perhaps even irrational, way, judge herself adversely. If her nakedness is connected with her outer-sense of self in a very superficial way, one that does not connect with her self-value and, one that omits the inner-self, then this woman's experience, I am maintaining, slides into a grey area between shame and embarrassment. It is likely, therefore, that 'shame at nakedness', which, on this reading, can never be nakedness as such because it is an inherently normative concept, operates on the border between these two related emotion-types. To see why, consider changing the normative context of this woman's nakedness, say, from the Puritanism of Victorian middle-England to the modern-day tolerance of nakedness of Northern Europe. Given the latter, it is more than likely that we would *not* attribute shame to this woman, but rather, embarrassment. One of the distinguishing features of embarrassment, we are now able to say, is that, unlike shame, it touches the outer-self, but not the inner-self. Embarrassment, recall, is prototypically a minor loss of poise or composure before an other and, necessarily 'heteronomous' or an outer-experience, for one cannot feel embarrassed when alone, nor equally, shame at nakedness when alone. It tends not to affect our

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<sup>172</sup> This is supported by Velleman (2006) '[P]ublic nakedness violates social norms and consequently elicits social censure, which can be echoed by self-censure on the part of its object' p.47.

deeply held convictions and self-values of the inner-self. If shame at nakedness is indeed shame, our characterisation shows it to be very close to embarrassment.

## Example 2

Now consider Sartre's voyeur. While peeking through the keyhole, any sense of outer-self is lost, for he is fully engaged with the events behind the door, maintaining only an implicit awareness of his inner-self. Let us deal with an actual judging observer (what we have been calling the heteronomous case), and then a non-actual, non-judging 'other', such as the sound of footsteps, in which the content of the shaming judgement is self-derived and, therefore, 'autonomous'. But first, let us clarify the shame-making feature of this situation.

Our voyeur generally recognises scopophilia to be an undesirable trait, or perhaps a vice, but certainly something that is forbidden. This much is implicit, for it is that very intrusion into another's privacy, against the norms of privacy, which frames the object of the voyeur's stimulation. The door represents the social barrier to the intimate domain of another. And it is because that barrier conceals the 'forbidden', transgressing it contributes to the voyeur's excitement and, his later shame; it is what makes his act shameful.

### The 'heteronomous' case

The actual, observing, judging other serves a dual and simultaneous function: *firstly*, the observer causes the man to become explicitly aware of his inner-self, the self he does not wish to reveal, for peeking is what he has succumbed to, and voyeurism, let us say, is what wholly characterises the man and his uninhibited desires at that moment. *Secondly*, the observer shocks the man into an explicit awareness of his outer-self, what he thinks this observer, and possibly others, *actually* think of him, that is, a scopophiliac. This is exposing because his unprotected inner-self is truthfully<sup>173</sup> represented in his outer-self for potentially all to see. What only he knew or was implicitly aware of about himself is now something that others know or can know about him.

Let us take a moment to say some more about the nature of this exposure. When the voyeur's inner-self is exposed before the other, in the outer-domain, it is forced to occupy a space that it is not prepared for. The question of one's (or another's) reasons, justifications or judgements in shame arise with that initial and revealing 'displacement'. In shame, we find ourselves ill-equipped for *any* kind of revelation or realisation within the outer-domain (or the

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<sup>173</sup> As we shall see, that accuracy or truthfulness of that mirroring is not a necessary part of shame.

inner-domain for that matter), yet alone a sudden, shocking and disturbing one, and much less one that might be true of us.

That the inner-self is simply unprepared and unqualified to meet the demands of its mere appearance in the outer-domain explains why a *negative* judgement is not a necessary condition of shame, and why, for example, the mere and benign gaze of an uncritical child, oblivious to the norms of privacy, can just as easily shame the voyeur as a look that is deemed to convey an actual judgement. It also explains why shame is not always merely a question of failure or transgression. It does not matter that those failures or transgressions, are rightly or wrongly, appropriately or inappropriately, even, rationally or irrationally,<sup>174</sup> self-ascribed<sup>175</sup> or ascribed by another. All that matters is that they are, nonetheless, intelligibly ascribed to one's inner-self, or perceived to be so, when the inner-self is exposed or revealed.

#### The 'autonomous' shaming judgement

In the voyeur's shame, the footsteps share the same (first) function with heteronomous shame: they cause the transition from an implicit to explicit self-awareness. But the *modality* of the second function, that is, the *mode* of one's self-focused judgement, changes. It changes from actuality, as with a heteronomous characterisation involving a judgement conveyed by a real-life critic, to that of possibility and the 'conditional judgement' that we introduced earlier. This introduces the possibility of an 'heteronomous' aspect in the self-derived, shaming judgement and a point at which our initial heteronomous and autonomous classifications appear somewhat crude because they fail to distinguish the source of the content of the shaming judgement.

So, firstly, and to repeat the above, only now for the 'autonomous' shaming judgement, the footsteps cause the man to become explicitly aware of his inner-self, of what or who he is, namely, a voyeur. The recognition of that thought, according to our characterisation, grounds the shame that he feels as the inner-self is brought into the outer-domain. But, secondly, the footsteps shock the man into becoming explicitly aware of his outer-self, not of what others actually see (as with the heteronomous case), but of what other's *could* or *could have* possibly seen. This is where our notion of the 'conditional shaming judgement' fits in and the change of modality. Shame arises because of the realistic threat<sup>176</sup> of that possibility of being seen and exposed.

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<sup>174</sup> One might think, for example, that feeling shame for the atrocities of one's forefathers is not rational; it is, though, understandable and intelligible.

<sup>175</sup> The experience of one's very own desires, thoughts, and feelings can be revelatory. For example, one can be astonished and bewildered at one's very own lack of empathy or affected, over-sentimentality.

<sup>176</sup> The threat must be believed to be real, for it to induce shame. Otherwise, we shall need to introduce something like the notion of self-deception, which is not without its problems.



However, the original characterisation of autonomous and heteronomous shame begins to break down because, needless to say, the thought of the other can be invoked even when the actual other is absent. This is one reason why focusing on whether the inner- or outer-self is involved (as opposed to the question of actuality and the other) makes for a less problematic characterisation of shame.

### Example 3

Scheler's model poses for a long time without feeling shame. But now, the artist's prurient glances induce shame in her. This is perhaps the most complex of all our examples, and open to a number of possible explanations. On this characterisation, this example reveals a number of transitions between the inner- and outer-domains of the self. What makes this example complex is that shame arises simultaneously on two levels, amounting to a 'double' shaming exposure: the first aspect is the intrusion of the man's intimate thoughts into the model's awareness,<sup>177</sup> the second aspect is the thought of her being party to this man's desires.

First, the artist, by expressing his interest in the model, is, let us assume, revealing (or, from the model's perspective, imposing upon her) the intimate, inner-attributes of his desirous self. For the model, the man no longer occupies the role of an artist, or does so only superficially. She is partly ashamed by the fact that she is, against her will, privy to this man's inner-self that is revealed in his wanting glance. The latter, as far as the model is concerned, is suggestive of an uninvited and unwelcome intimacy.

Second, the model has a very precise role which is reinforced by the artist's *objective* study of her body—hers is not a body to be subjectively desired but one that takes only a disinterested, artistic form. In her recognition of the artist's desire for her, her outer-self, her self as conceived of by how an artist ought to view a model, compared with how the artist views her *as a model*, is dissolved by the look of desire. That role which had until now protected her as a woman and sexual object is suddenly removed.

Of course, we need to suppose that the woman attributes a certain disvalue to the implications of the artist's gaze (whatever she takes them to be). But she does so in a way that does not (cannot) cohere with her inner- and outer-self-images or representations. The artist's desirous gaze overwhelms both domains of the self.

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<sup>177</sup> Accounts of Scheler's model by Taylor, Williams, Wollheim and Scruton all fail to account for this half of what I call a 'double' exposure.

The outer-self fails to cope because her role as a model is not, if you will, prepared to deflect this, or any man's desire. It is something, let us suppose, that she is not conditioned or prepared for. The inner-domain, on the other hand, fails to cope because the object of the artist's gaze has, without her consent, changed from an object within the outer domain (a model) to one which is operating at the level of her inner domain (a sexual partner) the latter of which involves her inner-self in a potentially exposing way. The reason why this is exposing is because a demand is implicitly made upon the model to respond, whether through rejection or consent. Up until her awareness of the artist's admiration for her, her inner-self had remained detached and protected, and did not significantly or explicitly comprise her awareness of the situation. Now, however, her inner-self is implicated and tainted by the artist's obscene and unmanageable glance.

But how does a *negative* impact upon her self-value arise? This is a question that troubled us previously, but we can now suggest an answer. Her inner-self is tainted, not by anything of negativity issuing from the artist, for his gaze is one of, let us say, admiration, but by the thought that she could be party to that sexual possibility and the reciprocated desire, as that very thought is rejected by her. This is the particular thought that degrades her. That thought, moreover, is not relative to any other, or as any other sees her, which is to say, a reflection of her outer-self, but a thought that arises only as she introspects upon her inner-self. In this respect, any negativity derives from an *autonomous* shaming judgement.

However, that thought is imposed upon her, against her will (and not just independently of it), for as long as she 'submits' to (i.e., poses explicitly aware of) the artist's unsolicited desires. Under the first aspect of the double exposure, her shame is wholly heteronomous. The artist has exposed his intimate desires and the model has unwillingly seen the artist 'naked', as it were; she has seen into his privacy. Under the second aspect, her shame is heteronomous in only a limited sense. The presence of the artist for the model's shame is only a causal feature, which is to say, the artist is merely a trigger of her shame. But the artist, as an *actual* other, is only a contingent feature of the model's shame, for we can imagine that the model may come to feel shame, albeit less intensely when, all alone a few hours later, she comes to realise the meaning of the artist's gaze. Again, we see how our previous heteronomous-autonomous disjunction cannot capture what is happening in this case.

#### **Example 4**

Now we must consider what has been regarded as the wholly autonomous case or, the case not involving the outer-self. Take a solitary artist, completely absorbed in work, which he knows no-

one else shall ever see. The more time progresses, the less he achieves. Having exhausted all circumstantial reasons, such as his poor working conditions and inadequate equipment, for his lack of success, he comes to realise that these factors can no longer explain his continual failure. Now that these reasons have been exhausted, he turns towards himself. He becomes explicitly aware that he alone is the reason for yet another failed masterpiece, and a lifetime of artistic disappointment; he is overcome with shame, as the accounts cited previously, would have us think.

It is always open for us to say that his failure targets his outer-self and his social reality is brought to his attention: a hopeless failure is what he may think others think of him. On the other hand, his failure reveals to him the inner-self, utterly diminished from within. If it is true that both aspects of the self are implicated, on our account, his shame would involve a transition of attention between outer- and inner- senses of self. The inner-self would be devastatingly validated by the characteristics of the outer-self. The artist would then become explicitly aware of failing to meet his inner-self-standards, producing a masterpiece being the measure of his self-worth and, he would be made explicitly aware of the possibility of the other's judgement.

But, one might object, is it necessarily the case that he entertains thoughts about his outer-self? He simply might not, as would be true of what has been defined as an autonomous shame. If the artist does not entertain thoughts about the outer-self, artistic disappointment nonetheless contributes to the collapse of his self-worth. But now, strictly following our characterisation, there is no transition of attention between inner- and outer-aspects of self: rather, any changes are limited to increasing degrees of awareness within that single, inner-domain. This, notice, is precisely the reverse of the primitive case (example 1) in which our explanation seemed to eliminate the transition between the inner and the outer (it was limited only to the outer-self). Even though we were more willing to consider 'example 1' an instance of shame (because the notion of the other features so strongly in our intuitions about shame), it nonetheless appeared in a grey area between shame and embarrassment. If, in this case, the artist's 'shame' is limited to the inner-domain, if it is indeed a mature, non-primitive shame that afflicts the artist, it is of a variant that is not paradigmatic of shame – paradigmatic, it should be emphasised, as maintained by our account, but something bordering shame and a loss of self-esteem or diminishment of self-worth.

### **4.3 The 'resolution'**

We began this study by regarding heteronomous and autonomous shame as hinging on the presence of the actual other. We showed how that did not make sense of the imagined other or the shaming judgement issuing from one's self. However, focusing on the notion of the shaming judgement made characterising shame in terms of heteronomy and autonomy extremely difficult. For example, the trigger of one's shame may be external (heteronomous) but without content (footsteps); the content of the shaming judgement must then be self-attributed and self-derived (autonomous) but that judgement may be of a form that shares its structure with the negative judgement of an other or, makes essential reference to the other (heteronomous). It becomes very difficult to say whether one's shame is then *either* autonomous or heteronomous: it is a mix of both, and a complex one.

It seems that that complexity cannot be avoided. If we must retain the language of an 'autonomous' and an 'heteronomous' shame, it is best done by associating these kinds of shame with the inner-self and the outer-self, respectively. Then, rather than trying to determine the various ways in which aspects of the shaming judgement can be autonomous or heteronomous, we can instead concentrate on the dynamic between these aspects of the self out of which that shaming judgement, under whichever characterisation, emerges.

The way in which we have characterised shame preserves many of the diverse features we uncovered in the literature with respect both to shame's autonomy and heteronomy and, as the previous examples have revealed, is able to replace or explain away the tension that emerges between autonomous and heteronomous characterisations of shame. The inner-self can be truthfully reflected in, or correspond to, the characteristics of one's outer-self, as when the voyeur realises that his inner-most desires have been recognised by the other. Equally, the outer-self can be seen to implicate the inner-self, as when the model realises that her nakedness is no longer regarded impersonally, but as representative of the possibility of sexual intimacy.

So, the relationship between the inner- and the outer-self is such that a threat to either one can indirectly threaten the other. In one direction (from inner to outer) I may fear appearing a certain way because I fear it may reveal something of my inner-self that I believe merits concealment, like voyeuristic tendencies. The voyeur is shamed by footsteps because of the possibility that his inner-self is mirrored and exposed in the outer-domain, where a shameful truth may be realised.

In another direction, (from outer to inner), my outer-self is tainted by another's false judgement. Here, there is no shameful truth to be realised, or to correspond with my inner-self. Rather, the other falsely imputes an unworthy characteristic. This comes to me from the outer-domain, and even though it does not correspond with any of the characteristics of my inner-self,

the fact that this imputation is taken to be true of me by another, and sometimes, the fact that I may come to realise that this imputation *may* be true of me (given, for example, the intrinsic doubt and uncertainty that I may harbour), can suffice for shame.

Our new characterisation, however, has revealed that wholly heteronomous, brute and inadvertent nakedness and, wholly autonomous, diminishment of self-esteem, are limiting cases of shame. With wholly heteronomous shame, there appears to be nothing available to us, beyond the shame-making features that reflect poorly on one's social esteem or outer-self, that we can call diminishing of one's self-value or of one's inner-self. For a start, there appear to be no negative, characterological judgements to be made about the naked woman saving her child (perhaps only the contrary, considering her disregard for her personal safety). Her shame, if it is that, is not immediately experienced as making reference to her inner-self; hers is merely shame *at* her nakedness, before the public gaze and is, essentially, a shame at her outer-self. Supplying further content to that shaming judgement, however, is difficult without an appreciation of those norms of nakedness in operation and it is perhaps only here, if at all, that we may find how she takes her inner-self to be indirectly involved. Indeed, that failure of appreciation makes it seem that 'primitive' shame, that is, shame which is caused by reasons that are obscure to the subject, because they have been, say, pre-rationally ingrained, resists fuller explanation. But our account can, nonetheless, provide a complete *structural* explanation. If it is actually shame, and not something closer to embarrassment that this account plausibly, I think, indicates about her experience, she moves from implicit to an explicit awareness of her outer-self within a particular normative context. And it is only in those details which, if at all, involve the inner-self, that we can begin to understand what makes her nakedness shameful and not merely embarrassing.

The question of a wholly autonomous shame has probably been the most difficult to reconcile with our pre-philosophical views of shame. But it is a credit to our characterisation that it highlighted a difficulty in construing it as shame, matching our pre-philosophical thinking. It is plausible to think that a wholly autonomous shame is rare and manifests itself with considerably less intensity than a 'fully-fledged' shame involving both aspects of the self. If what we have been calling a wholly autonomous shame is as such, it is a variant of shame that appears in another grey area, this time, perhaps, bordering shame and self-esteem.

Before we made the distinction between aspects of one's sense of self we were torn between which heteronomous or autonomous characterisation to opt for. But now we see how shame involves *both* (whether directly or indirectly) the inner- and outer- senses of self, within the very same shame-inducing scenario. And, given that these characterisations, according to our account, *do not first turn on the question of whether the actual or imagined other feature in*

*explanations of shame, but rather, on the question of whether the inner- and the outer-selves are implicated* we see that autonomous and heteronomous characterisations of shame do not generate a contradiction but are nonetheless compatible, in just the same way that different aspects of one's sense of self are compatible.

Why, then, does the aforementioned tension arise for philosophical reflection? There are two reasons. *First*, the *self* in autonomous and heteronomous characterisations of shame is underspecified; we tend not to distinguish between aspects of the self, and even when we do, we tend not follow through with that distinction, if only for want of a suitable model to ground such self-conscious emotions.

*Second*, the role of the *other* (real or imagined) is then either over- or under-emphasised. It is overemphasised in heteronomous characterisations, which tend to overlook the 'inner-self', in shame. This makes it appear that shame is limited to the outer-domain. It is underemphasised in autonomous characterisations, which tend to overlook the 'other', and, therefore, the possibility of integrating the 'outer-self', in self-focused, self-assessment. Sometimes, this makes it appear that the heteronomous 'other' is a superfluous and unnecessary component in the characterisation of shame.

Furthermore, the matter of this tension can appear confusing because shame paradigmatically operates on the boundary line between the inner and the outer. It is a product of the realisation of different aspects of the self, now in disharmony, within a particular normative context. In the protoemotion of shame, it is a product of the very drawing of the line between the 'inner' and the 'outer', or the bodily-self and the other.

Different aspects of one's sense of self arise in emotional life in tandem. In the developed individual they are intertwined and interdependent: the concealed cannot exist without the revealed, just as the inner-self cannot exist without the outer-self, or visa-versa.

I shall now conclude this thesis by extracting a positive characterisation of shame from the essential points of this study

## 4.4 A final characterisation of shame

*Shame is characterised by a painful, self-diminishing exposure and/or revelation that arises through the involuntary and unmanageable transition of attention between the inner-self and the outer-self.*

Let us explain.

*First*, shame arises in that *involuntary transition* of attention between the inner- and the outer-self. The inner- and outer-self possess certain qualities, comprising the relevant content or, the objects of one's attention. These qualities, as we have said, may be of the form of particular self-representations, self-concepts or self-images, relative to the 'inner' or the 'outer' domains of the self. However, in order to say more about these qualities, such as what it was about them that made one ashamed, we needed to appeal, more specifically, to some normative conditions or, what we called, 'shame-making' features. These are features with substantive normative content, which we might add, present the philosopher and psychologist with a rich and complex area for extended and further reflection. This brings us to our second structural feature.

*Second*, shame arises in that *unmanageable transition* of attention between the inner- and outer-self. It is not merely that shame arises when there is an involuntary transition of attention between the inner- and the outer-self, for such vacillation of attention is, at least implicitly, occurring during most of our social interactions. Rather, it is that shame arises when the qualities of the inner-self are painfully exposed within what is normally the domain of the outer-self or, when shaming judgements about the outer-self unmanageably reflect upon the inner-self. It is not necessary that the latter reflections are regarded as truthfully corresponding with the inner-self.

*Third*, what makes the transition unmanageable or unbearable for the shamed is an extremely painful and *self-diminishing* exposure or revelation. Exposure and revelation are exposing and revelatory relative to some value or that which may be held in esteem. This is normatively, and sometimes, psychologically very deeply (pre-rationally) grounded. We can better understand the shame that emerges when one's inner-self is often suddenly and without the opportunity for social masking or deceit, exposed before others, when, for example, we understand the nature of that socially undesirable quality of one's inner-self. If that understanding can be cultivated, it must be done through a wider appreciation of the particular normative context and those shame-making features. That wider appreciation, however, may not always be available to us, as for example, within cultures that are radically different to the ones that we are used to.

In shame, whether for psychological or for normative reasons, either a special set of inner-self attributes are unmanageably displaced in the outer-domain (inner to outer) and/or, conversely, a special set of outer-self attributes cannot be accepted as part of the inner-domain (outer to inner). Only after extended periods of time can these attributes be managed and accepted, if at all, as part of their opposing domains without being accompanied by intense feelings of vulnerability, dissonance or exposure. These special sets of attributes are delimited in two ways on this characterisation: firstly, by those things which impact on one's positive self-values, thoughts and commitments, broadly construed; and secondly, by the way in which they impact on the latter, which is to say, through the involuntarily or passive transition between implicit and explicit degrees of 'self'-awareness, or more accurately, albeit awkwardly, degrees of 'sense of self'-awareness. It is in this 'conflict' or 'displacement' of aspects of one's sense of self, and this revealed and acute tension between the 'inner' and the 'outer' within a particular normative setting, that we understand the kind of painful, anxiety-inducing elements involved. That tension occurs within a structure that is inherently *unstable* and transitional, and that is shame.

Let us finish with some final remarks. Shame is about the *self*. As to the question of whether we must necessarily posit the other or the other's judgement in an explanation of shame - we can now say that it depends on whether the outer-self is involved, and there are variants, or perhaps, borderline cases of shame in which the outer-self is not involved.

Shame arises when disharmony and discord between aspects of one's sense of self are brought to one's attention. It is not merely the case, as is often maintained, that *negative* judgements are the sole elicitors of shame. It is, rather, the involuntary transition between the two domains marking out different aspects of the self. This explains why occupying or being wholly within either domain of the self, one undergoes no shame. It explains why, for example, the model feels shame before the artist's desirous stare but not before his artistic gaze, the latter of which is limited to the outer-domain of an implicit agreement. And, it also explains why variants of shame that primarily occupy only one domain, are not paradigmatic of shame, operating in a grey area with other emotions and evaluative constructs. Thus, shame generally protects aspects of one's sense of self from judgements deriving from opposing domains.

Perhaps we should not be surprised to find that limiting cases have emerged. The emotion of shame is a highly complex phenomenon that grates against our philosophical urge to neatly categorise and to contain. It may be that the emotion of shame is simply unclear at the edges. This would explain why its philosophical characterisation can be seen to have generated the tension that it has.



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### **Online Resources**

*OED Online*: <http://dictionary.oed.com/>

*Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy Online*: [www.rep.routledge.com/](http://www.rep.routledge.com/)

*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: [www.plato.stanford.edu/](http://www.plato.stanford.edu/)