

Shame and the Internalized Other

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ABSTRACT

In *Shame and Necessity*, Bernard Williams engages in a forceful vindication of the ethical significance of shame. In his view, shame is an extremely productive moral emotion because of the distinctive connection that it establishes between self, others and world, through a self-evaluation that is mediated by an internalized other. In this paper, I examine Williams' conception of the internalized other and contrast it with other ways of conceiving the role of others in shame. I argue that, although Williams' views contain many important insights, much is to be gained by conceiving the role of others in Sartrean terms instead. The other's perspective is not merely internalized; it is constitutive of the kind of selfhood that has a capacity for shame.

KEYWORDS

Bernard Williams, shame, internalized other, moral emotion

Introduction

In *Shame and Necessity*, Bernard Williams engages in a forceful vindication of the ethical significance of shame. In his view, shame is an extremely productive moral emotion because of the distinctive connection that it establishes between self, others and world, through a self-evaluation that is mediated by an internalized other. In this paper, I examine Williams' conception of the internalized other and contrast it with other ways of conceiving the role of others in shame. I argue that, although Williams' views contain many important insights, much is to be gained by conceiving the role of others in Sartrean terms instead. It allows us to better understand the experience of shame and its moral significance. In Sartre's account of shame, the other's perspective is not merely internalized; it is constitutive of the kind of selfhood that has a capacity for shame. According to this view, the role of others in shame is at the same time thinner and more fundamental than the one advocated by Williams. It is thinner, because it does not presuppose the learning or endorsement of any substantial set of values and norms in order to feel shame. But it is also more fundamental, because it makes the relation with others, or rather, the capacity for it (relationality), *constitutive* of the self that can feel shame. This means that the structure of relationality is prior to any internalization of norms, and it establishes the ground for shame to become an emotion informed by norms and standards.

This paper starts by sketching a fairly typical definition of shame according to the relevant literature, a description that is in line with Williams' own account of this emotion. In order to clarify why he postulates the notion of an internalized other to explain shame, I take a step back and analyze the role of others in shame by contrasting it to other emotions in the same family, which shows that audiences are not necessary for shame. The question then arises: what is the role of others in shame? The following section returns to Williams' views on this matter, and specifically to his hypothesis of the internalized other. In the final section, I discuss my own Sartrean view and argue in its favor.

Shame

Among emotion researchers from various disciplines, the word 'shame' is often used in at least two senses. Some use 'shame' to refer to an "affect," i.e. a hard-wired, innate response,¹ that underlies a whole family of hedonically negative self-conscious emotions, including embarrassment, humiliation and some types of guilt. Many others use it to refer to a specific emotion belonging to this family. I will be using it in this latter sense, and comparing it to other related emotions in the following section, while retaining the idea that all these emotions form an inter-related family.

Shame as an individual emotion is characterized by a feeling of exposure, inferiority and vulnerability. Typical bodily manifestations include blushing, averting the gaze, adopting a collapsed bodily position and so on: in shame, one feels smaller or wishes to become smaller and hide from view. In the relevant literature, shame has been described through several labels: a self-conscious emotion, an emotion of self-assessment, a social emotion or a moral emotion. It has been labeled as a "self-conscious emotion" because it is directed back at myself: the intentional object of the emotion is the individual that feels it, *not* the situation or action which gives rise to the shame episode. In shame, I focus on myself and see myself as small, faulty or inadequate. As such, it has also been called an "emotion of self-assessment" because it involves a negative self-evaluation.² This negative self-assessment can be due both to active and passive aspects of selfhood: to actions and omissions of all kinds (lying to a friend, acting or speaking against one's values in order to maintain status in a particular social group), to things that befall us (victims of abuse typically feel it), to character traits, physical features, social background and so on.

The label "social emotion" refers to another key aspect of shame: exposure. Many authors claim that shame is a response to being exposed to the censoring gaze of a real, an imagined or an internalized audience.³ The unpleasantness of

¹ Cf. e.g. Elison, 'Shame and Guilt.'

² Taylor, *Pride, Shame, and Guilt*.

³ Cf. e.g. Williams, *Shame and Necessity*; Maibom, 'The Descent of Shame.'

exposure of a negative trait would explain why in shame we often experience a wish to hide and disappear from the view of others. However, the connection of shame to exposure to an actual external gaze or judgment is a rather controversial point, and this is what this paper focuses on. Finally, the label “moral emotion” mostly refers to its role in mechanisms of self-censorship and regulation of behavior according to norms or standards. This paper deals mainly with the social aspects of shame, but the other dimensions will come to the fore, especially the moral one, which was of special interest to Williams.

Shame and audiences

According to Williams, shame is an unequivocally social emotion. Now, to say that shame is social amounts to much more than saying that we learn the codes and standards of what is shameful from other people, that those standards are encoded in culture, or that shame serves social functions. As social psychologists Hareli and Parkinson⁴ and philosophers Deonna, Rodogno and Teroni⁵ explain, these claims are obviously true, but they do not tell us anything especially interesting about shame in particular, or even social emotions in general. They are far too broad to distinguish shame and the like from other, non-social, emotions, because all human emotions are partially governed and shaped by cultural codes and most of them serve social functions.⁶ Characterizing shame as social implies attributing to others a specific crucial role that is not exhaustively covered by the above general assertions. So what role do others play in shame?

In order to pin this role down, it is helpful to divide the possible answers into a taxonomy devised by Deonna, Rodogno and Teroni.⁷ They identify three different strands of the claim that shame is social: (i) shame as heteronomous, i.e., informed by values that do not belong to the ashamed subject, but to other people; (ii) shame as involving “an evaluation in terms of one’s appearance vis-à-vis an audience”; (iii) shame as the result of adopting an external perspective on ourselves.⁸ In short, others can provide the values, the gaze or the perspective. Williams, for his part, falls within the second strand: for him (and many others) the negative self-assessment of shame is triggered by the disapproving evaluation of an audience. But would he not fall within the first strand too? After all, what exactly causes my shame? The *gaze* of the other or her *evaluation* of me? Williams maintains that both are important, by arguing that this audience is an *internalized*

⁴ Hareli and Parkinson, ‘What’s Social About Social Emotions?’

⁵ Deonna, Rodogno, and Teroni, *In Defense of Shame*.

⁶ Cf. Hareli and Parkinson, ‘What’s Social About Social Emotions?’, 132–37; Deonna, Rodogno, and Teroni, *In Defense of Shame*, chap. 1.

⁷ Deonna, Rodogno, and Teroni, *In Defense of Shame*, 32–37.

⁸ They disagree with all three strands and offer a thought-provoking non-social account of shame, which I cannot engage with here.

other with very specific characteristics: it is, as we will see, a respected other. This dampens the heteronomy of shame to a very large extent. But how does Williams come to this conclusion? Let me spell out some of the considerations at play.

The first consideration is that, if shame requires an audience, it cannot possibly be an actual audience that is present in all instances of shame. After all, it is not difficult to think about examples of shame felt in solitude, when we think about our failures (even those that nobody else knows about), or when we remember certain past situations. This can be seen more clearly by comparing shame with embarrassment.

One might think that embarrassment is merely a mild form of shame, and indeed the two emotions are related, but there is an important experiential difference between them. Shame clearly concerns our sense of self; it burdens us with an “unwanted identity”⁹ and impacts our self-esteem and self-respect.¹⁰ As Williams brilliantly put it, shame helps us “understand how a certain action or thought stands to ourselves, to what we are and to what realistically we can want ourselves to be.”¹¹

Embarrassment does not seem to have this impact, and empirical studies have confirmed this.¹² Nussbaum points out the differential features of embarrassment, as opposed to shame: although both typically take the subject by surprise, embarrassment is “momentary, temporary and inconsequential,” while shame lasts longer and is more serious.¹³ This is the case, according to Nussbaum, because embarrassment does not involve, like shame, a sense of being flawed and defective, but merely a sense that something is socially out of place (marked social attention, often in the form of praise, can cause embarrassment). As such, it is social and contextual; it always requires an actual audience in front of which we are performing awkwardly. Solitary shame is possible, since one can feel faulty or inadequate when thinking about one’s flaws or remembering one’s failures, but solitary embarrassment (a solitary feeling of social awkwardness) makes no sense. The audience may turn out not to be there - perhaps you simply mistakenly thought that someone had seen or heard you - but it must be part of the story. And as soon as we are on our own, or we have ascertained that there was nobody looking or listening, embarrassment disappears without leaving a feeling of degradation. We typically feel embarrassed in front of others of things that do not embarrass us when we are alone, such as bodily functions, or of failures that are conceivable as such only because others are present, such as telling a joke that nobody else finds funny. This need not be the case in shame, which often concerns

⁹ Ferguson, Eyre, and Ashbaker, ‘Unwanted Identities.’

¹⁰ Cf. e.g. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, para. 67; Taylor, *Pride, Shame, and Guilt*; Deigh, ‘Shame and Self-Esteem.’

¹¹ Williams, *Shame and Necessity*, 93.

¹² Cf. Miller, *Embarrassment*, 22–28.

¹³ Nussbaum, *Hiding from Humanity*, 204–5.

flaws that are perceived as more permanent and much less dependent on the social context.

A good example of solitary shame can be found in the passages of *Anna Karenina* that describe her return to St. Petersburg from Moscow, where she has just met the dashing Vronsky.¹⁴ She sits alone in the train, with no audience, trying to fight her intense and anguishing shame by telling herself that her behavior to Vronsky was proper, that she did not betray her husband and nobody can blame her for anything. It is clear, however, that she does not dare to admit, even to herself, that a respectable and decent married woman like herself could have fallen in love with a dashing young officer like Vronsky. But who is the audience that is assessing her here in light of her unacknowledged feelings? And how to explain that she felt no shame at the party, while flirting and dancing with Vronsky in front of the high society of Moscow, and she only comes to feel it while she sits alone in the train?

This contrast between the two moments might lead one to think that audiences are irrelevant to eliciting shame: all Anna Karenina had to do was adopt a different perspective on herself and the situation. This might seem even clearer in an example proposed by Goldie in a different context:¹⁵ a man gets drunk at an office party, he climbs on top of a table and starts singing “Love is like a butterfly” at the top of his voice. At the time, in his drunkenness, he may have only been enjoying the music and the general merriment, but when he remembers the episode the next morning, he will see the situation in a different light, he will realize that his colleagues were laughing *at* him and not *with* him, and only then feel ashamed of himself. This would seem to indicate that the gazes of others, even when coupled with their mockery, are insufficient to cause shame: something is needed on the part of the subject as well, a change of perspective on himself. But does this completely rule out the need for an audience? Both Anna Karenina and the man in Goldie’s example exposed themselves publicly before an audience, and felt ashamed of themselves in solitude when they re-examined the situation, so the audience *was* a part of their memories. These examples might therefore suggest that both the audience and the change of perspective are necessary.

Furthermore, one might want to argue that the essential element is the negative evaluation of others: the man at the office party only becomes ashamed in the morning, because only then does he realize that his colleagues found him ridiculous. Similarly, Anna Karenina was engrossed with Vronsky and caught up in the excitement of falling in love with him at the party; while only in the train did she have enough distance from the excitement to realize what others must

¹⁴ Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, pt. 1, ch. 24.

¹⁵ Goldie, *The Mess Inside*, 38–39.

have been thinking about them. This might suggest, then, that the actual presence of others is unnecessary, but their evaluations are not.

Even so, it would be a mistake to argue that the awareness that others evaluate me negatively constitutes shame. This would amount to conflating the emotion of shame with what I would call “objective” shame, i.e., the verdict of society on what is shameful, or *disgrace*. Disgrace is not an emotion, but a condition. In the Online Oxford English Dictionary, it is defined as follows: “loss of reputation or respect as the result of a dishonourable action ... [*In singular*] a person or thing regarded as shameful and unacceptable.”¹⁶ A similar definition can be found in the Merriam Webster’s Dictionary: “*1a*: the condition of one fallen from grace or honor; *b*: loss of grace, favor, or honor. *2*: a source of shame.”¹⁷ Disgrace is, therefore, not an affective phenomenon, but a “social attribute,” i.e., an objective state, or a thing that can cause such a state. But the objective state of disgrace does not always necessarily cause shame: social attributes, codes and verdicts do not shape our experience of shame in a necessary and inescapable way.¹⁸ Shamelessness is possible and comes in many forms, including immorality and moral reformism.¹⁹ One may feel ashamed of things that are not disgraceful, and conversely, one may be in a state of disgrace in one’s society and not feel ashamed. One may argue that this is at some point the case of all moral reformers who actively criticize with the ways of life and the codes of shame and honor in their societies: think about Diogenes the Cynic, Jesus Christ and the sexual revolution, for example.²⁰ The possibility to resist the external verdict and respond to disgrace with defiance and even pride indicates that the external evaluation is also insufficient to cause shame.

What is then required for shame to arise? Sartre writes that “my shame is a confession”: in the moment of shame, I am endorsing the evaluation of unworthiness or inadequacy.²¹ Through shame I confess my “sin”, I confess that I am thus and so. Deonna, Rodogno and Teroni argue that this is the central element.²² They view shame as a negative self-evaluation in terms of my own self-relevant values, where no reference to the other is necessary. According to them, if I assess that I’m not capable of exemplifying my own self-relevant values, I will feel shame regardless of what others think or see in me. Their work yields a crucial insight: that my own values and perspective also play an important role in

¹⁶ Oxford Dictionaries Online. April 2010. Oxford University Press (accessed February 21, 2012). My emphasis.

¹⁷ “disgrace.” *Merriam-Webster.com*. Merriam-Webster, 2013. Web. 12 December 2013.

¹⁸ Yovel, ‘The Birth of the Picaro from the Death of Shame’, 1299.

¹⁹ Hutchinson, ‘Facing Atrocity.’

²⁰ Cf. *ibid.* for an interesting discussion of cases of shamelessness and their meaning; also Calhoun, ‘An Apology for Moral Shame.’

²¹ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 261.

²² Deonna, Rodogno, and Teroni, *In Defense of Shame*.

eliciting shame, but in my view they go too far. Evidence from empirical psychology seems to suggest that the role of audiences is crucial for intensifying and eliciting shame experiences.²³ Furthermore, looking at developmental psychology, it seems clear that all experiences of self-conscious emotion first appear in infants in the presence of audiences, which indicates that shame felt before others is much more primary than solitary shame.²⁴ Solitary shame depends on self-reflectivity and a well-developed self-concept, but not all shame is like this. Therefore, an account of shame that only accords a peripheral role to others seems to be missing something important.²⁵

The internalized other

Let me now turn to Williams' account of the role of others in shame. He is very well aware of the complexities of the issue that I addressed above, and in order to do justice to them, he (along with many other authors) defends the idea that shame is caused by the *internalization* of an audience, which doesn't necessarily involve explicitly imagining or remembering the audience every time.²⁶ Williams agrees to a large extent with Wollheim's Freudian account, which explains shame as caused by the introjection of an external authority figure, which becomes an internal "criticizing agency," or superego, that judges and censors the ego.²⁷ Freud believed that the superego starts to emerge around the fifth year of life, as a result of the child's internalization of the parents' moral standards through education.²⁸ For Freud, small children cannot feel shame, but during the developmental stage that he calls "sexual latency," a transition stage that goes approximately from 3 to 7 years of age (but may be longer or shorter depending on various circumstances), several "dams" are built that restrict and block the flow of sexual drive. These obstacles are shame, disgust and morality.²⁹ They arise as a form of self-protection, against a feared parental figure. According to Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex, the little boy phantasizes his father as threatening him with castration due to the boy's sexual desire for his mother. Then, in Wollheim's words, "in terror, the boy introjects the father, thereby exchanging a frightening external danger for enduring internal torment. The superego now harangues, upbraids, chastises the boy according to standards that make no allowances for,

²³ Smith et al., 'The Role of Public Exposure in Moral and Nonmoral Shame and Guilt.'

²⁴ Cf. Rochat, *Others in Mind*; Reddy, *How Infants Know Minds*.

²⁵ Cf. Zahavi, 'Self, Consciousness, and Shame.'

²⁶ Cf. e.g. Williams, *Shame and Necessity*; Maibom, 'The Descent of Shame.'

²⁷ Wollheim, *On the Emotions*.

²⁸ 'Superego | Psychology.'

²⁹ Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, 43, 58; see also Metcalf, 'The Truth of Shame-Consciousness in Freud and Phenomenology.'

indeed often expressly run counter to, the boy's own wishes."³⁰ Due to this developmental history, this introjected figure possesses both authority and heteronomous force:

[I]t is because internal figures originate, through an incorporative phantasy, from external figures, that, once they have been internalized, they may well continue to address the person who now harbors them as an alien force. They may set themselves to make the person feel shame or guilt on occasions when the person finds no reason to do so.³¹

Now, Williams does not make any claims about the developmental history of the internalized other, but he agrees that it possesses an authority that is related to its otherness, just like the superego does. But he makes a small observation here. On Wollheim's account, shame would share the same psychoanalytic origin as guilt: they would both be the result of different kinds of indictments by the superego. According to Williams, however, the figures that are internalized in these emotions are different, at least in terms of their perspectives and roles: in shame the internalized other would play the role of an observer or a witness, and in guilt, the role of a victim or a judge.³² The shaming audience, in any case, would be an element of our psyche, something we acquire and internalize as children, and that accompanies us throughout our lives, monitoring our emotions and behavior. Shame in these kinds of accounts is essentially in all cases a consciousness of exposure to the censoring gaze of another.

Now, this other cannot just be a literal copy of one's actual father and his values and norms, since people can come to be ashamed of their fathers (or their mothers, or their educators) for holding and cherishing values that they later repudiate. But on the other hand, it is also problematic to assume that the internalized other can simply be a placeholder for *any* observer, since not every observer, witness or judge can make us feel ashamed. Williams argues, for example, that we typically are not ashamed to be evaluated negatively by people we despise. In his view, therefore, the internalized audience is someone we respect.

To illustrate this, Williams employs the tragedy of *Ajax* by Sophocles. He quotes Ajax' suicide speech, where the Greek hero wonders how he can face his father after covering himself in shame.³³ This is not a purely rhetorical device: it points to something deep. Indeed, in the tragedy, Ajax is surrounded by people who express support and love for him, and do not condemn him: his servants and his wife. But he is a warrior, it is his honor as a warrior that is at stake, and those

³⁰ Wollheim, *On the Emotions*, 195–96.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 178–79.

³² Williams, *Shame and Necessity*, 219–223, Appendix I.

³³ *Ibid.*, 85; Sophocles, *Sophocles II*, *Ajax*, 462 seq.

views have no value for him in that context, no relevant impact on his sense of who he is. They have no power to counter the fact that he would feel deep shame in front of his (absent) father Telamon, who as a young man had been a brave and celebrated warrior. For Williams, however, in contrast to Wollheim, the crucial point is not that Telamon happens to be Ajax's father. What is essential is that Telamon functions, according to Williams, as the anchoring point that symbolizes the world where Ajax wants to live and the identity he wants to preserve (in this sense, his brother Teucer or his admired Achilles would have done just as well). Ajax is aware that the things that we do and do not do impact on who we are; that the world has certain expectations that must be fulfilled in order for us to possess and retain certain identities; that our identities, in short, are not under our exclusive control. In Ajax' case, his final monologue expresses that if he cannot command the respect of his father and men of similar position, worth and accomplishments, he cannot keep his identity as an honorable warrior, or his self-respect. In Williams' account, the internalized other always points towards the world I (want to) live in and its expectations of me:

The internalised other is indeed abstracted and generalised and idealised, but he is potentially somebody rather than nobody, and somebody other than me. He can provide the focus of real social expectations, of how I shall live if I act in one way rather than another, of how my actions and reactions will alter my relations to the world about me.³⁴

As such, what is crucial about the internalized other is that it commands our respect and functions as the reference point and limit to our possibilities in the world.³⁵ The fact that, according to Williams, respect is required implies that there is a degree of autonomy in the choice of the audience that can shame me, since respect seems to entail the recognition and admiration of certain values in the other. This means that my own values and standards are relevant to my shame and play a role in eliciting it. But at the same time, the other is genuinely other because it points towards my possibilities in the world, and those are not determined exclusively by me. Williams believes that giving respected others the power to shame us, even in the cases in which we do not share their opinions, is a sign of good moral discernment, because it entails a recognition of the limits of our own reason and the need for the help of others. Since, according to Williams, reason has its limits and moral truth is indeterminate, giving weight to the opinions of others is not incompatible with critical thinking and discernment: it is

³⁴ Williams, *Shame and Necessity*, 84.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 82–89.

often a result and an enhancement of them.³⁶ Shame is an acknowledgement that we give others that weight.

Now, Calhoun agrees with Williams in this last point, but she criticizes him for not going far enough.³⁷ According to her, his claim that, through respect, we have some power to choose the audience that can shame us is not so different from saying that in shame I am my own judge, that ultimately the only evaluation at play is my own evaluation of myself. This is so, in her view, because respect relies on shared values, and if the person I happen to respect betrays them, I would typically withdraw my respect.³⁸ In her view, therefore, Williams' solution means that eventually it all comes down to our individual values and norms. It wouldn't be so far away from an account of shame as autonomous, like the one proposed by Deonna, Rodogno and Teroni, who claim that the often referred-to phenomenology of the gaze of another is a metaphor through which we sometimes seek to make sense of shame.³⁹ It is part of some, but not all, instances of the emotion, and therefore cannot be a necessary factor for shame to arise. If this is so - their reasoning goes - would it not be more natural, and more faithful to the phenomenology of shame, to say that I am always the main judge, that the standards at play in this self-assessment are my standards?

Calhoun objects that accounts of this kind, which present shame as autonomous, have very undesirable implications when it comes to the shame that members of oppressed groups feel before the shaming of their oppressors.⁴⁰ In her view, these accounts cannot explain such instances of shame without implying that the oppressed are complicit in their own oppression at some level, or that they are morally immature or self-alienated, since they let themselves be influenced by external opinions they don't share or deem respectable. The dubious assumption that, in her view, this kind of accounts make is that "no rational, mature person who firmly rejects her subordinate social status would feel shame in the face of sexist, racist, homophobic or classist expressions of contempt,"⁴¹ and therefore, those people who do feel it are morally immature. Calhoun thinks this is unacceptable, because it shifts from the aggressor to the victim a substantial part of the responsibility for the suffering caused. Williams' account, in her view, has the same flaw, for it implies that in this sort of cases the ashamed subject respects someone who, in her own view, is not worthy of respect, and thus the suspicion of collusion stands. This cannot be right, she claims. Her strategy to avoid this problem, while honoring Williams' insight about the importance of others in our moral lives, consists in separating the realm of moral autonomy, reason and

³⁶ Ibid., 100, my emphasis.

³⁷ Calhoun, 'An Apology for Moral Shame.'

³⁸ Ibid., 134–35.

³⁹ Deonna, Rodogno, and Teroni, *In Defense of Shame*, pt. one.

⁴⁰ Calhoun, 'An Apology for Moral Shame.'

⁴¹ Ibid., 136.

knowledge from the realm of morality as a practice shared with others. Thus, I might recognize that the opinions of others have social weight and have an impact on me, because we're all participants in a shared practice of morality, while believing that these opinions are false, that they carry no epistemic weight.⁴²

Calhoun's strategy to save the autonomy of oppressed minorities is therefore to keep it separate from shame and give shame a different ethical role. When one is shamed for belonging to an oppressed group, one might deny the truth of the insulting remark, one might deny that the minority one belongs to actually has that negative trait, or deny that being a part of that group is a shameful thing, and still recognize the negative impact that such evaluations by others have in one's public identities, the power they have in shaping the world one will have to live in. That impact is real, and acknowledging it amounts to acknowledging a fact about the world and about our public identities, but it does not thereby imply that our capacity for autonomous judgment is compromised.

Now, there are at least two problems with Calhoun's criticism, one of them having to do with emotions of self-assessment, the other with respect. Beginning with the latter, one might argue that respecting another person does not have to entail agreeing with everything she says, thinks or values. This is clear in debates about tolerance. Indeed, the classic liberal way of thinking about tolerance, which is an essential attitude to cultivate in a pluralistic democracy, precisely requires distinguishing between respecting persons and agreeing with their actions, opinions or judgments. Tolerance is supposed to be justified *precisely because* one respects the person, since she is a free autonomous agent, and as such worthy of respect, *even though* one disagrees with her opinions - disagrees to the point where those opinions are deeply unpleasant, perhaps even in some sense painful to oneself, and yet one maintains one's respect for the person who holds them. Indeed, one *tolerates* those opinions out of respect.⁴³ With this I do not mean to take a position in the debate on tolerance, I simply mean to highlight that there are important and widespread views on respect that do not imply agreeing or even sharing values with the respected person. They merely imply conceiving persons as intrinsically valuable in themselves.

Judging by Calhoun's choice of examples, and from the ease with which she concedes that one might withdraw respect, it seems to me that she construes respect not in the above way, but as something quite close to admiration. Admittedly, Williams also chooses "role models" as examples of respected persons, and so he seems to lean in that direction as well. But if tolerance is thought of as a sign or a consequence of respect, I think both Calhoun and Williams go too far in approaching respect to admiration: respect is a more neutral attitude than they lead us to understand. At this point, one might think that such a notion of respect

⁴² Ibid., 139.

⁴³ Cf. Tonder, *Tolerance*.

is too wide to allow us to distinguish audiences that have the power to shame us from those that lack it, but I don't think so. Indeed, the problem with both Williams' and Calhoun's formulations is that they are too restrictive about who can shame us. In a sense, they get things the wrong way around. They seem to imply that nobody has the power to shame us *unless we give it to them*. In my view, the reverse is true: everybody has, to a higher or lesser degree, the power to shame us *unless we withdraw it* from them through contempt or disengagement, for example.⁴⁴ The power to shame is not a privilege we accord to certain esteemed others, it is a default power we all have over each other to varying degrees in social relations, and completely withdrawing it from particular individuals or groups is typically an effortful endeavor (with the exception perhaps of some pathological cases, like those of psychopathy or other social impairments).

The second of my criticisms to Calhoun has to do with her way of presenting the relation between shame and oppression. The main problem is that she only takes into account *one* of the varieties of shame and other shame-related emotions that come into play in resisting oppression and caving in to it. But as Deonna, Rodogno and Teroni remark, at least two other notions that Calhoun overlooks need to be considered in these cases: humiliation and stigma.⁴⁵ Distinguishing shame from the feeling of humiliation can do part of the work of saving the autonomy of oppressed minorities. The feeling of humiliation is different from shame in several crucial aspects. First and foremost, it necessarily involves another agent, who is trying to downgrade your status vis-à-vis hers. Her actions can be extremely violent (torture typically involves systematic acts of humiliation), but they need not be: something like refusing to greet you or acknowledge your presence can be humiliating. As such, the other's negative evaluation and downgrading of you is typically perceived as unjust and outrageous, and the focus of the experience is as much on the humiliated self as on the offending other.⁴⁶ Taking this into account, one can argue that acknowledging the practical impact of someone else's negative evaluation but refusing to ascribe any normative weight to it is precisely what we do when we feel humiliated, when we feel unjustifiably attacked, accused, offended or put down in the eyes of others. Humiliation is a common response to shaming; and some of Calhoun's examples could be described as humiliation.⁴⁷ But the moment one transitions into shame, one seems to be appropriating the negative evaluation on some level, this is why shame is considered an emotion of *self*-assessment.

⁴⁴ Cf. Hutchinson, 'Facing Atrocity' on Diogenes the Cynic.

⁴⁵ Cf. Deonna, Rodogno, and Teroni, *In Defense of Shame*, 226–43.

⁴⁶ Gilbert, 'What Is Shame? Some Core Issues and Controversies.'

⁴⁷ Cf. Calhoun, 'An Apology for Moral Shame', 137. The example she takes from Adrian Piper, in which Piper herself seeks to describe her feelings as 'groundless shame', is in my view a good example of feelings of humiliation.

Indeed, in this type of situations, when we feel ashamed of something we do not deem shameful because of pressure from others, it is not rare later to come to feel ashamed of one's own shame, as FitzGerald argues.⁴⁸ As an example, she uses a personal anecdote, where she reports that out of shame anxiety, she lied to a group of colleagues about shopping in a discount supermarket, and told them that she shopped in a more expensive one. Afterwards, however, when telling the anecdote to her partner, she felt ashamed of having allowed her shame anxiety to overrule her other values. In other words, she reports being ashamed of her shame. This meta-shame can often arise because one interprets the initial shame episode as a betrayal of one's own deeply held values, as a moment of weakness in which one momentarily upheld someone else's wrong values and self-evaluated in terms of them. One feels ashamed of having felt unjustified shame, of having caved in to external pressure. One feels that one's own value system has been fleetingly contaminated. This is exactly what FitzGerald reports.⁴⁹ This meta-emotion evidences the difference between shame and the feeling of humiliation, and it is proof that one felt a contaminating shame in the first place. Imagine a situation where, instead of acting like she did, she had told the truth, and someone in the group had ridiculed her for her choice of supermarket. She might have felt humiliated while enduring the mockery, but she probably would not feel ashamed of herself afterwards. This meta-shame suggests that her initial shame, as opposed to what would have been the case in humiliation, *did* evidence a fleeting value contamination.

Since social groups can and do exert high levels of pressure, feelings of humiliation often transition into shame, when the other's negative evaluation infiltrates our own. This infiltration can be very fleeting, like in FitzGerald's example above, or more permanent and insidious, as in the case of stigmatized groups that are constantly bombarded by stigmatizing messages.⁵⁰ It is therefore important to also look at stigmatization processes and be aware of their capacity to infiltrate our values and contaminate our autonomy.⁵¹

It should be noted, however, that the transition need not always be from humiliation to shame. As Morgan argues, shame can prompt us to examine our

⁴⁸ Cf. FitzGerald, "Review Article: Defending Shame". Extended Critical Review Essay on J. Deonna, R. Rodogno & F. Teroni, *In Defense of Shame: The Faces of an Emotion*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012'.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, sec. 2.

⁵⁰ Cf. Yovel, 'The Birth of the Picaro from the Death of Shame'; Calhoun, 'An Apology for Moral Shame', 135–37.

⁵¹ I agree with Calhoun that one should resist accounts that construe members of stigmatized groups as morally immature for feeling this type of shame. But the solution is not to separate shame from autonomy and construe autonomy as impervious to emotions. A more promising route, in my view, is to construe moral maturity differently, as involving something else than autonomy and allowing corrections to it when necessary. Cf. Williams, *Shame and Necessity*, 100.

relations to others, and thus motivate a transition from shame to humiliation.⁵² In the case of a stigmatized group, this transition towards feelings of humiliation might be an affirmation of autonomy, but this is not necessarily the case for all individuals and groups. In some other cases, responding to shaming with shame (rather than humiliation) might be an expression of autonomy too, such as when somebody publicly accused of a reprehensible action she indeed performed accepts her responsibility and shame.

In any case, I believe that the right approach to these issues requires abandoning the idea that, at least when it comes to emotions, autonomy and heteronomy are dichotomous, that this is an all-or-nothing issue, that shame must be *either* autonomous *or* heteronomous. FitzGerald argues convincingly that it is not possible to clearly determine whether the self-assessment of shame is autonomous or heteronomous in all cases.⁵³ In her view, autonomy and heteronomy come in degrees, and shame is a phenomenon where this becomes particularly clear, since it shows that the values of others can infiltrate one's own to varying degrees.

Thus, so far it seems clear that the role of others in shame is not equivalent to heteronomy, because shame can be autonomous, or it can fall somewhere in between autonomy and heteronomy. But it seems also quite clear that this is an emotion through which others can and do exert some influence on our values. This is, arguably, one of the reasons why shame has often been regarded as especially conducive to moral learning, as in Aristotle,⁵⁴ and it is frequently used for education purposes, as a tool to instill social and moral norms.⁵⁵ In this sense, shame has even been called the “midwife” and the “condition of possibility” of any human education.⁵⁶ This is also why humiliation and stigmatization can become insidious. The question now is whether we need to postulate an internalized other to make sense of the influence others can have in our shame.

The other in shame: internalized or constitutive?

Let me now address head-on the issue of the internalized audience. Why postulate it? As shown above, Deonna, Rodogno and Teroni are right in pointing out that in many cases, one cannot pin down the audience in front of which one is allegedly

⁵² Morgan, *On Shame*.

⁵³ FitzGerald, ‘Review Article: Defending Shame’. Extended Critical Review Essay on J. Deonna, R. Rodogno & F. Teroni, *In Defense of Shame: The Faces of an Emotion*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012’.

⁵⁴ Burnyeat, ‘Aristotle on Learning to Be Good.’

⁵⁵ See e.g., Heller, ‘Five Approaches to the Phenomenon of Shame’, 1024; Ferlosio, *El alma y la vergüenza*, 29.

⁵⁶ Ferlosio, *El alma y la vergüenza*, 29. This is *not* to say that shame should be used as an educational tool. I merely mean to register the fact that it can and has been used in this way.

ashamed.⁵⁷ Furthermore, the issue of internalization raises the questions of how and when do we internalize this audience, and which audience do we internalize. According to the psychoanalytic story, the audience would be our parents and main educators, which might be in line with many of the above examples. But what about someone who came to severely question and even be ashamed of her parents' values? What if, for example, the racist one is your father and you become ashamed of him having such views?⁵⁸ This gets complicated even further by Williams' requirement that one must respect the audience that gives rise to our shame. Does this mean that we internalize *all* the others we respect? Or a representative of all spheres of our lives that significantly shape our identities? How many internalized others do we typically have? When do we internalize them? Perhaps looking at development can give us some clues to clarify these questions.

According to Freud, shame emerges during the "latency stage" of development, between the 3rd and the 7th year of life.⁵⁹ Modern developmental psychologists have pushed this age further back, although there is no consensus on a specific age, or on approaches and interpretations of results. According to the cognitive-developmental approach to developmental psychology, self-conscious emotions such as shame or pride emerge in normally developing infants around the second year of life.⁶⁰ This is so because in the cognitive-developmental view, self-conscious emotions are thought to depend on the possession of a concept of self. Empirical proof that this concept is in place is linked to the mirror self-recognition test. Typically infants start to pass this test consistently from the 18th month of age onwards, and from then on, supporters of the cognitive-developmental view start to talk about the onset of self-conscious emotions, such as embarrassment, pride, jealousy and shame.⁶¹ There is much to discuss here that falls out of the scope of this paper, but for my current purposes, it is enough to underline that, according to the cognitive-developmental view, the condition for self-conscious emotions to arise is a concept of self that allows the child to re-identify herself from the perspective of *any* external observer (the image that the mirror shows is what others can see of us).

There is a growing number of developmental psychologists that criticize these views, and favor an interactive, second-personal approach instead. With this approach, Reddy, for instance, argues that starting from a self-concept gets things

⁵⁷ Deonna, Rodogno, and Teroni, *In Defense of Shame*, 30–32.

⁵⁸ Zahavi, 'Self, Consciousness, and Shame', 313, fn. 8.

⁵⁹ Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, 43, 58; cf. also Metcalf, 'The Truth of Shame-Consciousness in Freud and Phenomenology.'

⁶⁰ Cf. Lewis, *Shame* for a prominent example; Rochat, *Others in Mind*, 96–98 endorses this view.

⁶¹ Cf. Rochat, *Others in Mind*, 96–98.

backwards.⁶² In her view, what self-conscious emotions require is self-*experience* and interpersonal awareness (which the infant is capable of from the start), not any conceptual abilities.⁶³ In Reddy's view, interpersonal engagement elicits in the infant a very basic sense of self and other (the other person as qualitatively distinct from an object), that is tied to the interaction. This basic interpersonal awareness is what prepares the ground for a concept of self, not the other way around.⁶⁴ This is also what allows infants to experience self-conscious emotional reactions of coyness and showing off, which she documents already during their first year of life, sometimes as early as in the second month.⁶⁵ She doesn't call these reactions full-blown shame or pride (although some others, like Trevarthen, have no qualms about attributing shame to 3-month-olds⁶⁶), but they are its precursors and form its experiential ground. The point is that the sense of self that is required for shame, the kind of self-consciousness it exemplifies, arises immediately in and from the interaction and emotional engagement with others: it does not require a stable self-concept independent of the interaction, nor an internalized other. Indeed, these things rely to some extent on the sense of self that arises out of intersubjective emotional engagement.⁶⁷ This is why Reddy suggests that we call it "self-other-consciousness", instead of just "self-consciousness".⁶⁸

All this suggests that the most basic structures that enable shame are social in a fundamental way, but they do not rely in any form of internalization. This is in line with the Sartrean insight that shame exemplifies a form of self-consciousness that is fundamentally different from the minimal pre-reflective form given in the first-personal character of experience. As Zahavi explains, there is a minimal form of selfhood implied by the fact that experiences are perspectival, they imply an experiencer for whom these phenomena are given.⁶⁹ Sartre's example is illuminating: if I'm crouching at a keyhole to spy on someone, at that point I'm completely focused on what I see and hear, and my experience of self is minimal, it is implicit in those perceptions as their *mode*: those experiences are given *for* me, but this for-me-ness is not their focus, it is not part of their content, it is rather the mode in which they are given. Now, suppose I hear a noise in the corridor, indicating perhaps that another person is approaching, and I'm overcome by shame. Now my experience has changed fundamentally: I focus on myself and

⁶² Reddy, *How Infants Know Minds*; Draghi-Lorenz, Reddy, and Costall, 'Rethinking the Development of "Nonbasic" Emotions'.

⁶³ Reddy, *How Infants Know Minds*.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 144.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 129–40.

⁶⁶ At talks given at the University of Copenhagen and the University of Portsmouth in 2014.

⁶⁷ Reddy, *How Infants Know Minds*, 144.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 148–49.

⁶⁹ Zahavi, *Subjectivity and Selfhood, Investigating the First-Person Perspective*.

experience myself as an object, the object of someone else's perception. This is what Sartre calls my "being-for-Others": a fundamentally different form of self-consciousness that arises from recognizing that there are other subjects in the world who can perceive me.

Sartre's subsequent development of these ideas is very complex and problematic in many ways, but this is no place to engage in such long controversies. All I want to highlight is his central idea that engagement with others gives rise to a fundamentally different form of self-consciousness, that Zahavi and I have previously called *social* self-consciousness.⁷⁰ This is the form of self-consciousness that is at stake in shame. And according to Reddy, it is present in a very basic form from the first weeks of life, when infants are aware and respond to others' attention to them. This does not necessarily entail that shame (or pride, for that matter) can only be elicited when other people are present, it simply means that in those phenomena, the dimension of selfhood I am focusing on is the same that arises out of and is at stake in my engagements with others. A solipsistic being would be incapable of shame or pride. In emotions of social self-consciousness there is a crucial change in my self-experience: I relate to myself from the perspective of engagement with others. This does not mean that I need to take on any specific person's attitudes towards or judgments of me, it doesn't mean that I need to imagine a specific audience. It simply means that I focus on the dimension of myself that can be perceived from the outside and engaged with. Very young infants might only be able to experience it in direct interaction, but adults, who do possess a self-concept, can experience it in solitude. This is both thinner and more robust than internalization of an audience: it is a background constitutive condition, a feature of any self that can experience shame. But it isn't an other with a particular face or an idiosyncratic set of values. It is a condition of possibility for "self-other-conscious" emotions to arise.

Now, this is obviously not all that shame requires. Shame is an *unpleasant* form of social self-consciousness, a form that foregrounds the vulnerability of self and the dangerousness of others. Sartre believes that it is more fundamental than the pleasant forms, like pride, but it is quite unclear why that should be so, and developmental psychology does not support that view. Be this as it may, my aim here is not to establish the primacy of shame over pride, or the other way around, it is rather to highlight that the social self-consciousness they evidence does not require internalization of an audience: it requires the ability to relate to others as subjects, which is there from the outset in a very basic form. All emotions of social self-consciousness get enriched and complexified through sustained engagement with others, to the point where the notion of internalizing an audience might seem plausible. The underlying structure, however, is not a product of internalization; it is a feature of engagement. What we internalize, or learn, are norms and

⁷⁰ Zahavi, *Self and Other*; Montes Sánchez, 'Self-Consciousness, Caring, Relationality.'

standards, and facts about the social world and one's position in it. This makes it possible for shame (and guilt, for that matter) to disengage from the direct disapproval of others and become a personal self-evaluation, but this does not require internalizing the other. The other remains outside, as that which constitutes the dimension of self that gets evaluated: the intersubjective self.

To conclude, I want to return to Williams and his claim that shame includes a reference to real concrete others, to the world I want to live in and my possibilities in it. I think he is essentially right, but this does not require an internalized other. It requires an intersubjective self, i.e., a self that can become aware of a dimension of her being that depends on others. In other words, it requires the capacity to understand others and relate to them as subjects who can perceive oneself, and to understand oneself as an object of their experience, an object who is thereby affected and changed. It requires the capacity to experience that my identity, who I am, is not fully in my control, but depends on others. As one's world widens and enriches through learning, and one acquires the capacity to project oneself backwards and forwards in time, among other things, this enables the kind of complex, thick experiences that Williams describes, where Ajax understands he can no longer live as the hero he had been and wanted to keep being. The experience is concrete and can involve a reference to individual others, but it does not require internalization of audiences, just the awareness that who I am does not solely depend on me. The heightened shaming power of specific others depends on how my world is built, how much I care about them, and how much influence they have on the possibilities that matter to me, among other factors. All in all, I believe that shame is social in a thin but fundamental sense: in the sense that it is only possible for a social being, who is aware that her identity is partially dependent on others. But this does not require internalizing others: it requires living with and being affected by them.

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