

**From the holdings of the Department of Special Collections , Princeton University Library,  
Princeton, NJ**

These documents are either in the public domain, or can only be used for educational and research purposes (Fair use) as per U.S. Copyright law (text below). By accessing this file, all users agree that their use falls in the public domain or within fair use as defined by the copyright law. We do not charge any permission or usage fees for the publication of images of material in our collections, including those provided by Princeton University Library, via our website, catalog, or directly from staff. For more information regarding copyright, credit, and citation please review the information on the Copyright, Credit and Citation Guidelines page of our website.

<https://library.princeton.edu/special-collections/policies/copyright-credit-and-citation-guidelines>. If you have any questions, including how to order higher-quality images from the collection, contact Special Collections Public Services via our Ask Us! Form. <https://library.princeton.edu/special-collections/ask-us>

---

Doctoral Dissertations, 2011-2026

Philosophy

---

2015

# On the Nature of Guilt and Shame

Maley, Corey J.

Princeton, NJ : Princeton University

---

<http://arks.princeton.edu/ark:/88435/dsp010k225d44v>

*U.S. Copyright law: The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, §108, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research. If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of fair use that user may be liable for copyright infringement. This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve a violation of copyright law. <https://www.copyright.gov/title17/title17.pdf>*

ON THE NATURE OF GUILT AND SHAME

Corey John Maley

A DISSERTATION  
PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY  
OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE  
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

RECOMMENDED FOR ACCEPTANCE  
BY THE DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

Advisers: Professor Sarah-Jane Leslie, Professor Gilbert Harman

September 2015

© Copyright by Corey John Maley, 2015.

All rights reserved.

## **Abstract**

When we and others make mistakes, moral or otherwise, talk of guilt and shame is often close behind. Guilt and shame frequently co-occur in everyday language, enough so that they are often not distinguished from one another. However, careful investigation shows several ways in which the two are quite different. Guilt and shame are entirely different kinds of affective states, and as such, comparisons between the two are not straightforward. Guilt allows for variations in emotional phenomenology that shame does not, making certain generalizations about the feeling of guilt very difficult. Shame is more basic, is found in all cultures, has analogs in non-human animals; guilt has none of these features. I propose that the best analysis of the feeling of guilt is that it is simply feeling as if one has violated a norm that one cares about. Shame, on the other hand, is the emotion of having been dominated, or subjugated. Consideration of these differences offers some clarity about the nature of guilt and shame, and explains some of the disagreement found among prior conceptions of each. Furthermore, a clearer conception of guilt and shame is useful to theorists interested in the relationship of these affective states to questions of morality.

## Acknowledgements

I am quite fortunate to find myself in a position to do what I love. I could not have gotten here without the help and support of a number of amazing people.

First, I thank Gil Harman and Sarah-Jane Leslie, my advisors, for their support and guidance during this project. They have both been inspiring and insightful mentors, helping me navigate many obstacles throughout my graduate career. I cannot thank them enough.

I thank Gualtiero Piccinini for being a supportive mentor, colleague, and friend for many years. He was one of the first philosophers to take me and my ideas seriously, and I owe him a great deal.

I thank Carl Craver and Jeff Zacks for their encouragement while I worked in Jeff's cognitive neuroscience laboratory at Washington University in St. Louis. In their different ways, they both pushed me to work hard, and to think critically about philosophy, psychology, and neuroscience.

I thank my undergraduate philosophy professors Joseph Mendola, Edward Becker, and David Pitt. In particular, I thank Barbara Von Eckardt and Jeffrey Poland for their encouragement and willingness to work with me in my undergraduate days.

I thank my high school math teacher Emil Biga. He was the first person to really ask me to think, and to push me to go further when I was not doing my best work.

I thank my friends for conversations and support along the way, including Helen Yetter Chappell, Katie Muth, Aaron Sand, Daniel Schneider, Lee Spitzer, Serife Tekin, Kristie Thomas, and Sarah Thompson.

I thank my colleagues at the University of Kansas: Jack Bricke, Ann Cudd, Richard DeGeorge, Dale Dorsey, Ben Eggleston, Erin Frykholm, Scott Jenkins, Don Marquis, Eileen Nutting, Armin Schultz, John Symons, Tom Tuoizzo, and James Woelfel. They all have been helpful in offering comments on drafts of this work.

I thank my dear friend Patrick X. Monaghan for showing me what it is to love philosophy.

I thank my parents, Terry and Lori, for their constant love and support throughout the years.

Finally, I thank my wonderful wife, Sarah Robins. For many years, and in many different ways, she has been a source of encouragement, comfort, and support. She has believed in me when I could not believe in myself. The debt I owe her simply cannot be expressed.

To my grandparents.

# Contents

|                                                                          |          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Abstract . . . . .                                                       | iii      |
| Acknowledgements . . . . .                                               | iv       |
| <b>1 Introduction</b>                                                    | <b>1</b> |
| <b>2 What Guilt Is Not</b>                                               | <b>3</b> |
| 2.1 Introduction . . . . .                                               | 3        |
| 2.2 Philosophical Accounts of Guilt . . . . .                            | 4        |
| 2.2.1 Opponents of Guilt . . . . .                                       | 4        |
| 2.2.2 Proponents of Guilt . . . . .                                      | 6        |
| 2.2.3 Problems for Philosophical Accounts of Guilt . . . . .             | 6        |
| 2.3 Empirical Research on Guilt . . . . .                                | 7        |
| 2.3.1 Empathy . . . . .                                                  | 8        |
| 2.3.2 Cooperation . . . . .                                              | 8        |
| 2.3.3 Criminality . . . . .                                              | 9        |
| 2.3.4 Development . . . . .                                              | 9        |
| 2.3.5 Problems with the Psychological Views on Guilt and Shame . . . . . | 10       |
| 2.4 Why Guilt is Not an Emotion . . . . .                                | 13       |
| 2.4.1 Varieties of Guilt . . . . .                                       | 13       |
| 2.4.2 Feeling and Being . . . . .                                        | 15       |
| 2.4.3 Guilt as a Feeling . . . . .                                       | 16       |

|          |                                                   |           |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 2.4.4    | Feelings and Emotions . . . . .                   | 17        |
| 2.5      | Conclusion . . . . .                              | 20        |
| <b>3</b> | <b>The Problem of (and with) Shame</b>            | <b>22</b> |
| 3.1      | Introduction . . . . .                            | 22        |
| 3.2      | Desiderata . . . . .                              | 23        |
| 3.3      | Distinguishing Shame from its Relatives . . . . . | 24        |
| 3.3.1    | Embarrassment . . . . .                           | 25        |
| 3.3.2    | Humiliation . . . . .                             | 26        |
| 3.3.3    | Guilt . . . . .                                   | 27        |
| 3.4      | Previous Accounts of Shame . . . . .              | 27        |
| 3.5      | Shame and Domination . . . . .                    | 31        |
| 3.5.1    | Social Hierarchies . . . . .                      | 32        |
| 3.5.2    | Physical Domination . . . . .                     | 34        |
| 3.6      | The Problem with Shame . . . . .                  | 36        |
| 3.7      | Toward a Way to Live with Shame . . . . .         | 38        |
| 3.8      | Conclusion . . . . .                              | 39        |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Feelings and Emotions</b>                      | <b>40</b> |
| 4.1      | Introduction . . . . .                            | 40        |
| 4.2      | Emotion and its Theory . . . . .                  | 40        |
| 4.3      | An Account of Feelings versus Emotions . . . . .  | 43        |
| 4.3.1    | Emotion . . . . .                                 | 44        |
| 4.3.2    | Feelings . . . . .                                | 48        |
| 4.3.3    | Alignment with Other Theories . . . . .           | 52        |
| 4.4      | Making Sense of Guilt and Shame . . . . .         | 54        |
| 4.5      | Conclusion . . . . .                              | 57        |
| <b>5</b> | <b>Conclusion</b>                                 | <b>59</b> |



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

Despite our best efforts, we are imperfect beings. While much effort in moral philosophy has gone toward deciding what we should do (and why), we still sometimes fail to do the right thing. What do we feel when we fail in this way? What *should* we feel? Guilt and shame are the two most prominent emotions mentioned in such discussions, and the two frequently come as a pair. Perhaps surprisingly, it is only in the last several decades that we find serious attempts at distinguishing guilt from shame. Philosophers and psychologists have come up with a variety of accounts of guilt, shame, and how to distinguish the two. Not surprisingly, there is still a lack of consensus about how to characterize each.

In what follows, I offer three things. First, a discussion of the nature of guilt, including an examination of empirical research that one might think shed light on philosophical discussions of guilt. However, I criticize one prominent way that guilt has been operationalized. I argue that guilt is not, after all, an emotion, but what I call a feeling.

Next, I examine the nature of shame. One puzzle regarding shame that deserves much more attention is the phenomenon of shame occurrences in the absence of any perceived failings, moral or otherwise. An account of shame should, if possible, offer a unified characterization of different occasions in which people feel shame. After examining some previous accounts, I argue that the core of shame is about domination, or subjugation. Shame is the emotion of being dominated by others, or even a part of our self.

Finally, I provide a more detailed account of how we might fruitfully separate two distinct kinds of affective states. I propose that there is an important difference between emotions and feelings; briefly, emotions are found among all cultures, have analogs in non-human primates, and need not be directed toward any particular object, except perhaps one's self. Feelings, on the other hand, are not universally found among all cultures, do not have analogs in non-human primates, and must always be directed toward a particular object. This terminology is unfortunately imperfect: different authors use different terms to refer to different perceptual and affective states. Nevertheless, the distinction is important. On this characterization, sadness is an emotion, but feeling betrayed is not. This distinction helps to make sense of guilt, shame, and their relation to one another. On the view I offer, guilt is a *feeling*, which means that its emotional component might vary between people, and helps to explain why not all cultures deploy the idea of feeling guilty. Shame, on the other hand, is an *emotion*, more basic, not variable between different people, and found in all cultures, as well as many social non-human animals.

Rather than an attempt to answer questions about how guilt and shame relate to morality, the present project is aimed at clarifying what guilt and shame *are*. Once we have an improved understanding of guilt and shame, we can then further discussions about the place that each should have in our moral theories, as well as our continuing investigations in moral psychology. My hope is that the following dissertation will shed some new light on the nature of guilt and the nature of shame.

# Chapter 2

## What Guilt Is Not

### 2.1 Introduction

For better or worse, guilt and shame go hand-in-hand. Discussion of one almost always accompanies discussion of the other, and the two are rarely distinguished in everyday contexts. But certainly the two *are* different; and if for nothing more than the sake of conceptual clarity, the distinctions between the two should be made clear. Of course, philosophers have gone some way toward doing just this. In fact, these two emotions have received a fair amount of philosophical attention, perhaps more so than seemingly simpler emotions such as sadness or joy.

This is not surprising: guilt and shame are intimately connected to morality—at least for morally imperfect beings like us—in ways that sadness and joy are not. We sometimes expect, or even demand, that people feel guilty in certain circumstances; those who do not are cold, heartless, or in extreme cases, psychopaths. In other circumstances, we expect people to be ashamed of themselves. There are a variety of philosophical views regarding the extent to which these kinds of expectations are warranted and what precisely they amount to. Nevertheless, a clear and uncontroversial picture of what precisely guilt and shame *are*, and what distinguishes one from the other, has not yet come out of this literature.

In what follows, I will focus my attention on guilt, making only occasional remarks on guilt's relation to shame along the way. My primary aim will be to argue that guilt is not an emotion, but a feeling. A

complete story would require a well-developed account of emotion, which is something I cannot do here; rather, my aim is to bring out an important difference between guilt and shame, casting serious doubt on the assumption that the two are comparable mental phenomena. After surveying some of the more prominent philosophical views on guilt, I will argue that guilt is a feeling and not an emotion, a distinction which I will then articulate. I will then argue that feelings are not amenable to the same kinds of generalizations that emotions are, even though individual reports of feelings may be informationally rich. Furthermore, I will argue that much of the empirical research that purports to show that guilt is a desirable moral “emotion,” particularly when compared to shame, is deeply flawed.

## 2.2 Philosophical Accounts of Guilt

Given that we are, after all, morally imperfect, it is no surprise that philosophical investigation of morality extends beyond what we *ought* to do, but also to what happens (or should happen) when we do what we ought *not* to have done. Guilt makes itself known in such investigations, although the ways in which it does so are not always simple. We do not always feel guilt over transgressions: we may not know (such as when Ann unknowingly hurts Bob’s feelings), or we may not care (such as when Carl purposefully steals Dave’s newspaper in retaliation for Dave’s stealing his). In this section, I will sketch a few of the major philosophical views on guilt. My aim is not to argue for any particular view, but to illustrate both the variety of positions regarding the extent to which we should feel guilt (or sometimes guilt *as opposed* to shame, or vice versa) and the variety of conceptions of guilt on offer. It may be surprising that there are such different conceptions of this so-called emotion, and philosophers are not always precise about what they take guilt to be. Perhaps the thought is that guilt is not in need of clarification or explication: like other emotions, such as joy and sadness, what guilt *is* is self-evident. Nevertheless, it will become clear that philosophers do not agree on what counts as guilt, making the need for an account of guilt even more pressing.

### 2.2.1 Opponents of Guilt

A number of writers have argued that guilt is basically bad: it is an emotion that is harmful, in one way or another, and something we should aspire to excise from our emotional lives. An early proponent of this view is Nietzsche. In the second essay of his *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche is concerned with (among other things) articulating the origin of guilt, including its supposed intimate connection to punishment:

Punishment is supposed to possess the value of awakening the *feeling of guilt* in the guilty person; one seeks in it the actual *instrumentum* of that psychical reaction called “bad conscience,” “sting of conscience.” Nietzsche (1995, p. 517)

Nietzsche goes on to claim that punishment does not, in fact, foster feelings of guilt, but does the opposite: those punished “suffered no ‘inward pain’” Nietzsche (1995, p. 518). In a complicated exposition that I cannot hope to do justice to here, Nietzsche claims<sup>1</sup> that guilt (or “bad conscience”) is a kind of sickness resulting from our turning certain instincts inward as society and culture have developed. It is a sickness, to be sure: we are less “cheerful” than those ancients who felt no guilt. Although it is an illness that we cannot realistically hope to rid ourselves of (at least not now), it is nevertheless an illness “as pregnancy is an illness,” suggesting that the conditions allowing us to feel guilt are a necessary step to something greater. Nietzsche (1995, p. 524). Nietzsche’s discussion of slave and master moralities in the first essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals* is in the background of his analysis of guilt, which includes views about the connection between guilt and religious belief. As I mentioned, I cannot do justice to the complete Nietzschean picture, but what is important is to note what will be a common theme: that guilt is painful, and is ultimately something that we should—in some sense or another—banish from our psychological lives.

Freud engages in a similar project, although rather than explaining the historical or cultural origins of guilt, Freud offers an account of how guilt develops within the individual. Without getting enmeshed in the details of Freud’s view of our psychological architecture, we can say that Freud views guilt as

---

<sup>1</sup>I say claims, rather than argues, because Nietzsche relies on a story about the historical evolution of guilt that is not obviously true.

a kind of anxiety about being punished by an internalized representation of a parental figure (i.e. the superego) that threatens to punish when the person violates societal norms (see Freud (1961), especially chapter VII). Making sense of precisely how this process could work, given the capacities of the various components within Freud's theory—as well as their relations among themselves—is itself an interesting philosophical project (taken on admirably by Velleman (1999)). It is sufficient to note here that like Nietzsche, Freud has a dim view of guilt, but without Nietzsche's optimism: Freud sees guilt as an illness lacking even the “pregnant” possibilities that Nietzsche sees in this emotion.

Walter Kaufmann has a particularly negative critique of guilt. I will not spell out his overall project of how we should overhaul morality; a few quotations will suffice to provide an idea of Kaufmann's view of guilt. “Guilt feelings are a contagious disease that harms those who harbor them and endangers those who live close to them...Typically, guilt feelings make those who harbor them feel wretched” (Kaufmann, 1973, p.114). And further, “As a rule, guilt feelings make men vindictive and inhibit the development of generosity...If guilt feelings were at least of some help to those whom we feel we have wronged, it might still be argued that self-punishment served some purpose. But generally guilt feelings have the opposite effect” (Kaufmann, 1973, p.115).

Like Kauffman, Gilbert Harman takes guilt to be a pernicious emotion that should have no place in our moral lives (Harman, 2009). For every positive role that one might think guilt plays in our behavior, Harman argues that we can imagine either replacing guilt with something else, or eliminating the emotion outright. Thus, where some see anticipatory guilt as playing a role in guiding moral behavior, Harman argues that there are other (and better) reasons to act morally. And while some see those who feel no guilt as psychopathic (perhaps even by definition), Harman offers himself and some of his colleagues as proof of the existence of people who *are* moral (i.e. not psychopaths) but nevertheless guilt-free. More generally, he argues that for any person *P* normally judged to be moral, we can imagine her counterpart *P\** who does not feel guilt, and who would be as moral as *P*. Intuitions to the contrary are simply not shared by others, such as Harman, who remarks that “the proposed necessary connections between morality and guilt are arrived at through introspection and are accepted merely

because they seem plausible to the authors, presumably, because of their own experiences of guilt” (Harman, 2009, 206).

One might think that, even by his own lights, Harman’s intuitions ought not to have any more weight than his opponents: one side intuits that guilt is necessary for morality, another that it is not. But on Harman’s view, the burden of proof is on his opponents. Given the painful nature of guilt, involving “feelings of remorse, involving deep regret, painful humiliation, distress, self-punishment, and/or self-flagellation” (Harman, 2009, 206) and the possibility of morality *without* this painful emotion, Harman concludes that we ought to eliminate guilt from our emotional repertoire. As he puts it, “guilt is not needed for moral motivation, that it is incorrect to define moral standards as those standards it is appropriate to feel guilt for violating, that people can lack susceptibility to guilt without being psychopaths, that it would be a good thing to try to bring up children in such a way that they are not susceptible to such guilt, and that it would be a good thing for those moral people who feel guilt to try to eliminate it” (Harman, 2009, 212).

### **2.2.2 Proponents of Guilt**

Philosophers are (unsurprisingly) not unanimously opposed to guilt. Of course, given its unpleasant character, nobody takes guilt to be inherently good, but a number of authors have argued that guilt is instrumentally good insofar as it informs us about what is moral, or provides motivation to do the right thing (or at least avoid doing the wrong thing). For example, guilt plays an important role in Gibbard’s view of what it is for something to be morally wrong (Gibbard, 1990, 1992). According to Gibbard, what it is for someone to have done something morally wrong is for that person to be blameworthy; blameworthiness, in turn, is explained in terms of warranted guilt (from the first-person point of view) or impartial resentment (from the third-person point of view). Guilt itself, or at least the prospect of warranted guilt, is an instrument used to guide us to what is moral, and in that sense, is quite desirable (insofar as being moral is desirable, an assumption I will not question here).

In a similar vein, Brandt takes the feeling of guilt to be partially definitive of wrong actions (in light of an ideal moral code, the details about which need not concern us here): “What is it, then, for

someone to think sincerely that any action of the kind *F* is wrong?...If he thinks he has just performed an *F*-action, he feels guilty or remorseful or uncomfortable about it, unless he thinks he has some excuse—unless, for instance, he knows that at the time of action he did not think his action would be an *F*-action,” (Brandt, 1992, p. 121). Brandt leaves it open precisely what guilt amounts to (although he does mention that just *any* feeling of anxiety about punishment or anticipated consequences should not count as guilt). Nevertheless, it is clear that although he views it as a painful emotion, Brandt sees guilt as necessary for explaining morality.

Patricia Greenspan develops an account of guilt in her discussion of moral dilemmas, according to which guilt is an important identificatory mechanism in which the individual feels self-directed anger, and that provides motivation to repair damage done to others (Greenspan, 1995). Greenspan’s view is that the core of guilt is the uncomfortable feeling that one is at fault. According to Greenspan, when compared to shame, regret, remorse, moral anguish, and compunction, guilt “is the best candidate among these negative emotional reactions for supplying the motivational force of moral ‘ought’” (Greenspan, 1995, p. 135).

Velleman argues that, contrary to most other views (with the exception of Greenspan’s), it can be rational to feel guilt when one has *not* done anything morally wrong. For Velleman, guilt involves anxiety about the possible forfeiture of trust: trust others may have, and the trust that a person has in herself (Velleman, 2003). This withdrawal of trust is a particular form of punishment, and Velleman’s position is thus a refinement of Freud’s conception. Interestingly, Velleman argues that different anxieties are involved in different kinds of guilt: survivor’s guilt, for example, does not seem to involve anxiety about forfeiture of trust; instead, it involves anxiety about causing resentment. Other occurrences of guilt might involve anxiety about causing envy. As such, “guilt is a family of emotions, including anxiety about having warranted not only distrust but also angry or envious resentment and perhaps other, related reactions as well,” (Velleman, 2003, p. 247).

### 2.2.3 Problems for Philosophical Accounts of Guilt

This brief overview of some of the previous philosophical views on guilt makes it clear that the nature of guilt is not obvious (nor settled), that different accounts of guilt are not merely minor variations of one another, and that the precise relationship between guilt and morality is far from clear. The accounts of guilt I have mentioned provide different answers to key questions. For example, does guilt essentially involve anxiety, or feeling that one must be punished? Does feeling guilt make one feel terrible? Does guilt lead people to repair the damages they have caused, or even want to do so in the first place? When *should* we feel guilt, or expect others to feel guilt, or recommend that they do?

To be clear, I am not suggesting that we should be surprised that different philosophers have different views about guilt; disagreement, after all, is part and parcel of the discipline. Rather, I am suggesting that it is not clear precisely when the various views are in conflict because it is not clear that philosophers are all on the same conceptual page regarding what guilt *is*. If we had a settled picture of guilt we would still expect philosophers to disagree about its proper role in our moral psychology. For example, there is virtually no disagreement about what anger is, although there *is* disagreement about, say, whether anger can play a justificatory role in positive retributivism Rodogno (2010). But I suggest that we do not have a settled picture, and later, I will argue that this is due to guilt's not being an emotion at all.

I will now turn to the psychological literature, which at first may seem to offer a much-needed measure of empirical grounding for some of the claims I have mentioned above. However, I will show why much of this research is flawed, based on problematic assumptions built into operational measures of guilt.

## 2.3 Empirical Research on Guilt

Despite the relatively infrequent citations to empirical findings in the philosophical literature on guilt, a rich picture of guilt has been developing in psychology in the last few decades. This picture seems to support the view that feeling guilty after a transgression, at least compared to a number of other

possible responses, is better for everyone involved. In this section, I will first mention a few of these findings which seem to provide significant evidence for pro-guilt views. I will then examine some of the operational definitions of guilt used in the more prominent of these measures, and argue that this conception of guilt creates problems for claims made on the basis of this conception. These considerations will pave the way toward the view—presented in the following section—that guilt is not an emotion at all. Instead, it is a feeling, a difference that will be discussed below.

Contemporary discussions of guilt in the psychological literature are often explicitly contrasted with shame; these most often begin with a conception drawn from the psychiatrist Lewis (1971). Put simply, on this conception an instance of emotional guilt is an instance of feeling bad about something that one has done, whereas an instance of feeling shame is an instance of feeling that one's self is bad (the behavior-self distinction). Other distinctions have been proposed, but have found little support when tested empirically (reviewed in Tangney et al. (2007)). For example, one involves shame as an experience essentially involving public (or perceived public) exposure, contrasted with guilt as the more private emotion (the public-private distinction). Alternatively (and more broadly), some have thought that certain types of situations or experiences might tend to elicit guilt, whereas others elicit shame (e.g. perhaps unintentionally hurting someone elicits guilt, whereas stealing elicits shame). But these ways of distinguishing guilt and shame have been abandoned in favor of Lewis's, and numerous studies have based their findings on this conception.

### **2.3.1 Empathy**

June Price Tangney and her collaborators have been influential in arguing for the behavior/self distinction between guilt and shame, and demonstrating a number of ways in which guilt is beneficial, particularly when compared with shame. In an early study (Tangney, 1991), participants' proneness to guilt, shame, and empathy were measured using a questionnaire, asking these participants about how they would respond to various transgressions. Although guilt-proneness and shame-proneness were correlated (as one might expect, given their near synonymy in everyday language), the two were separable (according to comparisons with prior measures of guilt and shame), and were found to have

differential correlations with empathy. Specifically, guilt was found to be positively correlated with empathy (more specifically: other-oriented empathic responsiveness), while shame was negatively correlated. Thus, those people more prone to feeling guilt in response to moral transgressions are also more likely to feel empathy toward others. Similar results were reported in a series of studies by Leith and Baumeister (1998). Here, guilt-prone participants were more likely than those who were shame-prone to be able to take the perspective of others in stories. Additionally, these researchers found that, when asking participants to recall a situation in which they had experienced an interpersonal conflict, those who were identified as being guilt-prone were more likely—and better able—to take the perspective of the other participant in the conflict. Furthermore, those who were guilt-prone tended to report that the conflict had been resolved positively; shame-prone participants were more likely to report that their conflict had ended badly.

### **2.3.2 Cooperation**

Another set of results suggests that guilt-proneness is correlated with cooperation and other prosocial behaviors. Ketelaar and Au (2003) asked participants to play repeated rounds of a prisoner's dilemma game, and after a prescribed set of these rounds, had one group of participants recall an event in which they had felt guilt (the guilt-induction group), while another control group described a neutral event. Participants in the guilt-induction group were then found to play more cooperatively than those in the control group. Furthermore, those in the guilt-induction group who had previously been *least* cooperative were most likely to play more cooperatively. A follow-up study investigated the role of naturally-occurring guilt, rather than guilt induced from memory of a past experience. Here, each participant was asked to propose how to divide money between himself and a partner, and the partner is then asked to accept or reject this offer (an ultimatum game). Directly after writing down their offer, participants were asked to rate how they felt about their offer (but before learning whether their partner had accepted or rejected it). Those participants who made selfish offers and who tended to feel guilty about those offers tended to make generous offers on the next round of play (with the same partner).

To directly compare the effect of shame on cooperation to these results for guilt, de Hooge and her colleagues replicated the above results, but also explicitly included a “shame” group (de Hooge et al., 2007). Thus, participants were asked to recall, based on which group they had been assigned to, either a guilt experience, a shame experience, or a neutral experience. As in the Ketelaar and Au (2003) study, the guilt group was found to behave more cooperatively after this emotion had been “induced.” But there was no difference between those who had recalled a shame experience and a neutral experience, suggesting that the prosocial effect of guilt is absent in shame.

The final study I will mention examined the effect of others’ perception of guilt in a cooperation context. Wubben et al. (2009) had participants play a so-called public good dilemma game,<sup>2</sup> after which they were asked to report how they felt about their decision on a piece of paper. These answers were recorded, and the participants were given back what was supposed to be their own answers, but was actually the “answers” produced by the experimenters. Participants were thus led to believe that they had mistakenly gotten to see how someone else participating in the experiment felt about *their* decisions. As expected, participants reported that they expected these other “participants” who reported feeling guilty to cooperate more in future rounds of the game. More interestingly though, these same participants themselves were then more likely to cooperate than those participants who had read faux-participant reports that expressed no guilt. So merely learning that others—others who these participants had no contact with—felt guilty about their past behavior in this game increased the degree to which they cooperated.

### 2.3.3 Criminality

While the results mentioned so far mostly suggest a positive role for guilt versus shame, there is evidence that shame is correlated with a number of undesirable psychological traits, particularly in criminal populations. For instance, Wright et al. (2008) showed that, based on a series of questionnaires given to men in forensic psychiatric units, offense-related shame is associated with elevated levels of anger

---

<sup>2</sup>Public good dilemma games involve a decision about how much of one’s own resources (often money or tokens) to contribute to a public “fund.” If the level of the fund reaches some threshold, then that fund, plus some additional bonus, is distributed equally among the players, even those who contributed nothing.

problems, while offense-related guilt is associated with better anger-control abilities. As the authors put it: “these findings suggest that those individuals particularly prone to shame are not only more prone to anger in general, but are also less likely to deal with their anger in a constructive manner. In contrast, those individuals particularly prone to guilt are less prone to anger in general, and are more likely to deal with their anger in a constructive manner,” (Wright et al., 2008, p. 417).

Another study of inmates found that they vary as much as non-inmates in the degree to which one can distinguish guilt-prone from shame-prone individuals, and that the positive effects of guilt and negative effects of shame are much the same in this population as in the larger community (Tangney et al., 2011). That is, “Shame-prone inmates have more psychological symptoms, are more likely to blame others, and have more alcohol and drug problems relative to their non- shame-prone peers. Guilt-prone inmates exhibit more empathy and lower levels of externalization of blame and hostility, relative to those who are less guilt prone,” (Tangney et al., 2011, p. 727).

### **2.3.4 Development**

Empirical results regarding the seemingly positive effects of guilt and negative effects of shame are not limited to adults. A number of studies show how children benefit from guilt over shame in various ways. A study by Kochanska and her colleagues videotaped children interacting with an object rigged to break, and studied these children over several years (Kochanska et al., 2002). Independent coders rated the degree to which children displayed various expressions such as gaze aversion, positive and negative affect, and various bodily signals. A stable pattern of behaviors emerged for some of these children, which the researchers argue is nascent guilt. These guilt-prone children were found to be more moral, meaning that later assessments showed that they were less likely to violate moral rules.

It is not just that children experiencing guilt have better outcomes: their parents’ use of guilt, as opposed to shame, is beneficial as well. For instance, Krevans and Gibbs (1996) found that parents who taught their children to feel guilty about moral transgressions involving other people—as opposed to those mothers who used other forms of discipline, such as shame-induction, power-assertion, or love-withdrawal—had children rated to be the most moral and empathetic in later years. Scarnier et al.

(2009) studied the ways in which mothers reacted to their children's moral transgressions. One study focused on real scenarios, in which mothers were asked to recall how they felt about their children's wrongdoings, as well as how they dealt with or disciplined their children. Another study focused on hypothetical situations, asking mothers to predict how they would respond to their children. Those mothers who felt guilt about their children's behavior were more likely to use beneficial, adaptive parenting strategies, whereas those who felt shame about their children's behavior were more likely to use maladaptive strategies.

### **2.3.5 Problems with the Psychological Views on Guilt and Shame**

It would seem that the psychological research on guilt and shame paint a clear picture: guilt is to be preferred over shame in nearly all cases. We should teach our children to feel guilt but not shame; we should encourage people to feel guilt but not shame. As Tangney et al. (2007) puts it:

In sum, empirical results converge, indicating that guilt but not shame is most effective in motivating people to choose the moral paths in life. The capacity for guilt is more apt to foster a lifelong pattern of moral behavior, motivating individuals to accept responsibility and take reparative action in the wake of the occasional failure or transgression. In contrast, research has linked shame with a range of illegal, risky, or otherwise problematic behaviors. Thus, when considering the welfare of the individual, his or her close relationships, or society, feelings of guilt represent the moral emotion of choice.

On the surface, this seems like a remarkable bit of progress toward resolving some of the philosophical disputes mentioned above. Sadly, there is a fundamental flaw in much of this research. First, there are serious reasons to doubt that guilt and shame are the same kind of thing; thus, the utility of comparing the two is dubious. As I will argue in the next section, guilt is not an emotion in the same way that shame is (if guilt is an emotion at all), and so comparing the two is akin to comparing sadness (a genuine emotion) with feeling disappointed (a complex state that has different feelings depending on co-occurring thoughts). Additionally, there are purely methodological worries about how guilt has been conceptualized in the majority of the psychological research, which I will now address.

Researchers interested in studying guilt (or other putative emotions) empirically face a difficulty. Given that there is no instrument for directly detecting guilt (i.e. guiltometers do not exist), one has to somehow operationalize the emotion, and use a questionnaire to infer its presence in study participants. In the case of guilt, one of the most prominent measures is the Test of Self-Conscious Affect (TOSCA) and its revisions, developed by Tangney. Ideally, this measure would reliably detect guilt (as opposed to shame), which would then allow one to observe (or infer) concomitant phenomena in subjects experiencing (or prone to experience, as the case may be) guilt.

The difficulty with this approach is that it is very sensitive to the operationalization of guilt that is used in constructing the measure. Problematic assumptions can lead one to think that what seems to be a *discovery* about guilt is actually just a *feature* of guilt that has been built into the criteria for detecting it in the first place. Understandably, researchers do not want to continuously reinvent the wheel, so even a flawed measure can continue to be used by other researchers. I believe that is precisely what has happened in the case of guilt.

For example, consider the following questions from the TOSCA (Tangney and Dearing, 2002):

1. You have recently moved away from your family, and everyone has been very helpful.

A few times you needed to borrow money, but you paid it back as soon as you could.

- (a) You would feel immature.
- (b) You would think: "I sure ran into some bad luck."
- (c) You would return the favor as quickly as you could.
- (d) You would think: "I am a trustworthy person."
- (e) You would be proud that you repaid your debts.

2. You attend your coworker's housewarming party and you spill red wine on a new cream-colored carpet, but you think no one notices.

- (a) You think your coworker should have expected some accidents at such a big party.
- (b) You would stay late to help clean up the stain after the party.

- (c) You would wish you were anywhere but the party.
- (d) You would wonder why your coworker chose to serve red wine with the new light carpet.

3. You break something at work and then hide it.

- (a) You would think: “This is making me anxious. I need to either fix it or get someone else to.”
- (b) You would think about quitting.
- (c) You would think: “A lot of things aren’t made very well these days.”
- (d) You would think: “It was only an accident.”

For each answer choice, participants are to rate how likely they are to agree with the statements on a 5-point scale (from 1: not likely, to 5: very likely). Each answer choice corresponds to a different category: shame, guilt, externalization, detachment, and pride, which is sometimes divided into two types (which need not be distinguished for present purposes). So in the first question, (a) corresponds to shame, (b) to externalization, (c) to guilt, (d) to alpha-pride, and (e) to beta-pride. In the second, (a) corresponds to externalization, (b) to guilt, (c) to shame, and (d) to detachment. In the third, (a) is guilt, (b) is shame, (c) is externalization, and (d) is detachment.

Note that in these questions (and others follow a similar pattern) what counts as guilt is quite simply a propensity to engage in pro-social behavior! The only mention of a particular feeling or emotion is in the third about anxiety. This is striking, and poses a problem for claims about the supposed pro-social nature of guilt. To be sure, other questions have answer choices that differ: some mention specific feelings (such as anxiety in the third listed above, as well as feeling bad and feeling unhappy), and others are concerned with desert (not accepting an individual award for a group effort, or feeling that one deserves to be punished). Still others are about what is arguably mere regret (vowing to be more careful next time, or to study harder next time, without mentioning any particular feeling; similar to the way one might regret making a losing move in chess without feeling guilty about it). Thus, this

measure of guilt has it that what counts as guilt is some admixture of propensities to engage in prosocial behavior, feel some negative emotion, feel that one deserves punishment, and regret the thing done wrong. Furthermore, the things about which one can feel guilt include being late for appointments, doing poorly on a test, having second thoughts about remaining with a volunteer project, and having a friend's dog run away while one is taking care of it. In other words, this measure of guilt has it that one can feel guilty for arguably non-moral failings, including those involving no other person as a victim.

There is plenty of room to argue that this is not an accurate conception of guilt, or that it is too disjointed to count as a single emotion (a point to which I will return in the next section). For now I will set that aside. The larger problem is that it is now completely unsurprising that people found to score high on the guilt component of this measure are also pro-social: that is built in to what is measured by "guilt" in this questionnaire. That people prone to guilt are more pro-social is thus not a discovery, but a necessary artifact of how guilt is measured on this instrument. And pro-sociality is just one feature of guilt that is built into this measure; there are certainly others. To take just one example, the desire for punishment (or the desire to avoid reward) is taken to be constitutive of guilt, but it is not obvious that this is a conceptually necessary component of guilt.

While many studies rely on the TOSCA, there are other measures of guilt and shame. Unfortunately, these are very often derived from the TOSCA, or share its conceptual commitments, and thus share similar problems. For example, the parental discipline method known as "guilt-induction" is essentially "discipline which directs the child to attend to his or her victims' perspectives," (Krevans and Gibbs, 1996, p. 3266). Thus, inducing guilt is inducing an empathic orientation. It is then no wonder that parents who "induce guilt" in their children have children who are more "moral." The influence of the TOSCA is far-reaching: a recent example comes from Cohen et al. (2012), who developed a measure of guilt derived from (and checked for validity against) the TOSCA.

Some may find the idea that guilt is intimately tied to feelings of reparation and pro-sociality unproblematic. However, that is not the point. Again, it is certainly not the case that guilt *necessarily* involves such feelings: it is not incoherent to imagine a case in which a person both feels guilty but does not feel that she needs to repair whatever damage she's done. So to the extent that guilt *does*

involve such feelings, it is a question which empirical investigation might well help to answer. But this cannot be determined if guilt is defined to include those very feelings, and thus it is unclear what studies that begin with such a notion of guilt can show.

While there is more to be said about the methodological problems involved in empirical studies of guilt and shame, that will have to wait for another occasion. What I will do now is use the problematically multifaceted view of guilt used in the TOSCA as a departure point for my argument that guilt is not an emotion at all.

## 2.4 Why Guilt is Not an Emotion

Virtually all of the philosophical and psychological literature on guilt and shame assume that they are of the same kind: guilt and shame are emotions, and both are often taken to be exemplars of the so-called moral emotions. One difficulty for any account of guilt is that the cases in which people describe feeling guilt form a rather diverse class with a lack of emotional congruity among those cases. After examining this difficulty, I will argue that guilt is not an emotion at all (an idea first proposed by Ortony (1987) and subsequently ignored), although shame probably is (although that is a claim I will have to return to at a later time). By looking at the various kinds of guilt, it will become clear that guilt is best conceived as a *feeling* rather than an emotion, a difference I will explain below (I will discuss this difference in more detail in a later chapter). I then argue that clarifying this difference seriously undermines claims about the desirability of guilt, particularly as opposed to shame. The evidence comes from several sources, and while none of these considerations are conclusive, taken together, they cast serious doubt on guilt's status as an emotion, moral or otherwise.

### 2.4.1 Varieties of Guilt

Occasions in which people describe themselves as feeling guilt show that there are several types of guilt, at least as guilt is ordinarily understood. There are four types that I will sketch only roughly. First, there is other-directed guilt, felt when a person does something to harm someone else, such

as accidentally breaking a friend's vase. There is also self-directed guilt, felt when we a person does something that harms only herself, such as eating a piece of cake while on a diet (Wollheim, 1999). Third, there is religious guilt, felt by people of certain faiths (e.g. so-called Catholic and Jewish guilt), which are interestingly *not* feelings of guilt felt for, or on behalf of, other group members. Finally, there is survivor's guilt, felt by those who have survived some kind of tragedy while others have not. There may be other dimensions along which guilt-types can be classified, such as whether the transgressions involved are moral or not. But for present purposes, this categorization will suffice.

Accounts of guilt can be roughly classified as being narrow, emotional, or cognitive, depending on how they understand the types of guilt just mentioned.<sup>3</sup> Narrow accounts offer a single specification of guilt that leaves out others. Examples include the accounts given by Freud (1961) and Harman (2009): neither of their conceptions of guilt cover religious or survivor's guilt. Others, such as Velleman (2003), are emotion-based: guilt is taken to be a family of related emotions, each member of which is captured by different thoughts, but where these are similar enough to warrant their all being called "guilt" (in Velleman's case, that family resemblance is based on anxiety, where the anxiety is about being punished, resented, or feeling anger). In other words, there are different kinds of guilt, but they are unified by the emotional experience of guilt, and not by what one is feeling guilty about. Finally, there are cognitive accounts, such as Prinz and Nichols (2010). In this type of account, guilt is distinguished by what one is feeling guilty about; i.e. the thought that underlies the emotion of guilt.

The primary problem with narrow accounts is their exclusivity. While a narrow account may provide a satisfactory picture of one kind of guilt, proponents of these accounts then owe us an explanation of why other types of guilt are not worthy of the name. Perhaps the thought is that only certain kinds of guilt are philosophically interesting, or that certain kinds of guilt are not really instances of guilt at all. While there are some plausible possibilities, most accounts simply do not acknowledge these other types of guilt. For example, perhaps one could claim that religious guilt is not guilt at all, but a type of shame. Or a supporter of Tangney's account, discussed above, might believe that guilt, understood as the emotion resulting from doing a bad action, is the only conception of the emotion worthy of

---

<sup>3</sup>These accounts are not meant to cover cases of group-based guilt, where one feels guilt for, or on behalf of, the members of one's group.

our consideration, because it is the only conception reliably detected by empirical means (that is, if her account did not have the flaws that it does). As things stand, discounting different types of guilt would require arguments that are just not on offer on narrow accounts.

Emotion-based accounts acknowledge different varieties of guilt, but then have the problem of explaining why these different types count as guilt on the basis of the underlying emotion, but others do not. For example, Velleman conceives of guilt as a family of emotions, united by anxiety. So although one can feel guilty about many different things, what makes those different experiences all count as instances of guilt is the underlying anxiety: sometimes the anxiety may be fear of punishment, sometimes fear of resentment, sometimes anxiety about being angry. But why do only these types of anxiety count as guilt? For example, why would other anxieties, such as anxiety about fear of failure, *not* count as a species of guilt? And why should we accept that self-directed guilt essentially involves anxiety about the forfeiture of trust to ourselves, as it does on Velleman's account? It seems dubious to attribute such anxiety to every instance in which a person might feel guilty. I might feel guilty for failing to make it to the gym this week without thereby being anxious about the possibility of being unable to trust myself to ever make it! To be sure, there may be a fix: perhaps some self-directed guilt is not actually guilt at all. Recall (Zeelenberg and Breugelmans, 2008), which found that people tend to report feeling guilt when they do something that results in an interpersonal harm, as opposed to feeling regret when the same act results in harm only to oneself. Thus, Velleman could deny that all self-directed guilt is guilt, properly understood. But the more general point remains: it is not obvious that anxiety is always involved in guilt. To take another example, consider a person who is the sole survivor of a plane crash on a desert island for which she bore no responsibility (a fact of which she is perfectly aware). Would she only be able to feel survivor's guilt if there were witnesses, or the potential for rescue? It seems quite reasonable to imagine her feeling survivor's guilt (among many other things, of course) even if she were completely alone and believed she had no hope of being rescued, and thus having no possibility to be anxious about the fear of being resented, as Velleman's account would have it. Perhaps other mixed emotional accounts could fare better, but it is difficult to see precisely what could unify all of these varieties of guilt. Let us turn instead to cognitive accounts.

A good example of a cognitive account is found in Prinz and Nichols (2010), which attempts to account for all types of guilt by identifying the constitutive *thought* underlying guilt. The idea here is that the core of guilt is the thought that “someone I am concerned about has been harmed and I have responsibility for that in virtue of what I have done or failed to do,” (Prinz and Nichols, 2010, p. 134) where “concern” and “responsibility” are construed broadly enough to account for many types of guilt. For example, “someone I am concerned about” can certainly include oneself as well as others, so both other-directed and self-directed guilt is covered. Perhaps some instances of religious guilt could be covered, but once again, survivor’s guilt poses a problem. There may well be some cases of survivor’s guilt in which one mistakenly believes she *is* responsible, but certainly many cases do not involve any such beliefs. Take the example mentioned above: being the sole survivor of a plane crash may well engender survivor’s guilt, even if one believes (rightly) that, as a passenger, she had nothing to do with the tragedy. Another problem with wide accounts is their ability to distinguish guilt from related emotions like shame. Imagine that one feels bad because of his inability to stick up for a friend who’s being taunted. Insofar as the thought here is that the person in question is responsible for the harm done to her friend, the case fits this criterion for guilt just mentioned perfectly; but we can easily imagine the person feeling shame, or embarrassment, rather than guilt. The problem for cognitive accounts is to both capture different types of guilt while not capturing other emotions or feelings, such as shame or embarrassment. Perhaps this can be done, but it is difficult to see how.

In general, any account of guilt faces a competing pair of desiderata. On the one hand, an account of guilt should accommodate different types of guilt (or explain why, in a principled manner, certain things that seem to be guilt are not guilt after all). On the other hand, an account of guilt should explain why these different types of guilt really deserve the same label “guilt,” yet be able to distinguish these various types of guilt from closely related emotions such as shame. The simplest way to solve this conundrum is to think of guilt not as an emotion, but as a feeling.

### 2.4.2 Feeling and Being

It may seem completely obvious that guilt is an emotion: we speak of feeling guilt, or feeling guilty, in much the same way we speak of feeling angry or sad. Further, as mentioned previously, the mere ability to feel guilt is what separates us from the psychopaths. But talking about a feeling does not necessarily (and not even often) mean that one is talking about an emotion. Consider the wide variety of terms that can be substituted for *X* into the schema “I feel *X*”. Members of this set include ‘anxious’, ‘betrayed’, ‘cranky’, ‘discouraged’, ‘empty’, ‘frustrated’, ‘giddy’, ‘happy’, ‘irritated’, and many more. It is exceedingly unlikely that each of these deserves to be called an emotion: “feeling happy” is quite likely to coincide with an instance of happiness, which is an emotion if anything is; but “feeling empty” or “feeling betrayed” are not.<sup>4</sup> While there is often a variety of emotions that people can and do experience when they feel empty or betrayed (as well as a variety of accompanying, and likely necessary, beliefs), these are simply not emotions in any full-blooded sense. Thus, the mere fact that we can speak of feeling something does not necessitate that that something is an emotion.

Although the fact that one can speak of “feeling *X*” is not sufficient for *X*’s being an emotion, it is necessary. Uncontroversial emotion terms, such as ‘happiness’, ‘sadness’, and ‘anger’ fit this pattern. Also interesting is that the emotions one claims to experience when uttering the phrase “I feel *X*” are the very same ones referred to in “I am *X*” (minding, of course, nominal and adjectival forms such as “I am angry” and “I feel anger”). Thus, declaring that one *feels* sad is no different than declaring that one *is* sad, just as being angry and feeling angry amount to the same thing.<sup>5</sup> Note that this does not work for certain terms, such as ‘alone’: one can feel alone without being alone, and vice versa. Similarly, one can feel empty without being empty (whatever “being empty” turns out to be). And as some writers have made explicit (e.g. Lamb (1983)), “being guilty” and “feeling guilty” work much like “being alone” and “feeling alone.” That is, one can certainly be guilty without feeling guilty, and vice versa. Thus, as a first pass, emotion terms seem to be those that admit of no difference between “being” and “feeling.”

---

<sup>4</sup>I deliberately omit terms such as ‘tired’, ‘cold’, and ‘hungry’ that are also obviously feelings, but only in a somatic sense (which it may be better to call sensations). Similarly, I omit talk of feeling that is merely synonymous with believing, as in “He feels that externalism about mental content is crazy.”

<sup>5</sup>It may be that subtle distinctions could be made between feeling sad and being sad when one is in the grips of some peculiar philosophical theory, but I know of no such theory, and will set aside that concern for now.

Again, this may be a necessary condition, but it is not sufficient (e.g. being hungry and feeling hungry are synonymous, but hunger is certainly not an emotion). This pattern certainly fits uncontroversial cases, such as Ekman's seminal list of the six basic emotions: anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness, and surprise (Ekman et al., 1972).

My proposal is that guilt is a feeling, and not an emotion. As such, we should not expect guilt to play the role that genuine emotions do in our moral and scientific theories. This idea is perhaps best illustrated by analogy. Consider betrayal (or abandonment, suggested by Ortony (1987)). Suppose you have, in fact, been betrayed by Jones, but do not care.<sup>6</sup> You might express this fact by saying "Jones has betrayed me, but it does not bother me. I do not feel betrayed." Now suppose that you do care: you might say "I feel betrayed by Jones." But what do you experience? Perhaps sadness, perhaps anger, perhaps some combination; *some* negative emotion seems appropriate (it would be baffling for the feeling of being betrayed to consist of happiness, even if happiness is ultimately a consequence of the betrayal). There is a wide range of appropriate *emotions*: one instance of betrayal might include anger as the dominant emotion, while in another instance, the dominant emotion might be sadness. The work done when one speaks of "feeling betrayed" is the conveyance that the speaker has a feeling that normally accompanies the belief that one has, in fact, been betrayed, often along with that very belief. That feeling, however, can include any number of emotions.

It is worth belaboring the importance of the difference between being guilty and feeling guilty. The subject of this essay is the so-called feeling of guilt, but simply *being* guilty is, by itself, of considerable importance, both philosophically and in everyday life. To be sad and to feel sad are virtually identical, and a philosophical treatment of *being* sad would be a philosophical treatment of *feeling* sad.<sup>7</sup> But to be alone and to feel alone are not the same thing, and the state of being alone (at least in the absence of feeling alone) does not seem to be of any particular philosophical importance. But to *be* guilty—

---

<sup>6</sup>I grant that there is a strong negative connotation to betrayal, such that one might not actually call a betrayal that one did not care about a "betrayal" in the first place. Nevertheless, it is possible to imagine such an occurrence, and difficult to succinctly describe such a scenario without using the word "betrayal." I set this concern aside in what follows.

<sup>7</sup>Except, perhaps, if one were to make a distinction between the occurrence of sadness and a longer-term propensity or disposition to feel sadness (the first might be feeling sad, the second being sad). But this kind of distinction isn't found in normal sadness talk: without some explicit theoretical apparatus in place, we would find it quite puzzling to here a friend say "I'm not sad, but I feel sad."

distinct from *feeling* guilty—is to be in a state central to philosophical discussions of moral and legal culpability. Guilt in this sense is a rich concept, and of course I cannot take up the nature of guilt itself in the present essay.

### 2.4.3 Guilt as a Feeling

The proposal I offer is that the so-called emotion of guilt is not an emotion at all, but a feeling—variable across different people and different occurrences—that normally accompanies the (possibly mistaken) belief that one *is* guilty. There is no single emotion that *is* guilt: some occurrences of feeling guilty might involve anxiety, others might involve anger, and still others might involve sadness. And surely there will be cases in which there is a complex combination of these emotions. But just as there is no one emotion of betrayal or abandonment, there is no one emotion of guilt. Of course, there are constraints on what one could reasonably be expected to experience in expressing feelings of these types: feeling guilt might include feelings of anxiety, or anger, or sadness, but it would certainly not include feeling happy.

Understanding guilt as a feeling, rather than an emotion, solves many of the problems mentioned above. First, it solves the problem of the plurality of “types” of guilt. Any occasion in which one feels as if she is guilty of some transgression is an occasion in which she feels guilt. Harming another person is one example of such an occasion (i.e. other-directed guilt), but so is eating food forbidden by one’s diet (i.e. self-directed guilt). Additionally, the thought that one is constantly sinning, or that one is constantly not living up to certain standards, are both occasions for feeling that one is guilty of religious transgressions (i.e. religious guilt). Finally, we can understand survivor’s guilt, in which one feels *as if* she is guilty of a transgression, even when she is not. On my proposal, this would be similar to feeling alone, even when one is surrounded by friends and is not alone in any sense, even by one’s own admission (similar analogies can be made with feeling appreciated, betrayed, neglected, and perhaps many others). The feeling is *as if* one is alone, just as the feeling in survivor’s guilt is *as if* one is guilty.

This proposal also solves the problem of how to account for the unity of guilt in light of the fact that there seem to be a diversity of types of guilt. Very simply, different types of guilt are just different occasions in which one feels as if one is guilty of a transgression. These occasions need not consist in the same emotions: again, some instances of guilt might be marked by sadness, others anger. Some instances in which one feels guilty may engender further thoughts, such as that one deserves punishment; others may motivate further behaviors, such as that one ought to try to repair whatever damage has been done. Again, there are constraints: the emotion felt as part of feeling guilt ought not be elation, and the thoughts engendered by feeling guilt ought not motivate one to repeat whatever actions caused the guilt feeling. But what unifies guilt is the feeling that one is guilty, rather than any particular emotion.

Finally, this account avoids the problem of including other related emotions and feelings, such as shame or remorse. Feeling guilt is simply feeling as if one is guilty for a transgression, even if one knows that one is not. One of the emotions that might accompany that feeling is shame (as many of the psychological studies on guilt and shame have discovered, guilt and shame are highly correlated); but one can certainly feel shame for things that involve no transgressions at all, such as one's appearance or poor performance. Similarly, many instances in which one feels guilty will involve remorse, but not all: feeling guilty for intentionally hurting someone might often result in remorse, but feeling guilty for surviving an accident might involve no remorse whatsoever, because there is no action for which one could feel remorseful about.

#### **2.4.4 Feelings and Emotions**

My proposal that guilt is a feeling, and not an emotion, requires a story about what this difference is and why it's important. A full account of the difference must wait for another occasion, which is in no small part due to the unresolved status of what emotions are in the first place; in the words of Mulligan and Scherer (2012, p. 345): "There is no commonly agreed-upon definition of emotion in any of the disciplines that study this phenomenon. This fact leads to endless debates and hampers the cumulative progress of research. It also constitutes a major impediment to interdisciplinary dialogue and research

collaboration.” Nevertheless, there are some preliminary points to make about how feelings differ from emotions, and I will sketch some of those relevant to understanding guilt, particularly with an eye toward distinguishing it from shame.

First, I understand the term “emotion” here in an occurrent, episodic sense. Emotions have beginnings and endings: whatever emotions are, we experience them, and experiences begin and end. Although emotions may be long-lasting, they differ from propensities or dispositions to experience emotions, moods, and so on. I break company with most emotion theorists in that I do not believe that emotions necessarily have intentional objects (which is the majority view). Many emotions do have intentional objects, and in future work I will argue that shame has one’s self as its intentional object.<sup>8</sup> However, sadness is an emotion if anything is, and sadness can (and does) occur without that sadness being *about* anything at all (for example, as a side effect of certain medications). A similar point can be made about anxiety. However, in what follows, nothing crucial hinges upon whether emotions *must* have intentional objects; it is enough that at least some do, a point which no one seriously disputes. Finally, I remain neutral on whether “emotion” is a natural kind term, although at least some particular emotions are better candidates for natural kinds than others. In particular, I will claim that shame is in the class of good candidates, but remain neutral on whether other single emotions, such as anger, are also natural kinds, or whether the superordinate term “emotion” itself names a natural kind, or class of natural kinds (see Scarantino (2012) for an excellent discussion of this issue).

The term “feeling” can also be understood in a number of ways, and I only note a few relevant points here. First, I take feelings to be distinct from mere sensations: although the grammatical similarity of “feeling hungry” and “feeling alone” might suggest that these are similar, first is an instance of a sensation. Briefly, sensations seem to be cognitively impenetrable in a way that proper feelings are not. Although I can distract myself from my hunger pangs, a change in my beliefs will not change the sensation. However, if I come to believe that I have a new group of friends, my feeling of being

---

<sup>8</sup>Although this is not the case for some instances of feeling ashamed *of* someone. However, this seems to be a species of group-based shame, and as such will have to wait for another occasion.

alone may well be alleviated. In fact, it seems that feelings—distinct from sensations in this sense—are precisely those things that can *only* be alleviated by a change in beliefs.<sup>9</sup>

In everyday discourse, feelings are not always distinguished from emotions. However, with careful consideration we find differences, and these differences have important consequences for how we think about the emotions and feelings. Feelings have a cognitive component that emotions may not, and this cognitive component is a belief about what typically causes the state in which one finds oneself. Thus, people are necessarily aware of their feelings in a way that they may not be of their emotions. Consider the emotion of sadness: one may have not know why one is sad, or one may even know that one has no reason for being sad (in the case of a medication's side-effect). In some cases, one may not even know *that* one is sad: there are certainly instances of non-conscious emotions. But feelings are not like this: if I feel abandoned, I necessarily know what it is that I feel. And part of what I know is that this is the state that is normally caused by situations in which I have been abandoned.

The rough idea, then, is that feelings are conscious emotions plus a belief about the typical cause of the emotion. Two points are important to mention here. First, any particular feeling may consist of some variety of emotions, or even more than one emotion. Feeling betrayed, for example, might include sadness in some instances, anger in others, or both in still others. The second point is that the belief one has about one's emotional state in a feeling is *not* a belief about its actual cause, but about the typical cause. Thus, when one feels guilt, one does not necessarily believe that one *is* guilty of anything, although one does believe that the emotional state she finds herself in is of the kind typically caused by being guilty. Survivor's guilt is an example of this: one may truly feel guilty, which may mean that one experiences intense sadness, coupled with the belief that this is the kind of emotional state that is normally caused by being guilty, even though there is absolutely no belief that one actually *is* guilty of anything. Of course, in many instances, the feeling of guilt will include a belief that one is actually guilty, but this is not necessary, just as it is possible to feel alone without believing that you are, in fact, alone.

---

<sup>9</sup>Of course, it may not be psychologically possible for one to have the belief that might alleviate a negative emotion: one's religious guilt might require alterations to beliefs fundamental to one's worldview.

Understood this way, feelings and emotions play different roles in explanations of behavior. In our everyday discourse, telling someone that you feel betrayed (or annoyed, or abandoned, or alone etc.) functions in part to inform others about your emotional state, but more so to convey a certain amount of explanatory information about *why* you believe you are in the kind of state that you are in. So, for example, suppose that Adam prepares his favorite dish for Brian, but it does not come out well. Adam might say that he feels annoyed with himself, or disappointed, or angry (or Adam might simply say that he *is* annoyed, disappointed, or angry). Each of these might have a subtly different phenomenology (e.g. annoyance seems closer to anger, whereas disappointment seems closer to sadness), but they might not; in any case, the primary value of these different feelings is that they (or their expression to another person) convey information about their perceived typical cause. In this case, the perceived cause (i.e. the substandard preparation of the dish) is identical to the actual cause. Adam's feeling annoyed with himself suggests that he is unhappy (and perhaps angry) about, say, his own incompetence as a chef, or something else that he may think he could have controlled. Annoyance with oneself conveys that one failed to live up to some standard. On the other hand, if Adam is simply disappointed, this does not suggest that Adam believes that he failed to live up to a standard, but that things just did not work out as he wanted them to (perhaps the recipe is a new one that Adam simply does not like).

This is a controversial point, and some may object that different feelings do have distinct characters (or phenomenal feels, or something along these lines), and this is how we distinguish them. It is difficult to tell with any precision whether or not this is true. However, the important point is that different feelings convey distinct kinds of information about their perceived causes. Consider another example, one that many parents have had with their children (and children have had with their parents). Suppose a child does something bad, and the parent finds out, causing the parent to be upset. The parent reacts with a frown, and the child can tell she is in trouble. Two typical (of many possible) responses are that the parent feels angry, and the parent feels disappointed. Now it may be difficult to separate how these different feelings *feel* to the parent: of course they are both unpleasant, and, again, perhaps disappointment has something like sadness as a component. But what is conveyed when expressing these different feelings is obvious, as is the difference between what is conveyed. As many parents

and children know, making a parent feel angry is far preferable to making them feel disappointed, and this is not because making a parent feel angry is less painful or less hurtful than making a parent feel disappointed. The “magnitude” of the negative feeling, and even the feeling itself, may, in fact, be identical. However, when a child learns that her actions caused her parent to feel disappointed in her, she learns that her parent’s esteem for her has decreased (or something along these lines), but when she learns that her actions caused her parent to feel angry, she does not worry about the decrease in esteem. Even a very angry parent is often preferable to a slightly disappointed one!

Emotions, then, are components of feelings, and thus more basic. As mentioned earlier, I cannot provide a full theory of emotions here. But the idea that emotions are basic is largely uncontroversial. Some, such as Ekman (1992), argue that the only things that really count as emotions are the basic emotions; others, such as Damasio (1994) and Griffiths (1997), argue for distinct lower-level and higher-level emotions. Other animals, such as non-human primates and social mammals such as dogs, seem to have emotions, whereas they do not have feelings (neither in the sense articulated above, nor in everyday discourse, unless one takes emotions and feelings to be synonymous). This is because emotions need not—and often do not—have belief as a component. In any case, whatever precisely emotions *are*, they are more primitive than feelings.

The view of guilt I have argued for in this section is that guilt is a feeling, and not an emotion. Feelings, I argue, are more complex states than mere emotions: feelings include a belief about what typically causes the emotion one is feeling. In particular, the feeling of guilt is the feeling one has which one normally attributes to being guilty of a violation, although one need not believe that she actually *is* guilty of such a violation (as in the case of survivor’s guilt). Different people will, because of culture and upbringing, feel guilty about different kinds of things; furthermore, the emotion that is part of this feeling may also differ. Thus, some people may feel guilty about putting on weight, and people who feel guilty about this may experience different emotions as part of that feeling (e.g. feeling guilty about gaining a few pounds may be composed of anger in one person, sadness in another). This kind of variation makes generalizations about guilt very difficult to come by: one person’s guilt about hitting a friend might involve remorse, whereas another’s guilt about not giving to charity might involve shame

or sadness. Rather than explaining the *kind* of mental state that one is in, or what that mental state feels like, describing a state as a feeling of guilt explains what it is that the person having that feeling normally attributes that feeling to.

## 2.5 Conclusion

I have outlined some of the accounts that philosophers have given of guilt, and discussed some of the seemingly-promising findings about guilt that psychologists have discovered. But, I argue, the initial methodology developed to measure guilt builds into guilt many of the features that have then been touted as reasons to favor guilt as a moral emotion, particularly relative to shame. These various features point toward the view that it is a mistake to think of guilt as a single emotion in the first place. Rather, guilt is a feeling, and in particular, to feel guilt is to feel the way that one has learned one typically feels when one *is* guilty. But the emotional component of that feeling may involve anger, sadness, anxiety, or some combination of these. I suspect, but did not argue, that the explanation of this emotional diversity lies in individual learning histories about which violations are the ones one should feel bad about, and what constitutes the appropriate way to feel bad. Exploring this issue must wait for another day.

Additionally, I have laid the groundwork for distinguishing guilt from shame in a way that shows why comparing the two is deeply mistaken. If shame is truly an emotion, then it is more basic than guilt, less cognitively-penetrable than guilt, and universal in a way that guilt is not. An explicit discussion of shame will also have to wait for another occasion, but from what I have argued above, it is clear that the idea that we should “prefer” one or the other is a mistake. We may not be able to control when we feel shame, much as we cannot (in a straightforward sense) control when we feel sadness. But we may have some control over when we feel guilt, much as we have some control over when we feel abandoned. The right argument could convince you that you have not, in fact, been abandoned, and thus you may stop feeling as such. Similarly, the right argument could convince you that you are not,

in fact, guilty of anything, and thus you may stop feeling that way.<sup>10</sup> But no argument will convince you that you should stop feeling an occurrence of sadness, and no argument will convince you that you should stop feeling an occurrence of shame. I will explore these issues further in later essays.

These kinds of distinctions are important for understanding this aspect of our moral psychology. In order for us to become more moral, it is important that we understand which parts of our psychology are under our control, and to what extent. While many authors have realized the division between cognition and emotion is at best simplistic for some time now (Damasio (1994) offered an early popular exposition), the best way to understand how to proceed with a more sophisticated division of mental processes related to our moral psychology is very much in flux. What I propose above is a small contribution to the effort to determine what our moral psychology is made of.

---

<sup>10</sup>Although, in these cases, the accompanying emotion may linger, the way in which one might continue to be angry and “riled up” even after a heated argument with a friend has been revealed to be a misunderstanding.

## Chapter 3

# The Problem of (and with) Shame

Sorry Bubs, shame ain't worth as much as  
you think.

---

— Steve Earl as “Waylon.” *The Wire*,  
Season 5, Episode 5, HBO.

### 3.1 Introduction

The eminent psychiatrist and violence researcher James Gilligan once described shame as follows:

By *shame* I mean the feelings of inferiority, humiliation, embarrassment, inadequacy, incompetence, weakness, dishonor, disgrace, “loss of face”; the feelings of being vulnerable to, or actually experiencing, ridicule, contempt, insult, derision, scorn, rejection, or other “narcissistic wounds”; the feeling of not being able to take care of oneself. Jealousy and envy are members of this same family of feelings. (Gilligan, 1976, 144)

While this characterization clearly emphasizes the non-controversial fact that shame is far from a pleasant experience, it leaves much to be desired. Is it, in fact, a family of related emotions? Or is it better

to think of it as a single emotion accompanied by something else? Which items on the above list are sufficient for shame, and which are necessary? Surely we would not want occurrences of shame to require *all* of the above items, but which subset (or subsets) is neither described nor obvious. It's not unreasonable to look for more precision.<sup>1</sup>

On the other end of the spectrum, we find characterizations such as this:

I posit shame as an innate affect auxiliary response and a specific inhibitor of continuing interest and enjoyment...shame operates only after interest or enjoyment has been activated; it inhibits one, or the other, or both. The innate activator of shame is the incomplete reduction of interest or joy. (Tomkins, 1987)

This will not do either, as we can easily imagine cases in which one's joy or interest has been inhibited without any resulting shame. And it does not seem to work as a merely necessary condition either: certainly one can feel shame when no joy or interest preceded it. If the characterization is meant to say that, prior to shame, the individual does not feel as bad as she does when shame occurs, then this characterization seems trivial. Of course shame is unpleasant, and it will only be in extreme cases when the emotions preceding shame are somehow worse than when shame occurs.<sup>2</sup>

More recent research in both psychology and philosophy has gone some way toward more precise characterizations of shame. Still, like the feeling of guilt, the nature of shame is poorly understood. In this chapter, I will attempt to help this situation. Once we clarify what precisely shame is—and carefully distinguish it from related emotions and feelings—we can be in a better position to assess its desirability. In what follows I will argue that shame is essentially about domination. And despite recent attempts to apologize for shame, understood using the account I propose, shame is desirable only insofar as the hierarchical structures under which it appears are themselves desirable (and some types

---

<sup>1</sup>An additional problem which I will not address here (interesting as it is) is Gilligan's claim that shame is the precursor to guilt, and much more important for moral development than guilt. Empirical research has suggested that the latter claim is almost certainly not the case.

<sup>2</sup>Perhaps an example would be a person who is extremely sad after having just been told that her mother has died. Upon learning that she was the victim of a cruel joke—her mother is in fact alive—she feels shame which, relative to her sadness, is not as painful. But these cannot be the kinds of cases Tomkins means to exclude.

of shame are always undesirable, although perhaps not preventable given our particular psychological makeup).

## 3.2 Desiderata

What we might want from an account of shame? First, it is worth clarifying the target of our inquiry; one important way to do this is to separate shame from other closely related concepts. Our everyday talk of shame may or may not be illuminating, so we must find cases where we have the clearest instances of shame that are not well-described as also being cases of, say, embarrassment, or humiliation, or guilt. If we find such cases, we may be able to conclude that shame is its own thing, different in important ways from seemingly-related emotions. If we do not find such cases, then depending on the pattern of relationships we find, we might conclude that shame is a species of some other emotion, or simply an extreme (or decreased) form of another emotion. For example, it seems plausible that *joy* is nothing more than a large degree, or extreme form (or something like that) of *happiness*. At the same time, it seems plausible that *contentedness* is a different emotion or feeling altogether, although it is related to happiness. We can imagine someone being happy without being content, but it is difficult to make sense of what it would mean to feel joy without feeling happy. Of course, different people may use these words in different ways: one might argue that there are different kinds of happiness, perhaps applying to different timescales. In such a case, then, it would be worth investigating if there is any difference between this larger sense of happiness and contentedness. In any case, it is a good starting point to see in what ways we can separate shame from its *prima facie* relatives.

Additionally, a satisfactory account of shame should to accord well with empirical results. Psychologists—both research and clinical psychologists—have discovered much about shame in our (i.e. Western) culture. Other significant research, although not as extensive, offers results about shame in other cultures, as well as shame (or at least some analog or precursor) in nonhuman animals. Any philosophical account of shame should take this research into serious consideration, meaning that conflicts between such a philosophical account and empirical research should be minimized. If this is

not possible, then we must investigate whether philosophers and psychologists (and other empirical researchers) are using the term “shame” in different ways. If so, then we are simply talking past one another, and one interesting project is to figure out why. If not—that is, if the philosophical and psychological conceptions of shame are the same, or quite compatible—then one interesting question is how the empirical research does or does not match our philosophical account. The possibilities here are too many to enumerate, but they may involve different uses of shame in different philosophical accounts or different operationalizations of shame used in different psychological experiments.

Finally, an account of shame ought to help us to make sense of the fact that different cultures perceive the cultural place and significance of shame in different ways. While the classical distinction between “guilt cultures” and “shame cultures” (see Piers et al.) may be too blunt, it is nevertheless the case that shame plays a different role in some cultures than others. More specifically, in Western culture, shame tends to be seen as an undesirable emotion we ought to avoid, except when we want to punish another (i.e. the practice of “shaming,” which, of course, is quite unpleasant for the person being shamed). But in more collectivist, interdependent cultures, shame tends to be seen as a desirable response to at least some kinds of norm violation. Furthermore, the empirical evidence suggests—at least at a first glance—that experiencing shame in our culture often leads to, or is at least correlated with, obviously undesirable emotions (such as depression and anxiety) and antisocial behavior. At the same time, empirical results suggest that shame has a positive effect in collectivist cultures. An account of shame should be able to explain why shame plays this seemingly very different role in different cultures, or perhaps explain why these are actually not the same kinds of shame.

### **3.3 Distinguishing Shame from its Relatives**

The task of narrowing in on a characterization of shame requires some investigation into how we use the term, and determining what cluster (or clusters) of features we can locate as central to what we might call “shame-proper,” and separate them from other features in those occasions in which we might nevertheless use the word “shame.” If we can identify this “proper” shame, we can then ask

what differentiates it from related feelings or emotions, such as guilt, embarrassment, humiliation, and so forth.

First, let us look at the phenomenon of being *ashamed*. One might say that one is ashamed of various things, including one's failings, one's physical characteristics, one's self, one's family, one's country.

Common examples of feeling ashamed for one's failings are moral failings. One might feel ashamed for slapping a friend during a heated argument, or lying to a family member. But the failings leading to shame need not be moral. Suppose Dave goes to his first five-star restaurant with his grad school adviser and a few other professors. Faced with an array of silverware on both the left and right sides of the plate, Dave may feel ashamed that he does not know which to use when the first course arrives. Knowing what silverware to use on such an occasion hardly qualifies as a moral matter; it is simply a matter of convention, or etiquette. But Dave may very well feel ashamed. Or suppose Erica is invited to see her friend's artwork at a gallery. Erica examines a particular painting and decides it is hideous. Later, she discovers that this very painting was her friend's. Erica may feel ashamed that she judged her friend's work so harshly. Yet it does not seem that Erica has done anything *morally* wrong.

The second kind of thing about which one might feel ashamed is one's physical characteristics. One could be ashamed of one's large nose, weight, or lisp. Or one might be ashamed of characteristics which are not "physical" in a straightforward sense, but which are nevertheless personal. For example, one might be ashamed of one's race or ethnicity, one's upbringing, or one's educational background.

A common expression of shame, especially in the second-person, is that of feeling ashamed of one's self. People who behave badly are told that they ought to be ashamed of themselves, and we often use this expression when scolding children. Furthermore, without any specified object, the phrase "I am ashamed," seems to mean nothing more than that I am ashamed of myself. In a sense, the self may be the default object of shame when no further object is specified, and the partial object of shame when a further object is specified.

Now it should be noted that these distinctions are not at all clear cut, but merely aids to think about the kinds of things about which one might feel ashamed. One can quite easily lump all of the above in the category of feeling ashamed *of one's self* with variation in the cause or reason for feeling ashamed.

For example, it is quite difficult to make sense of the difference between Erica's feeling ashamed *of herself* because she slapped her friend in a heated argument and her feeling ashamed *that* she slapped her friend. Similarly, there is no obvious difference between Fred's feeling ashamed of himself *because* of his large nose and his feeling ashamed *of* his large nose. Perhaps there is a slight difference in degree: feeling ashamed *of oneself* may seem stronger, in some sense, than merely feeling ashamed of something one did, or of some feature of oneself. But that is splitting hairs with more precision than seems warranted.

### 3.3.1 Embarrassment

The examples above may all be occasions for feeling embarrassed, as well as, or instead of, ashamed. However, insofar as it can be done, shame and embarrassment ought to be distinguished. Surely there is a difference between mere embarrassment and shame, even though we may often use "being ashamed" as synonymous with "being embarrassed." It is worth considering some important differences between the two.

Embarrassment and shame seem to have a great deal of overlap; in fact, that overlap is so great that the attempt to cleanly separate the two may seem to be a fool's errand. However, we can find examples where embarrassment, but not shame, appropriately describes what we feel, and vice versa. As a first pass, it may seem that shame is simply intense embarrassment, and the two are not different in kind. Just as elation is extreme happiness, so is shame extreme embarrassment. In that case, we need only to agree that there is some (probably very difficult to determine) demarcation with embarrassment on one side and shame on the other. There might be many borderline cases in which we cannot say with certainty that the case is one of shame rather than embarrassment (or vice versa), just as we might expect if we were to examine cases of elation versus "mere" happiness. Alternatively, shame and embarrassment may be quite different in kind, even though we find they often come together (much as shame does with guilt). On either view, there will be clear cases of shame, clear cases of embarrassment, and perhaps some borderline cases. Consider the following examples.

A clear case of feeling shame might result from being defeated in a competition. Athletes often feel shame after losing, and particularly in one-on-one competitions. They do everything right—everything they could—yet still they feel ashamed after being defeated. It does not seem appropriate to call such a case one of embarrassment. We might be willing to call it mere embarrassment if the athlete's pants had fallen down, causing her to trip while running. But if a sprinter loses in the absence of any external factors, we can easily imagine her feeling shame. Someone may even say (a coach, perhaps) that her performance is nothing to be embarrassed of; she may even agree. Still, feeling shame after such a defeat is conceptually appropriate.<sup>3</sup> I will say more about this kind of example later, but for now it need only serve to illustrate an uncontroversial occasion of shame.

A clear case of embarrassment might result from realizing that one's fly is unzipped in the midst of teaching a class. All but the most stoic among us would probably blush, perhaps try to lighten the situation by making a joke, or perhaps step out of the room to amend the situation. Again, everyday language use might not clearly distinguish feeling embarrassed by this situation as opposed to feeling ashamed. But if we take seriously that there is a difference, mere embarrassment seems to do the job. As I will argue later, this is an occasion where one's social standing has not been lowered in any significant sense, which I take to be necessary for shame. And while not a perfect test, uncontroversial cases of embarrassment—such as the one described here—may well be retold in the future as humorous anecdotes; uncontroversial cases of shame may serve as anecdotes, but not funny in any sense.

### **3.3.2 Humiliation**

Shame and humiliation seem to be closely related. I think that, at this point, we can make clear one important way that the two differ. Humiliation is akin to an extreme form of embarrassment. Carrie, the prom queen, who stumbles a bit as she is stepping up to the stage, may be slightly embarrassed. Depending on the details of Carrie's personality, she may just blush and smile, or make a small joke of the matter, or try to pretend it didn't even happen. But when Carrie's nemeses pour pigs' blood on

---

<sup>3</sup>I say "conceptually" only in order to make clear that I am not speaking of any normative appropriateness. I will not be concerned with that in this essay.

her from above, there is no way in which Carrie—or anyone else for that matter—can laugh it off, or pretend it didn't happen.<sup>4</sup> This is a clear case of humiliation, which I take to be extreme embarrassment.

In the account of shame I sketch below, I take shame to involve domination, either metaphorical or literal. For a situation to involve domination, it must be clear to the dominated person that he has, in fact, been “lowered.” Cases of humiliation may or may not involve shame, depending on whether or not the person believes herself to have been forced into a lower position. In Carrie's case, whether she feels shame along with her humiliation depends on whether she believes her peers have dominated her: whether they have forced her into submission, as it were. If Carrie is merely humiliated, she would be angry, and not afraid to confront her peers (and, as happens in the novel, determined to punish them). But if she has been shamed, then she accepts that she has been dominated by her peers; they have successfully put her in a lower place, and she would be more likely to hide and avoid them.

### 3.3.3 Guilt

Guilt and shame are often used interchangeably in everyday language, but a bit of thought reveals that there is some difference in the two. Interestingly, a clear distinction between guilt and shame is a relatively new development in the psychological literature. Although an early distinction between so-called guilt cultures and shame cultures was made in anthropology in the 1950s (e.g. (Piers and Singer, 1971), originally published in 1953), psychologists did not acknowledge the distinction between guilt and shame until the work of Helen Block Lewis (1971). This distinction was taken up in the work of June Price Tangney (1990). Psychologists have characterized the difference between guilt and shame in terms of the object of assessment: guilt is the feeling that I have done something bad, that I have behaved badly. Shame is characterized by feeling that my entire self is bad, that I am a bad person. I will discuss more about the dominant view of shame in psychology below; for now, it is enough to note that guilt and shame are two separate phenomena.

---

<sup>4</sup>This example is taken from the Stephen King novel *Carrie*.

### 3.4 Previous Accounts of Shame

Accounts of shame can be found starting with at least the writings of the Ancient Greeks. I cannot hope to do justice to every account on offer in the literature; in this section, I will discuss some of the more prominent accounts from recent decades. Accounts of shame show parallels with accounts of guilt: there is both disagreement on what precisely shame *is*, as well as whether shame is desirable or not.

As mentioned earlier, Tangney, building on the work of Lewis, has developed an influential account of shame specified relative to guilt. On Tangney's view, an instance of guilt is one where the person in question feels bad about something she has done; an instance of shame is one in which the person in question feels her whole self to be bad. Psychologists have proposed other common sense views about the difference between shame and guilt, but none hold up to empirical scrutiny (these results are reviewed in Tangney et al. (2007)). For example, one might think of shame as an experience essentially involving public (or perceived public) exposure, whereas guilt requires no such audience, and is thus the more private of the two. Another thought is that certain types of situations or experiences tend to elicit guilt, whereas others elicit shame, and the difference is not simply whether the situation is one involving public exposure or not. For example, maybe stealing tends to elicit shame, whereas lying tends to elicit guilt. These latter two distinctions have virtually no empirical support, whereas the distinction offered by Tangney (or at least its operationalization<sup>5</sup>) seems to support a robust difference between shame and guilt.

David Velleman offers an intriguing philosophical account of shame (Velleman, 2001). The story of Genesis provides, on Velleman's view, an exemplary instance of shame, and a puzzle whose solution should provide some insight into the nature of shame. According to the second book of Genesis, Adam and Eve were naked, and neither were ashamed of that fact. Later, when the two have eaten from the Tree of Knowledge, they make clothes in order to hide their nakedness, about which they are now ashamed. What is the knowledge, Velleman asks, that Adam and Eve could gain such that their nakedness becomes a source of shame where it once was not? Surely the knowledge that Adam

---

<sup>5</sup>The problem with this operationalization is a topic I take up in another essay.

and Eve gained was not mere awareness: before eating from the Tree, they knew they were naked. One possible—although unsatisfactory—answer would be that the knowledge they gained comprises something like a new belief that nakedness is shameful. That answer only pushes the question back a step further: *why* would they be given the knowledge the nakedness is shameful? Further, would merely *knowing* that nakedness is shameful make them ashamed? Perhaps, but likely not. Imagine being unaware that wearing eyeglasses is a shameful behavior according to the cultural norms of a country you are visiting. Once you are told that wearing glasses is shameful, you may well take them off and refrain from wearing them during your stay. You may even apologize for your ignorance of this cultural norm. It seems unlikely, however, that you would *feel* shame.<sup>6</sup>

Velleman's answer is insightful and provocative. The knowledge that Adam and Eve gained was the realization that they could not control their genitals, because they had been given the knowledge of lust. Prior to gaining this knowledge, Velleman agrees with St. Augustine's claim that they must have procreated, not out of lust, but out of their free will. After "the fall," the instinctual drive of lust made them lose control over these parts of their body (the "private" or "shameful" parts). At the same time, Adam and Eve realized that they need *not* obey these instinctual drives. Hiding the physical evidence of lust thus becomes important: we may choose not to act upon our sexual urges, and we want to hide our body's response to lust, taking control over how we display ourselves—one of the most intimate aspects of ourselves—to others.

The idea generalizes: shame is the emotion that arises when others see what we would normally want to conceal, but are unable to conceal at the moment. For example, suppose Adrian invites his colleague Barbara over for dinner. Barbara arrives early, and lets herself in. Adrian has just showered, and Barbara sees him naked. Adrian would normally want to conceal his nakedness, but in that moment, cannot do so. He thus feels ashamed for being seen naked.

Deonna and his colleagues provide a very different kind of account of shame Deonna et al. (2011). Whereas Velleman's account of shame involves being seen by others in a way that you cannot control,

---

<sup>6</sup>Of course, you may feel *something* if people give you looks of disdain or scorn. The mere knowledge that you are engaging in the shameful behavior—in the absence of reactions like those just mentioned—would not lead you to the feeling.

Deonna's account takes shame to be the experience of failing yourself. On this account—as opposed to Velleman's—one can feel shame in the absence of any others, or perceived others; in fact, one may feel shame about a failing that no one else would ever know about. Shame, on this account, is not about a failure of self-presentation, but a failure of living up to one's own standards.

Shame, according to Deonna and colleagues, is the experience of demonstrating to oneself that he/she is incapable of living up to or meeting some standard or norm. Of course, the standard must be one that the person cares about. Also, “incapable” is taken to be read in a very strong sense: it is not that you simply cannot quite meet the standard, but that you demonstrate to yourself that you cannot even *minimally* do what is required if one were to value that standard. The locus of shame on this account is one's own perception of oneself.

As an example, suppose Craig takes himself to be an excellent actor. He values other actors whom he perceives to excel at their craft; he spends much time memorizing lines and thinking carefully about how to best portray the fictional characters of his roles. He has secured a role in a much-anticipated new play, and has invited friends and colleagues to attend the première. As the play begins, Craig is about to deliver his first lines. But to his astonishment, he has completely forgotten his lines. He suddenly has no idea what he is supposed to say, not a single word of the soliloquy his character was supposed to deliver.

This is an occasion in which Craig would feel shame. He cares deeply about his ability to act, yet he has demonstrated that he could not even perform in the most minimal way that would reflect his deep love of acting. His error was not a small one: he did not flub his lines, or stutter, or make some other minor error in his delivery. Rather, his performance reflected what could be accomplished by one who had no regard for acting at all. Craig has shown to himself that he is not even capable of being a mediocre actor, let alone an accomplished one.

The problem with accounts of shame thus far is their inability to account for the different occasions that bring about shame. Deonna's account of shame is partially motivated by the desire to view shame as primarily about one's own values, rather than the values of others. The worry Deonna is concerned with is that if shame is heterogeneous, it cannot play the role that one might want it to play as a species

of moral emotion: if your feeling shame is guided by what may simply be social conventions that you do not care about, you may feel shame for reasons having nothing to do with what you take to be moral concerns. However, it seems that prior to demanding that shame play the role we would like it to in moral psychology, we should have a worked out account of exactly what shame is. That is my primary task here. But before moving on to my account, it is worth examining in detail the kinds of cases that each of the most prominent accounts of shame fail to account for.

Tangney's account of shame is quite simple: shame is the feeling that one's self is bad. What "bad" is relative to, however, is left unspecified. Whether the badness of shame is relative to our own standards, or to the standards of others, is not clear. Perhaps that is not a pressing concern, given that psychologists often seem interested in the contrast between guilt and shame, rather than precise accounts of each alone. Questions used to test for an individual's proneness to shame involve giving participants scenarios where they are to imagine they have done something wrong, then asking them how they would feel. Shame-related answers include choices like "I would feel small, like a rat," "I would feel incompetent," "I would want to be anywhere but here," and "You would feel stupid," (Tangney, 1990). I discuss Tangney's work elsewhere, but here it is enough to note that this is not a very precise account of shame, although the answers in Tangney's operationalization of shame may overlap with at least some occasions for shame.

Despite the elegance of Velleman's account, it may be that focusing too much on how to explain the shame of Adam and Eve does not help provide a more general account of shame. Velleman takes blushing to be one of the central physiological responses to shame (Velleman, 2001, 40), which, while perhaps true occasionally, is also—and perhaps even more so—the central physiological response to embarrassment. In fact, accounting for the difference between embarrassment and shame is a problem for Velleman's account. According to him, embarrassment is the feeling that one is the subject of unwanted attention, whereas shame is the anxiety of losing one's social standing altogether; on this view, we would expect the two to co-occur, perhaps with some frequency. Being the subject of unwanted attention may well be an opportunity for one to fail to present oneself as one wishes to. For example, people are often embarrassed about having to speak publicly, but only because of the attention of

others that the situation necessarily requires. If the performance is a good one, it is natural to think of the speaker reporting only having felt embarrassed, but not ashamed. However, if the performance goes poorly, the speaker might naturally feel both embarrassed and ashamed.

This view of embarrassment has its merits, but it seems to follow from Velleman's account of shame that one could never experience shame without embarrassment. If one is in a situation in which one fails to present oneself as one would prefer (i.e. an occasion for shame), it is nearly trivial that any attention at all would be unwanted. Whether this is a bug or a feature of Velleman's account is unclear. More problematic is that it also follows from this account that certain experiences would be occasions for both embarrassment and shame, although shame does not seem appropriate. For example, consider audibly flatulating while giving a lecture. This would of course be quite embarrassing, but may well not elicit shame; in fact, this is precisely the kind of experience that one might later recount as a humorous anecdote (at least among close friends!). But is the attention unwanted? In a sense, yes: a lecturer clearly wants the attention of the audience, but *qua* lecturer, not *qua* flatulater. But in another sense, the attention of the audience was already focused on the lecturer. If this is an occasion for mere embarrassment, some modification will need to be made to Velleman's account. But on that account, this is an occasion for shame. Surely flatulating in public is not consistent with how most lecturers (virtually all, one hopes) would want to present themselves. It is natural to imagine one being quite embarrassed in such a situation—blushing, perhaps apologizing, perhaps nervously laughing—but shame would be odd. Of course we can imagine a person experiencing shame in such a situation, just as we can imagine a person getting angry, sad, or elated on such an occasion. But these would be at the very least bizarre emotional responses. This kind of case is quite naturally one of embarrassment, but not shame, although Velleman's account fails to characterize it correctly.

One of the virtues of Deonna's account is also its central problem. Reserving shame for those occasions when one has demonstrated, to herself, that she is incapable of meeting the minimum requirements for having a value that she cares about allows shame to be unresponsive to the unshared values of others. If I value being a vegetarian while my community values eating meat, I will not feel

shame when not eating meat in the presence of others. I choose my values for myself, and shame registers my inability to live up to those values.

However, this view of shame fails to account for a large class of shame occasions that involve trauma or assault. Many survivors of various kinds of assault, including physical, verbal, and sexual assault, report feeling deep shame, among other emotions. The shame felt by such people is particularly pernicious, given that they often believe that they were *not* behaving in some way contrary to their values. This makes recovery from the emotional aftermath of such events very difficult: people with emotions such as these are not suffering from any kind of mismatch between their behavior and their commitment to their values. Of course this is not always the case; some victims of trauma do suffer because of their belief that they are responsible for the damage done to them. But many victims acknowledge that they know they are not at fault, and yet feel deep shame because of their trauma.

In order to account for the occurrence of shame in situations such as this, a proponent of Deonna's account would need to claim that the shame felt is, in fact, the result of the person failing to meet something like a deeply held value of self-preservation. That some instances of trauma might be described in these terms is a possibility: beginning boxers and wrestlers often feel shame after losing, and it is reasonable to treat these cases as ones in which the loser has demonstrated to himself that he is not capable of living up to the valued ability to win (or perhaps not be beaten). But it is difficult to account for the shame felt by some victims of assault in this way. Perhaps the shame felt by some victims of sexual assault is due to their perceived failure to maintain the value of chastity or purity. Even if that is a possibility, it certainly cannot account for all cases, an issue to which I return in the next section.

But suppose for a moment that we follow this idea: the shame felt by trauma victims is due to their failure to live up to a general value of self-preservation. I suspect it is quite normal for each person to value his or her life to a great degree, and failing to preserve oneself does seem like a demonstration of an inability to uphold that value. However, if this is the correct way to understand the shame of assault and trauma victims, we should expect a much higher occurrence of shame. People often feel shame when they are the victim of a physical altercation, and perhaps that is because the victim later feels she

did not do more to prevent the altercation. But people do not seem to feel shame when they are the victim of their own reckless driving (although of course the situation is quite different if someone else is the victim of their reckless driving, see Lowinger and Solomon (2004)). This difference cannot be accounted for in virtue of some difference in values, or some difference in the flouting of the same value (i.e. self-preservation). In both assault and reckless driving cases, the victim may well believe that he did not do everything he could to prevent or avoid the situation. So Deonna's account, modified in this way to account for the shame of assault victims, would predict that the reckless driver would feel shame as well. That prediction does not match the data.

Finally, consider cases of shame felt by those who hide their behaviors to the larger public, but not to individuals. One example might be Ted Haggard, the Christian evangelical pastor who was found to have done drugs and had sex with a male masseur. Haggard was alleged to have had an ongoing relationship with this man for three years, while at the same time espousing his view that homosexuality is immoral. One might quite reasonably think that engaging in homosexual activity is a clear indication that one is not even minimally capable of maintaining the "value" of being against homosexuality. It also seems reasonable to believe that, over the course of three years, Haggard had plenty of opportunity to notice this fact about himself. Yet he did not express feeling any shame about this relationship until his masseur reported the relationship publicly. On Deonna's account, we would have to explain this lack of shame as being one of intense self-deception. This is, of course, possible, but would require further amendments to the account.

These prior accounts of shame have offered some insights into the nature of shame, and it would be a mistake to claim that they are fatally flawed. However, while there are many cases of shame that Velleman's account, or Deonna's account (or both), get right, there remain some that they do not without serious amendment. Perhaps some emendation to one of these accounts is possible, but that is not what I think is the best way forward. Rather, I take shame to about something related, but not quite captured in any prior account of shame. It is better to account for shame in terms of what I will call domination, or perhaps subjugation, for lack of a better term.

## 3.5 Shame and Domination

The account of shame I offer in what follows is incomplete, but offers what I believe to be a novel avenue toward a better understanding of this important emotion. Many prior accounts of shame are correct in focusing on an audience—real or imagined—to characterize the phenomenon of shame. As mentioned earlier, there is very little evidence to suggest that people actually do feel shame without the attention of an audience. However, it is difficult to understand the nature of shame only in terms of the values of others and one’s adherence to (or violation of) those values. There are certainly occasions of shame in which a person has violated a norm in such a way as to indicate a lack of care for that norm. But not all cases of shame can be so described, and not all occasions of norm violation are occasions of shame.

I suggest that the essence of shame is the feeling of being *subjugated* or *dominated*. Domination can mean many things, which I will discuss further. But domination necessitates an other who dominates, and thus shame is about an agent outside or separate from one’s self dominating the self. Domination can come in degrees, and it sounds strange to talk of being weakly dominated; in some instances, then, it may be more natural to speak of subjugation. However, when we attend to the domination involved in shame, it becomes clear—or at least I will argue—that domination is the right way to think about shame, and provides a unified account of shame.

### 3.5.1 Social Hierarchies

The first kind of domination I will discuss is domination within social hierarchies. The extent to which social hierarchy plays a role in everyday life varies widely between (and even among) cultures. The classic guilt-culture versus shame-culture dichotomy captures the extreme ends of what is likely a continuum (or at least a gradient) of the importance of different types of social hierarchy. There are many dimensions along which one could discuss hierarchies, but I will focus on just two. Researchers have made a distinction between “objective” and “subjective” social hierarchies: objective hierarchies include occupational status, education level, and income; subjective hierarchies involve one’s beliefs

about one's position relative to others in terms of importance, happiness, or standing in their community (Ekehammar et al., 1987). While one's position in each type of hierarchy carries some weight in virtually all cultures, individual cultures place more weight on one or the other; this maps onto the guilt-culture/shame-culture dichotomy. For example, in the U.S., more weight is placed on subjective social rank: people report higher levels of well-being (measured as "life satisfaction," having "positive affect," and several other measures) when their subjective social rank is higher. In Japan, more weight is placed on objective social rank: higher levels of well-being are correlated with one's educational level and occupation ((Curhan et al., 2014) provides details of these correlations). Thus, all other things being equal, a person in the U.S. with a low-paying job and a low level of education has a better chance of reporting high levels of well-being than her counterpart in Japan; conversely, a person in Japan with a high-paying job and a high level of education has a better chance of reporting high levels of well-being than her U.S. counterpart.

By definition, people normally find themselves in a hierarchy above some people, and below others (except, of course, in the rare situation in which one is at the very top or very bottom). The mere existence of people above you in a social hierarchy is not an occasion for any particular negative emotion, although discontent with one's position may well motivate attempts at increasing that position.<sup>7</sup> I may well aspire to become the dean of a university, but the existence of a dean who is not me does not hurt in any way. However, loss of position in a hierarchy can well be an occasion for shame, and indeed, I claim this to be the essence of shame.

The simplest cases of this type are decreases in one's position within objective hierarchies, such as being demoted by an employer. In the normal course of events, a demotion indicates that a person has done poorly in some way, and people often feel shame when they are demoted. In a weak sense, this is a form of domination: someone of a higher status "puts you in your place." That is, one's objective rank has decreased, but not by some mere accident, nor because others have been promoted. Rather, someone in a position of higher authority explicitly lowers your position. Within the objective hierarchy of the employer, the person demoted has no power over the boss's decision, and the decrease in her

---

<sup>7</sup>Perhaps these would be occasions for envy or jealousy, but that discussion will have to wait for another time.

rank is solely in the hands of the boss. This, then, is an occasion for shame; the extent to which one will feel shame will be a function of the objective hierarchy's importance to the person in question. In collectivist cultures such as China and Japan, demotions can cause a great deal of shame: it is likely that Sun Dan-yong, an employee of the company Foxconn, which manufactures iPhones, killed himself after losing a prototype iPhone because of the shame he felt (or feared he would feel) because of disappointing his employer.<sup>8</sup>

More extreme forms of this phenomenon can be found in military contexts. In the bushido code of the samurai, defeated warriors often chose to kill themselves via seppuku, a ritual form of suicide. Although at times this might be a way of escaping torture at the hands of the enemy, it was also preferable to the shame that the samurai would feel after having been defeated (Fusé, 1980). In a straightforward sense, the prospect of being lowered in the samurai hierarchy was often worse than death. Other examples like this include wartime soldiers found guilty of desertion preferring a military execution to a life—even after returning home—of deep shame. For example, (Costa and Kahn, 2007) discusses the thousands of Union deserters in the Civil War who moved away from their communities upon being released from the military because of the shame they felt for having deserted their posts.

Another class of shame is due to a reduction in one's place in a subjective social hierarchy; that is, a reduction in how one perceives her place among friends or peers. I want to call this reduction another case of domination, although at first the word seems too extreme. Not just any reduction in how you see your place among your peers is likely to give rise to shame. Suppose Frida decides that she no longer wants to be a lawyer because she discovers that she really loves teaching, but all of her lawyer friends look down on being a teacher (because they believe that those who can't do, teach). If Frida quits her job as a lawyer, she may well *not* be ashamed, even though she may admit that her place in the subjective social hierarchy has diminished. There are a couple of possibilities: it may be that if she previously believed as her colleagues do about the place of teachers relative to lawyers, but then decided of her own accord to become a teacher, her subjective social hierarchy has changed. Perhaps she now believes that teachers are just as valuable as lawyers. But this need not be so. She may well believe

---

<sup>8</sup>However, many details about this case are unclear. Sun reported that the company had threatened him, which Foxconn denied.

that her new occupation is not nearly as prestigious, valued by her peers, and so on, yet still fail to be ashamed of her transition because she places more weight on her happiness. But most importantly for my view of shame, if in fact there is any sense in which her position in a subjective hierarchy is, in fact, lowered, she has moved herself lower of her own accord.

To see the difference I have in mind, imagine that Frida fails at her job as a lawyer, and is demoted to a position that she sees as less valuable than her prior position; this would likely be an occasion for shame. Her fall in her perceived social rank did not just happen, and it certainly did not happen by her own volition. The lowering of her status was, in a sense, forced upon her. Whoever made the decision to demote Frida asserted her power over Frida, and put Frida in that lower position. This is a form of being subject to another's will, resulting in Frida's lowered subjective social status. Frida may well be embarrassed at times when she has to explain to others what has happened, or when she is seen moving her belongings out of her office. But mere embarrassment does not capture the feeling of being lowered; this is an occasion for shame.

Soldiers who returned from Vietnam who did nothing involving being lowered in an objective hierarchy nevertheless often report shame due to their perceived lowering in a subjective hierarchy. The reasons are varied, including not wanting to be in a combat situation in the first place but being forced to because of the draft, or having done things that they regret. One study showed that soldiers suffering from PTSD also scored high on measures of feelings of inferiority and alienation (Wong and Cook, 1992). This suggests that they feel they have been lowered in a social hierarchy.

### **3.5.2 Physical Domination**

Perhaps the most unfortunate example of shame-inducing occasions involve physical assault, including sexual assault. Earlier it was mentioned that views of shame that focus on the adherence to, or divergence from, some norm, value, or standard are committed to claiming that victims of assault see themselves as not upholding a norm, which, if not insulting, is at least preposterous. Obviously normal people value their own safety to a great degree, but it is absurd to claim that the assault victim should be characterized as feeling shame for a lack of attention to self-preservation. Furthermore, it would

not explain why victims of assault feel shame, but victims of car accidents, kidney stones, and lightning strikes do not.

Let me start with the easier case of sports. While not victims of assault, participants in sports—and particularly in combat sports—often feel shame when they are defeated Kordi et al. (2009). Why participants in combat sports should feel shame more often and more intensely than participants in other sports is not easily explained by appealing merely to the difficulty of defeat. Rather than positing some difference in the pain of defeat across different sports, I think the difference can be easily explained if we attend to the nature of the defeat. Losing in any sport can be difficult and painful, but defeat in baseball, basketball, tennis, or freestyle swimming means that the opponent played better, which may mean some combination of being more agile, being stronger, faster, more accurate, and so on. But being beaten in a combat sport is different. In these cases, the loser is physically (and personally) dominated.

My claim then is that being physically dominated makes normal people feel shame. And by “physically dominated” I mean quite literal physical domination: being knocked out in boxing, pinned in wrestling, or being forced to resign in mixed martial arts.<sup>9</sup> Obviously experienced participants in these sports learn to suppress or temper this emotion. The sense in which one is dominated when one’s basketball team loses is a metaphorical one; the sense in which one is dominated when one is physically pinned to the ground is quite literal. Once again, a case in which a boxer is knocked out is very different than one in which a basketball player is knocked out: the physical consequences may well be identical, but the boxer has been defeated—dominated—by his opponent, where the basketball player has not. A prediction follows from this suggestion, for which I have been unable to attain any clear data. If physical domination results in feeling shame, and sports vary with respect to how much a loss can be characterized as physical domination, then we should expect participants in different sports to feel shame in accord with that variation. Perhaps we should expect loss in individual combat sports to

---

<sup>9</sup>Consistent with this is the following speculation: participants in combative sports such as the ones mentioned are often more eager to congratulate one another, and more genuine in doing so; this may be due to their particular vulnerability to shame at the moment of defeat. A norm of congratulating one’s opponent (mixed martial artists very often hug and seem to express genuine concern for one another) may well help to alleviate the potential for shame. I will discuss vulnerability and shame later in this essay.

feel the most shame, loss in individual non-combat sports to feel less, and loss in team sports to feel the least.

More difficult examples involve victims of assault. In addition to many other emotions, victims of physical assault often experience shame (Gilbert and Andrews, 1998). There is some room to account for this shame in terms of failure to live up to a standard, or failure to present oneself publicly in the manner one chooses; as mentioned above though, I do not believe these avenues are fruitful. I think it is better to understand this experience of shame as one of being dominated by another. The assault victim—like the loser in a combat sport—is literally physically dominated, although it is obviously worse than the case of combat sports because the assault victim is an unwilling participant. Cases in which assault victims feel shame are often quite difficult for the victims, because they accept that they are not to blame, and there is no sense in which they are at fault.<sup>10</sup> This is one of the factors that makes assault victims so very difficult to treat: they very often fully believe that they are not to blame, and that they do not deserve to have been victimized; yet the ensuing shame persists. I believe this is not because these victims believe that they have failed to live up to a standard, or that they are being viewed in a certain way by the public, or a perceived other. The simplest explanation is that victims of assault have been dominated, and that is the heart of shame.

Repeated exposure to assault can also lead to experiences of shame, often in the form of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). An (unfortunately) vast number of kinds of cases could be used as examples, but I will focus on intimate partner violence (IPV).<sup>11</sup> The vast majority of IPV victims are women, and the violence here can be both physical and verbal (or emotional).<sup>12</sup> In IPV situations, women are frequently dominated by their male partners, resulting in their belief that they are not only unworthy of their partner's affection, but of anyone else's either. They are made to feel that their position is lowered relative to others. The unfortunate result is that even though such women

---

<sup>10</sup>Of course some victims of assault *do* believe they are at fault or somehow partially responsible, but my concern is with those who do not, yet still feel shame.

<sup>11</sup>This is what used to be called domestic violence. The new term is meant to de-emphasize the connotation that this kind of violence happens in the context of a home, or only among married, heterosexual couples.

<sup>12</sup>I will use examples of female victims of IPV simply because much more is known about these cases; in doing so, I do not in any way mean to imply that male victims are of less importance.

are unhappy, they often believe that leaving their abusive situation would be even worse, because the abuser is the only one who cares for them (Beck et al., 2011).

The idea I have proposed here is that shame is essentially the feeling of having been dominated. What precisely this means depends on the case. Physical domination often leads to shame, as does domination in a social hierarchy. What unites these different kinds of domination—why they should be called cases of domination at all—is that there is something outside of the person doing the dominating. Shaming someone, on this account, is *factive*, whereas humiliation is not. You may attempt to shame me, but if I do accept having been lowered, or your power to lower me, I have not been shamed. But covering me in blood during a public event would be humiliating, regardless of whether I am ashamed.

### 3.6 The Problem with Shame

Various writers have argued that shame is a useful moral emotion, and that it may even be a core emotion, or of central importance.<sup>13</sup> I have doubts about such claims, which I will outline in this section. The basic idea is that shame in many forms is quite painful, leads to unproductive behaviors, and in many cases has nothing to do with what we ought to consider anything resembling the result of immoral behavior. To quote another television show:

...there are things worse than death. Shame.  
Shame's not an option for me.

---

—Maximiliano Hernández as “Agent  
Amador.” *The Americans*, Season 1,  
Episode 9

The fact that we often take “being ashamed” to be synonymous with “being embarrassed” obscures the fact that true shame is quite painful. Despite the somewhat problematic nature of psychologists’ operationalizations of shame (which I discuss elsewhere), the research suggests very little room for shame to be a positive thing. I will mention a few examples from a variety of sources.

---

<sup>13</sup>For example, see (Gilligan, 1976) and (Williams, 1993)

Criminals who feel shame are much worse off than criminals who feel guilt. The shame-prone offenders are much more likely to get angry than the guilt-prone offenders. Furthermore, when they do get angry, shame-prone offenders are much less able to effectively deal with their anger than guilt-prone offenders (Wright et al., 2008). Also, PTSD-inducing experiences that involve shame are much more likely to be correlated with depression, whereas those that involved guilt without shame were not so correlated (Robinaugh and McNally, 2010). Even children as young as preschool age who are more prone to shame have higher rates of depression than those who are not (Luby et al., 2009).

People trying to lose weight differ as to how they engage in effective weight-management behaviors. Those who experience weight-based shame do much worse than those who experience weight-based guilt (Conradt et al., 2008). Several studies show that, relative to people who experience guilt over past transgressions, those who experience shame are much less empathetic (Tangney et al., 2007; Leith and Baumeister, 1998).

Many of these studies are mere correlations, so one should be careful about the kind of conclusion to draw about the relationship between shame and other negative emotions and behaviors. A true experiment—and thus the only way to ensure a causal relationship between shame and other phenomena of interest—would involve directly manipulating one group of people to feel shame relative to a control group, and then test for the differences of interest in the shame group. However, it would undoubtedly be unethical to induce real shame in the participants of psychological studies. Some studies are able to come close by asking participants if they would act in a shame-related way following some imagined event, or asking participants to recall a situation in which they felt shame. One study asked one group of participants to recall experiences in which they experienced shame, and another to recall experiences when they felt guilt de Hooze et al. (2007). The group asked to recall shame were significantly less likely to engage in pro-social behavior (measured as cooperating in a cooperation game) than those who were asked to recall guilt.

Furthermore, shame-induction as a parenting strategy leads to bad outcomes for the children involved. Researchers have studied the effects of mothers telling their children that *they* are bad following things like breaking a toy or hurting another child, as opposed to being asked to think about how their

action is bad, or being coldly ignored. Children who were told that they were bad (labeled “shame-induction”) were independently rated as being less empathetic and generally more likely to break rules and act up in later years (Kochanska et al., 2002; Krevans and Gibbs, 1996).

So the psychological literature paints a rather grim view of shame. Tangney puts the point thusly: “Taken together, my research indicates that feelings of shame often give rise to a range of potentially destructive motivations, defenses, interpersonal behaviors, and psychological symptoms” (Tangney, 2001, 127). There are some recent suggestions that shame might, in fact, result in some of the behaviors that are usually associated with guilt, such as attempting to repair any perceived damage caused by the shame-producing transgression. However, whether shame in fact leads to those behaviors is highly dependent on the situation, including whether one feels that one will incur even further harm if one attempts such reparative behaviors (de Hooze et al., 2010). An interesting idea (that I will not pursue here) is that this may account for why individuals in so-called shame cultures may not experience many of the negative effects of shame outlined here. Virtually all of these studies include only participants in Western cultures (i.e. U.S. and Europe). That exploration will have to wait for another time.

Other problematic cases of shame involve shame at features that one cannot easily control, such as being ashamed of a facial deformity, or being in poverty. I should say here how I believe these can fit into my view of shame as domination, given that it may be difficult to identify what precisely is doing the dominating. First, note that not all people who are in poverty or have deformities feel shame; in fact, one might reasonably believe that they ought not feel ashamed. But for those who do, I think this shame can be explained as the inability to rise to a higher (i.e. better) level in a social hierarchy, where that inability is seen as the result of being held down by another. Those with facial deformities often shop late at night so as to avoid the stares of others; their shame is about being looked down upon—and being prevented from being in a position of *not* being looked down upon—by other people. The impoverished person who is ashamed of her poverty feels that she is being held in a lesser position by others, prevented from moving up in the world. This understanding of shame helps account for why not everyone with a deformity, or who is in poverty, will feel shame. One may have accepted his deformity, and refuse to see the gazes of others as indicative of being less-than; one may accept her

poverty, and refuse to see her situation as one of indignity, but of misfortune. Thus, when one sees one's place as being held down—as being dominated—shame follows. But the situations need not require seeing one's place in that way.

Finally, consider again the victims of assault. There is virtually no way that one can understand the frequent shame response resulting from being assaulted as in any way a good thing, unless one maintains a (to my mind) perverse belief that the victim in question “deserved it.” It is very unfortunate that people feel shame in these cases; as mentioned before, coping with this shame can be extremely difficult and resistant to cognitive therapy. The feeling of shame can be so strong that people search for some reason that justifies their pain: they must have done something to deserve this. At the same time, many victims also maintain that they in fact did nothing wrong, resulting in cognitive dissonance in addition to their painful emotional state. This matter is quite difficult, and requires further investigation. For the present essay, however, it is sufficient to note that there is no sense in which the shame of assault is to be desired.

### **3.7 Toward a Way to Live with Shame**

While in some sense it might be good if we could eliminate shame from our psychology, this is almost certainly impossible. We are all prone to shame to some degree or another, which may well be due to some evolutionary benefit in our early primate ancestors. Shame certainly makes it very clear when our place among our peers has been lowered without our choice, and it is possible that part of the normal shame response evolved in our ancestors in order to limit further lowering (Maibom (2010) has an interesting argument along these lines). The extent to which non-human primate “shame” is like ours is not settled, but there are obvious similarities, including averting one's gaze from others, and moving one's body so as to appear smaller and less likely to be noticed. In addition to decreasing the probability that our status is further lowered, shame (or its analog) may also have been motivating, both in the sense that realizing one has been dominated means that one needs to restore one's place, and in the sense that shame-eliciting situations are to be avoided. Whether shame was really adaptive, and

whether shame is adaptive now, are interesting questions that deserve further exploration, but I will set them aside for now. What I would like to address in this last section is how we are to understand what to do with shame, as it were, given that it is painful, largely undesirable, but unlikely to go away.

One might think that, given everything I have said so far, we should not even be prone to feeling shame. But that would be a mistake. Consider what it means to call someone shameless. Obviously this does not mean merely that the person is not currently feeling shame, or is psychologically defective to the point of being unable to feel shame. And some uses of the term are relatively innocuous, such as shamelessly promoting one's recently published article on social media. But more serious uses of "shameless" to describe individuals implies that they are somehow outside the realm of a hierarchy of some type that their peers value. To be shameless is to *not* display a certain amount of deference to the (perhaps implicit) hierarchies that others abide by or adhere to. I do not want to suggest that one should be insensitive to these hierarchies, or that these hierarchies are inherently bad.<sup>14</sup> It may well be that the hierarchies we attend to are ones that we believe we should support, or that we should dismiss. In any case, I want to suggest that we should open ourselves up to these hierarchies, and while remaining sensitive to our place among them, attempt to better understand the power that such hierarchies have on us.

What I have in mind is openness to a kind of vulnerability. Many occasions in which we might feel shame can be eliminated by admitting to ourselves (and perhaps to others) that we are, in fact, imperfect, and thus vulnerable to being dominated by others. But identifying and admitting these features of ourselves can—at least sometimes—mitigate some instances in which we feel shame. Understanding our imperfection, admitting it to ourselves and others, diminishes the power of others to dominate us. One interesting class of shame-eliciting situations are those things which involve something that has the status of stigma. Certain behaviors or dispositions are considered shameful within some particular community, meaning that discovering one has such a feature or has engaged in such behavior has a lowered place in the community. How does this fit into the idea of shame as domination?

---

<sup>14</sup>(Calhoun, 2004) argues that one benefit of shame is precisely its ability to make us sensitive to the norms of the communities we find ourselves in.

I hypothesize that certain shameful behaviors or features of ourselves are shameful in the sense that, were others to learn about these parts of ourselves, they would have the power to lower us in our perceived place in the social hierarchy. If I seriously believe that my having committed some terrible act, or my secret love for Beanie Babies, is shameful, this seems to mean that, were someone to find this out about me, my status relative to them would be lowered, and my status relative to others could be lowered if those others were to find out.

However, we can take ownership of those things we think might be shameful, and decrease their power over us. For example, many people still view mental illness as something to be ashamed of: it is something to be hidden, not discussed. People with such beliefs about their mental illness fear what will happen if others were to discover their secret. But surprisingly, at least in some cases, individuals can take responsibility for their illness, and disclose it to others. This is almost paradoxical: by becoming as vulnerable as one might imagine possible with respect to their secret shame, these individuals are able to escape the domination they fear would follow from bringing that shame to light. Prior to revealing their secret, people fear just how vulnerable they would become to the domination of others. But when willfully putting oneself in that vulnerable position—indeed an extremely vulnerable position—the shame loses its power. The secret is out, as it were, by my own choice, and thus cannot be used against me.

There is, of course, much more to say about this, and much to clarify. Furthermore, it may be that some kinds of shame cannot be dealt with in this way. The first-order shame felt after being a victim of an assault may not benefit from any kind of ownership, for example, although it may be the case that the shame of keeping the fact that one was victimized could be dealt with in such a way.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

We can best understand shame as being about domination, either literally or metaphorically being demoted. Our place is lowered by someone else, against our wishes; or, we fear that our place would be so lowered if our shameful secrets were known. Future work on this subject requires getting clearer

about certain details, such as the nature of domination. But focusing on being dominated by others provides a unified account of shame which better captures cases of shame that other accounts miss, and offers a more perspicuous view of the nature of shame relative to other views.

# Chapter 4

## Feelings and Emotions

### 4.1 Introduction

It may be somewhat surprising that there is very little consensus among philosophers or psychologists on how to precisely characterize emotions. We know that they are affective states (which is nearly tautological), and we know that virtually all cultures share at least some emotions, but not others. We know that non-human animals also have emotions, although it is not clear where to draw the line between those that have emotions and those that do not. And we also know that they differ from other affective states, such as hunger or (physical) pain. But we have not converged on how many emotions there are, or whether there are different kinds of emotions (and if so, what accounts for the differences in kinds).

In this chapter, I will sketch what I believe to be an important distinction between *feelings* and *emotions*. There is little consensus on how to use these terms, and in some sense my own use will be somewhat nonstandard. However, this distinction is useful in making sense of an important set of differences between different emotions. This set of differences has been partially deployed by some authors to distinguish between so-called primary and secondary emotions, or between so-called basic and complex emotions. The distinction I will discuss here captures some of the insights prior authors have offered about the nature of emotions; in addition, there are further benefits to this view. Most

importantly, I suggest this distinction can be important when we are to make sense of the relationship between different emotions, such as the subjects of this dissertation: guilt and shame. While many accounts of guilt and shame are set up as an opposition between the one and the other, I propose that while shame is an emotion, guilt is a feeling. This helps to explain why shame—but not guilt—can be found in all cultures; why shame—but not guilt—seems to have analogs in many social, non-human animals; and why shame—but not guilt—has a wide variety of phenomenological characteristics and behavioral consequences.

## 4.2 Emotion and its Theory

Philosophical and psychological accounts of emotion vary widely along many dimensions. I will not offer a complete, positive account of emotion here. Rather, I will discuss some of the features of emotions that different accounts offer, and examine points where the intersection is greatest. The task is to find the most robust, and perhaps most basic, characterization of emotions. Later, I will contrast this class of emotions with the set of feelings, which, I argue, are more complex, and have a very different function than the emotions. So while a complete account will have to wait for another day, what matters most for the present essay is a characterization of emotion rich enough to be contrasted with a rich enough characterization of feelings.

Theories of emotion go back millennia: covering the history of the philosophy of emotion would be an enormous task (a brief history of thought on emotion, spanning from Ancient Greek to psychoanalytic, is found in Lyons (1999)). Here, I will briefly mention some of the most influential, primarily in order to situate the rather modest framework that I propose in the next section.

First, there are what can be called non-cognitive theories of emotion. These theories view emotions as consisting of a characteristic sensation, typically intimately related to physiological change. The first contemporary proponent of this view was developed by James (1884) and Lange (1885), and now referred to as the James-Lange Theory of emotion (JLT). According to JLT, emotions are identified with the feeling of certain physiological changes as those changes occur. In support of this view, James

states: “If we fancy some strong emotion, and then try to abstract from our consciousness of it all the feelings of its bodily symptoms, we find we have nothing left behind, no ‘mind-stuff’ out of which the emotion can be constituted, and that a cold and neutral state of intellectual perception is all that remains,” (James, 1890, 451). It is indeed difficult to discern what is left of, say, fear when we imagine subtracting the characteristic physical accompaniments, such as an increase in our pulse, extremely heightened attention, the feeling of the surge of adrenaline, and so on. More recent views have their roots in the JLT, such as Prinz (2005).

Another set of views has it that emotions necessarily have a cognitive component, commonly referred to as “core relational themes.” For example, Prinz and Nichols characterize guilt as having the core relational theme: “someone I am concerned about has been harmed and I have responsibility for that in virtue of what I have done or failed to do,” (Prinz and Nichols, 2010, 134). These core relational themes (the relation being between the environment and the person) are the occasions that cause the emotion in question to arise, and are the basis of the relevant judgment. Thus, “When we judge that there has been a loss, we become sad; when we judge that we are in danger, we become afraid; and when we judge that our goals have been fulfilled, we become happy,” (Prinz and Nichols, 2010, 119).

A final set of views about emotion have it that emotion is a kind of perception. De Sousa, for example, takes emotions to be perceptions of situations that are similar to “paradigm scenarios” that we learn as children. We learn that people tend to be sad in certain situations, and happy in others. As we develop, our ability to process the complexity of situations increases, as does our ability to associate situations with more complex emotions. Ultimately, when we encounter a situation that is similar to one of our paradigm scenarios, we simply perceive that situation as having the emotion associated with the relevant paradigm scenario (De Sousa, 1990).

Psychologists have studied emotion for decades, yet there is still no consensus on how to best define emotions. Beyond uncontroversial truisms, such as that emotions are a certain kind of affective state, no precise definition is on offer. Emotion researchers are only recently beginning to take this as something of a crisis in psychology. Thus, we find statements such as the following: “The scientific study of emotion faces a potentially serious problem: after over a hundred years of psychological study,

we lack consensus regarding the very definition of emotion,” (Cunningham and Kirkland, 2012, 369). Although researchers are increasingly interested in pursuing multidisciplinary approaches to defining emotion, it is clear that the philosopher interested in emotion is going to be disappointed if she turns to the empirical literature for an accepted definition.

Thus, there is no consensus on whether emotions include a cognitive component, and if they do, what that cognitive component amounts to. It is quite natural to think that, for example, an episode of fear is directed at something that one judges to be dangerous (or fearful). If this were true, then part of fear would be the judgment that something is dangerous. However, a major problem for views like this is that we can be quite aware that something is not dangerous, yet still fearing it. One might be afraid of heights, and thus fear driving over a bridge, without actually judging or believing that the bridge is dangerous. Why might one say that there is no such judgment about the bridge? Quite simply, because a person who sincerely *does* believe that driving over a bridge is dangerous would not do so. However, examples like this abound: people drive over bridges, pick up dead rodents, and swat insects crawling on the wall, all while experiencing fear of those things but not believing them to be dangerous. A similar point could be made about experiencing emotions while reading a novel, or watching a movie. People regularly read horror novels and pay for the experience of watching a scary movie. And while no one doing these things believes that she is actually in danger, or that there is anything to fear, it is obvious that they are able to experience fear.

Perceptual theories attempt to address worries such as these in the following manner. Consider the famous Hering illusion in Figure 4.1.

In this illusion, the two horizontal lines are parallel, but the radiating lines create the illusion that they are bending away from the point where the radii converge. That the lines really are parallel can be verified by means of a straightedge. However, after having verified that the lines are actually straight and parallel, this new belief does not affect how one perceives the lines: one can see them as being non-parallel while believing that they are. Similarly, for perceptual theories of emotion, if emotion is a kind of perception, then it is easy to explain why we can experience fear of driving over the bridge while

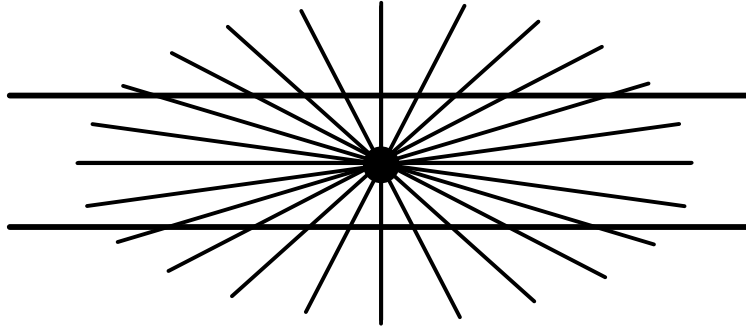


Figure 4.1: The Hering illusion

knowing that it is safe: in cases like these, our perception cannot help but present these situations as fearful, and our knowledge that the situation is in fact not fearful does nothing to alter our perception.

Perceptual theories have difficulties too, however. Despite solving the “scary movie” problem, there is a concern about different types of perception. We have a fairly good explanation of why different sensory modalities work as they do. In short, seeing is different than hearing because the visual and auditory systems transduce different kinds of energy into neural signals. Taste and smell (i.e. chemoreception) differs from other senses because the receptors for chemicals receive very different kinds of input from other senses. For example, visual and auditory inputs can be understood as varying along continuous dimensions: a light is brighter or darker, the red is more or less saturated, and the red is closer to violet and orange than it is to green; similarly, a sound is higher or lower pitched, louder or quieter. Taste, however, does not vary along dimensions other than a particular taste being stronger or weaker. But if we include emotion as a type of perception, what makes this kind of perception different than these more familiar kinds? And how are we to understand the difference among those emotions, understood as perceptions?

An entirely separate approach to theorizing emotions is the so-called social constructionist or cultural constructionist account. The concerns of these accounts are centered more on how the social and cultural environment in which an individual finds herself is an integral part of exactly which emotions she will experience. I will say more about this perspective below, but for now it is enough to note that this perspective is largely orthogonal to the concerns of the theories mentioned above.

My purpose here is not to evaluate all of these theories, nor to provide a novel theory of emotion. Rather, these theories serve as a background against which I will make a rather simple distinction between what I will call “emotions” and a more complex affective state called “feelings.”

### 4.3 An Account of Feelings versus Emotions

There is much to be gained by distinguishing between feelings and emotions. I am not particularly committed to these particular terms, although there is a precedent in everyday language for the use of “feeling” as a label for the group of affective states I want to single out. At this point, it is enough for me to make clear that there are different groups of states I want to identify, with useful distinctions between those groups. So let me begin by identifying what I do *not* want to include, in order to make it clearer what I do want to include in the classification scheme I will introduce below.

First, there are the states that I will call “sensations.” These are affective states that have a particular phenomenal character, and are normally caused by some physical, bodily disturbance. I have in mind various pains, itches, pangs of hunger, thirst, the sensation of being tickled, the sensation of stretching one’s muscles or being massaged, and so on. I want to distinguish sensations of this sort from the sensory experiences that have been the subject of much philosophy of mind. Thus, in the framework I propose, seeing a well-lit tree or hearing the roll of thunder are *not* sensations, but sensory experiences.<sup>1</sup> The distinction between these is meant to demarcate those states that are inherently pleasant or inherently unpleasant, from those that are mere experiences which we may or may not take to be meaningful or not, much less pleasant or unpleasant. So, for example, we would expect a normal person to engage in certain behaviors if she were in pain (namely, pain-reducing behaviors), because we take pain to be inherently unpleasant. Were a person to sincerely experience pain as either neutral or pleasant, we would conclude that something is quite wrong. Patients with “congenital indifference” to pain are an example; unlike other types of analgesia, these patients have no trouble discriminating physical disturbances, such as detecting a cold stimulus versus a hot one, or discriminating between

---

<sup>1</sup>Again, I am not wedded to any particular terminology in this framework, but merely the differences between the affective states that they refer to.

being prodded with a dull instrument versus a sharp one. While they can describe different kinds of “pain” experiences, they exhibit no behaviors or descriptions indicating that their “pain” is at all disturbing or troubling (Manfredi et al., 1981).

Before continuing, I should mention that there are some difficult cases for the distinction just made. For example, feeling a cold glass of ice water is what I would like to call another sensation, even though it is not quite of the same character as the other sensations mentioned. Feeling something cold may be either pleasant or unpleasant, depending on one’s circumstances. At the same time, extreme cold (or heat) is always unpleasant. Being touched is similar: a light touch may be pleasant or even unnoticed, whereas a “strong” touch (i.e. being hit with a baseball or punched in the stomach) is always unpleasant. The most difficult borderline category is taste: it is clear that one taste can be pleasant for some and unpleasant for others. Some people like garlic, others do not. But would a very strong taste of garlic necessarily be unpleasant, the way very strong heat would be? That is not clear. Certainly some people enjoy food that is so spicy that it is painful for others to eat. So whether taste fits into what I want to call sensations or not is not clear. However, it is not important for my purposes that the framework I am presenting is able to categorize every possible affective state kind.

Next, I want to make a distinction between “emotions” and “feelings.” Emotions are the simpler of the two, and there is no controversy calling these affective states “emotions.” Rather, the potentially controversial aspect of this framework is the things that I do *not* want to call emotions (which I will get to below). Examples of emotions are fear, anger, joy, sadness, and shame. An important feature of emotions is that they have a universally-recognized, characteristic expression (the work of the psychologist Paul Ekman was seminal in identifying this fact (Ekman, 1992)). In all cultures where emotion has been investigated, the expression of, say, fear, is the same for every culture; thus, an individual from one culture can recognize that a person from a very different culture is afraid by that person’s facial expression alone.

Feelings are a more complex affective state, which, in the framework I propose, are best understood as an emotion *plus* some belief about the cause of that emotion. Feelings do not have a universally-recognized expression across cultures, or even within a single culture. A simple example is feeling

betrayed: if one feels betrayed, then one has a certain emotion, such as sadness, anger, or perhaps a combination of the two, plus the belief that the cause of this emotional complex is that one has been betrayed by some other agent. Again, note that I am using the term “feeling” in a restricted sense that is at odds with the commonplace usage, as in “an itchy feeling.” I propose that we can substitute *that* use of “feeling” with the term “sensation” without any loss of meaning.

With this rough distinction in place, let me now go into more detail about how emotions differ from feelings in the framework I offer. Once that is done, we will be in a position to better see an important way in which guilt differs from shame, and how that difference complicates previous understandings of their relation to one another.

### **4.3.1 Emotion**

Emotions are primitive affective states whose function appears to be primarily one of motivation. We avoid the things that give rise to painful or negative emotions, such as anger, fear, and sadness. We seek out the things that give rise to pleasurable or positive emotions, such as happiness. Other emotions accompany situations that demand increased attention, such as surprise. While I will not attempt to exhaustively characterize emotions in detail, I will highlight some of the ways in which they differ from feelings (as I understand them).

Emotions as I understand them are episodic. An instance of sadness has a rather well-defined beginning and end. Those endpoints may be fuzzy or difficult to pinpoint; still, it is quite normal to say that I was angry about something, but then was no longer angry. How exactly we are to demarcate emotions is not important for my present purposes. Rather, it is only important to distinguish emotions from more long-lasting and dispositional states such as moods, or propensities to experience some emotion. For example, one might experience an instance of jealousy, but not be a person others would describe as having a jealous personality. On the other hand, one might say that someone is a jealous person, although that person is not currently experiencing jealousy. My topic is the experience of jealousy, and not the propensity or disposition.

One critical part of emotions are their characteristic phenomenology. There is a particular way that sadness feels that one can always recognize. Of course, there are degrees of sadness, and there are very different causes of sadness. Plus, emotions often come in clusters, so that one may feel a certain degree of sadness along with some degree of, say, anger, or even joy.<sup>2</sup> The core experience of sadness is, I claim, the same across all instances of sadness, and as far as we can tell, across all people. To be sure, there are some emotion theorists who disagree with this (e.g. (Heavey et al., 2012)). These theorists claim that different instances of an emotional experience can differ in their phenomenological character. However, there is not really a disagreement here, but a difference in terminology (which, as I mentioned, is particularly difficult when discussing affective states in general). There are certain affective states that *do* differ in their phenomenal character, but these are what I call feelings (there are further distinctions between emotions and feelings, as I will make clear below). For what I call emotions, there is virtually no disagreement about whether sadness differs from instance to instance, once the cause of the instant is considered, and the degree of the emotion is considered.

Another crucial aspect of emotions is their characteristic expression. Beginning with Ekman's seminal work, psychologists have determined that there are certain emotions whose expression is universally recognized (Ekman and Friesen, 1971). Interestingly, this ability to recognize emotions includes cultures who do not have access to modern media, and thus could not be influenced by, say, typically American or European expressions. This is strong evidence in favor of an innate human ability to express emotions in particular ways, allowing for easy recognition of those emotions between persons and between cultures.

One interesting development in the psychological research into emotion expression and recognition is the varying significance of contextual and social cues in the recognition of emotion. Certain expressions, when viewed without any context (i.e. participants in studies are asked to judge what emotion a person is expressing, where the photograph is just of a human face) are virtually always judged to be of anger, or of sadness. However, when expanding the information the participants have about the stimulus, the same facial expression can be taken to indicate different emotions, depending

---

<sup>2</sup>An example of such a case seems to be the experience that some have after ending a relationship that they were unhappy with. There is both sadness and happiness at the same time.

on those contexts. For example, a face that is recognized as fear in no context will be recognized as pain if participants are given information that the person depicted is in a stereotypical pain-eliciting situation (Carroll and Russell, 1996).

Furthermore, the extent to which these situational and social cues influence emotion recognition varies among cultures. To take just one example, a recent study examined participants from both the U.S. and Japan, where each participant was asked to judge the emotion of a target person depicted in a cartoon drawing, where the target person is in a larger group of people (Masuda et al., 2008). Based on behavioral data, including eye-tracking data about where in the picture they looked, the Japanese participants were much more likely to look at the people in the picture comprising the entire group than were the U.S. participants. The researchers conclude that the Japanese participants use information about the whole group to decide what emotion a particular person is expressing, including the degree to which that emotion is being expressed. Thus, a happy-faced person among happy people is judged to be happier than a person expressing the same face among sad people. But for U.S. participants, information about the surrounding group does not seem to have an effect on those participants' judgments: a happy face is a happy face, no matter what the surrounding group is up to.

It is quite natural to suppose that emotions always have intentional objects. We are sad about a certain state of affairs, or perhaps because of a certain state of affairs. Sometimes the cause and the object of an emotion may be the same: that it's raining outside *causes* me to be sad, and I am sad *that* it is raining. In other cases, the cause and the object may differ: I may be angry at Chris, but my anger is caused by Derek's telling me what Chris said about me. In still other cases, it may be that intentional object is non-existent: many of us have experienced intense emotions about fictional characters in novels and movies.

It might be true that most emotional experiences do have an intentional object. On this point, however, I want to differ with most other emotion theorists (e.g. De Sousa (1990)). Emotions, according to the framework I offer here, need not have an intentional object. So for example, it is perfectly normal for a person to be sad, but not sad about anything in particular. Perhaps one has had a bad dream that one no longer remembers, but the emotion of sadness lingers. Or perhaps one has taken a drug that

has the side-effect of causing sadness. In both cases the emotional experience does, of course, have a cause; but in neither case is there an intentional object. Furthermore, I want to distinguish cases like this from merely being “in a bad mood,” where one might also feel prone to sadness for no apparent reason. I will not offer a theory of moods, but I think they can clearly be distinguished from emotions for my purposes.

This aspect of emotions has been under-appreciated, with many theories of emotion taking it for granted that emotions must have an intentional object. The problem with doing so is how we can account for what seem to be genuine episodes of emotion in the absence of *any* intentional object whatsoever. The side effects of medications provide the clearest example: certain beta-blocking drugs have a tendency to induce sadness in those taking them; other medications can induce bouts of anger, happiness, or even feelings of dread. For patients experiencing these side effects, it can be particularly unsettling that the emotion does *not* have an intentional object, but this fact does nothing to reduce or alleviate the emotion. Furthermore, certain mental illnesses are typed by emotional experiences that do not have an intentional object. In somewhat simplified terms, depression is partially characterized by frequent bouts of sadness that are not *about* anything in particular.

The emotion theorist who has it that emotions *must* have intentional objects is at a loss to account for these phenomena. One response would be to claim that the instances of “emotion” I just mentioned are, in fact, deviant cases, and that they are explained by normal, non-deviant cases in which emotions *do* have an intentional object. In other words, the normal cases (i.e. instances of emotions where the emotion has an intentional object) are prior to the abnormal cases. I am sympathetic to this line of response. However, the emotion theorist who insists that emotions have intentional objects must explain how it is that these abnormal instances of emotions are emotions at all. Phenomenologically, sadness feels the same with or without an intentional object.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the neurophysiological bases of emotions with and without intentional objects is the same, and their functional role within our larger psychology is similar. For example, we can predict which medications might produce sadness

---

<sup>3</sup>There may be some differences, of course, but these can be attributed to other emotions or feelings. For example, it might be particularly frustrating to experience sadness with no intentional object, or it might be particularly frustrating to be sad about a family member’s repeated incarcerations. In these kinds of cases though, we have a complex of emotions.

as a side effect because we know something about the neurophysiology of sadness, and we know that some medications will alter our neurophysiology in a way that may well induce sadness. And if I am sad that my dog died, I might weep, mope, and lose motivation to do things I would normally do. Similarly, if I am sad because of my medication, I might weep, mope, and lose motivation to engage in normal activities.

Given these considerations, it seems that the burden is on the emotion theorist who insists on the necessity of emotions having intentional objects to tell us why these objectless emotions do not deserve the label. They are similar, or even the same, on many other dimensions, they just lack an object. Without further motivation to insist on emotions having intentional objects, I claim that emotions need not have them, even if they often do.

The affective states that I am calling emotions are primitive relative to feelings, in the sense that they are one component of feelings (which I will discuss below), but they themselves do not have further components. They are also primitive in another sense: other animals, such as non-human primates, have, if not the same kinds of emotions, analogous affective states. Thus, non-human animals experience sadness, anger, joy, in much the same way that humans do. This provides some evidence that emotions are evolutionarily more primitive than feelings, which do not have an obvious analog in non-humans.

Neuroscientific study of the mechanisms underlying emotions has revealed a detailed picture of the circuitry involved in animals such as rats, cats, and some non-human primates. It is very difficult to deny that these species experience fear. Interestingly, the neural circuitry involved in experiencing fear, and the circuitry involved in learning to associate particular stimuli such that they evoke a fear response, is homologous in rats, cats, non-human primates, and humans (LeDoux, 1998). This means that our best evolutionary evidence suggests that all of these species have this neural system in common because we all descended from a common ancestor with that neural system. This is opposed to what are called analogous systems, in which different organisms have organs that perform similar (or even identical) functions, but not because of descent from a common ancestor. A simple example of this is the wing of a beetle and the wing of a bat. Both have the function of enabling flight (perhaps among

others); yet the beetle wing seems to have evolved from part of its shell, while the bat wing evolved from the hand of an earlier ancestor.

While contemporary neuroscience has not yet completed the task of discovering the neural mechanisms underlying emotions in humans and non-humans, it is uncontroversial that non-human primates share with us the ability to experience basic emotions like anger, sadness, joy, disgust, fear, and surprise. Other research suggests that there are analogs to other emotions—and in particular, shame—in non-human primates (Kemeny et al., 2004). Thus, there are similar displays of those emotions between humans and non-human primates: the baring of teeth indicates anger, and a lowering of eyes and slumping to appear smaller indicate shame.

### 4.3.2 Feelings

Unlike emotions, feelings are not primitive. On my view, they can be analyzed into at least two components: their emotional content, and their “caused-by/object” belief. Depending on the feeling, the emotional content might include a number of emotions, although the belief is, in a sense, rather specific. In fact, feelings vary widely between different cultures in a way that emotions do not.

Let me first focus on objects. Feelings, unlike emotions, always have an object, which may or may not be their cause. For example, one might feel betrayed because she actually has been betrayed, or because she merely believes she has been betrayed. In either case, a (real or imagined) betrayal is the object of that feeling. This aspect of feelings is an important difference with emotions, which can occur (although they need not) without any object at all. But with feelings, the only way we can determine *what* feeling it is that we are experiencing—the only way to individuate feelings—is by their object. In fact, the emotional component of many feelings might be very similar, even identical.

Consider the following example. Suppose Susan were to say that she is feeling sad. We have an idea of what Susan is experiencing: an unpleasant affective state. However, without further information, we know neither the intensity of that emotion nor the cause or object of that emotion. It may be that she is just slightly upset because it is raining, or it may be that she is deeply sad because she received her seventh rejection letter in a row. All we know is that she is sad. In fact, Susan might be sad for no *reason*

at all: perhaps Susan is on a medication that has the side effect of causing sadness. But suppose Susan were to say that she feels betrayed. What we know now is different. We know that she is experiencing *some* negative emotion; perhaps she is feeling sad, perhaps angry, or perhaps some combination of both. But now we do know something about the cause or object of her emotion: we know that she believes that someone has betrayed her, meaning that someone has lied to her, deceived her, been disloyal, et cetera. Except in some very bizarre set of circumstances, we know that she does *not* feel betrayed because it is raining, or she was late to work, or that her pet hamster died.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, we know that there must be *some* cause or object of her betrayal. Someone who believes that she feels betrayed, but not *by* anyone or anything in particular, is using “betray” in an incorrect way: one cannot feel betrayed without feeling betrayed *by* something.

Feelings are not the only things that are identified this way. Some simple examples include being stabbed, gored, or sunburnt. Consider being stabbed and being gored. If we are told that Steve has been stabbed, we know that he has some kind of puncture wound, and we know that some person used either a knife or a very sharp object to cause this wound in Steve. Similarly, if we are told that Tera has been gored, we know that she has some kind of puncture wound, and that it was caused by an animal using its horn or antler. Each term tells us both about the kind of wound, and about its cause. In fact, it may be that Steve’s wound is identical in its intrinsic features to Tera’s wound: someone who knew nothing about their respective histories would be unable to tell which was which. Nevertheless, they are different: the one is the result of being stabbed, the other is the result of being gored.

An important difference in the case of feelings is that their object may or may not be their cause. If I feel neglected, I believe that someone has neglected me and I am (to some degree) sad about that. But of course I may be wrong about being neglected, because I misheard something in a conversation. Clearly, if there is no neglect, then that neglect cannot be the cause of my feeling neglected. It may be that it is simply my mistaken belief that is the cause of my feeling, but it is also the case that (an imagined) neglect is the object of my feeling.

---

<sup>4</sup>I say “bizarre” because one could, of course, concoct scenarios in which betrayal would be apt. If Susan believes that God promised her that it would not rain today, she may feel betrayed by God. But we can safely set these considerations aside.

This aspect of feelings explains why the way to alleviate or eliminate a feeling is to focus on its object. In the example above, if I falsely believe that I have been neglected, but then later discover that I was mistaken about this, I would no longer feel neglected. A similar pattern holds for feeling betrayed, or feeling a sense of accomplishment. If I discover that I am wrong in believing that my friend's failure to pick me up from the airport is because of her betrayal, but rather because of a flat tire, I will no longer feel betrayed. And if I discover that I am wrong about having discovered a solution to a complex mathematical proof, I will no longer feel a sense of accomplishment. This is not to say that there may be some emotional "momentum" or "residue." When discovering that my feeling betrayed is baseless, I may well immediately be elated. But in some cases, the emotional component of the feeling may take time to dissipate. The anger that is part of my feeling betrayed may linger even after I no longer feel betrayed.

One might object at this point that some feelings do not actually have objects. After all, people spend much time and money on psychotherapy, and a large part of this therapy involves discovering feelings that we do have, but are not consciously aware of.<sup>5</sup> Plus, it seems wrong to say that psychotherapy involves discovering mere emotions (in my sense); it is not just that one needs to discover that she is simply sad about nothing in particular.<sup>6</sup> Rather, therapy is directed at determining the objects and causes of feelings. But in what sense do these feelings have objects if the person is not even aware of them?

It seems that there are two ways we can accommodate feelings when they are unknown to a person. First, it often happens that a person seeks psychotherapy because she experiences dysfunctional alterations in her emotions for reasons unknown to her. In many cases, the goal of therapy is discover (or perhaps uncover) the source of these emotions. For example, patients in treatment for psychotherapy can know that they feel guilty about something to various degrees, including having no knowledge that what they are feeling is, in fact, guilt (Zylicz, 2009). In these cases, the patient only knows that she feels bad in some way, but she sees no reason why she feels that way. The process of therapy can reveal that

---

<sup>5</sup>Thanks to Scott Jenkins for discussing this point with me.

<sup>6</sup>Obviously this does happen in the case of depression. But this is a diagnosis one is given *after* possible causes and objects of that sadness are ruled out.

the bad feelings are connected to something that the patient was unaware of. On my account, this can be explained by saying that the person was unaware that her emotion was actually a feeling: she knew she was experiencing some unpleasant emotion, but not why. In those cases when no such connection can be made, the therapist then might look to a physiological defect, such as a chemical imbalance.

A similar phenomenon can occur when a person has a feeling about a situation that seems mismatched with her actual beliefs about that situation.<sup>7</sup> A person might feel distrustful of her colleagues, for example, while also believing she has no reason whatsoever to have that feeling. The psychotherapy process in cases like these sometimes reveals that the patient has previously felt distrustful of another set of coworkers in the past (something the patient may or may not be aware of), and her current situation is similar enough to the past one that the feeling is reactivated.

Feeling terms are not universal in the way that emotions are. Many cultures have names for feelings that others do not. While one might think this indicates that different cultures have different emotions, this seems unlikely upon reflection. There are so many feeling terms that are found in one language and not others that insisting these all name different emotions leads to the absurd conclusion that people in different language communities literally have different emotions. The simpler hypothesis is that different linguistic communities with different histories have formed different feeling words. Nevertheless, these feeling terms can be understood by those who are not members of the language community in question, suggesting that they are not, in fact, completely different emotions.

This is best illustrated with some examples. In English, we have the term “awkward,” which we often use to describe ourselves or a particular eliciting situation. This is understood to refer to a minor social discomfort that might best be characterized as low-level anxiety.<sup>8</sup> So, if I am feeling awkward, I feel some low-level anxiety about some social situation, perhaps involving a minor violation of implicit social norms, or running into a person with who I am unprepared or unwilling to speak with. Furthermore, if someone else tells you that she felt awkward in a particular situation, you would know two different things. First, you would know that the person in question felt a low-level anxiety

---

<sup>7</sup>Phobias are a straightforward example, where a person might feel frightened of a certain kind of insect, while knowing full well that that kind of insect is not dangerous.

<sup>8</sup>One might disagree with this characterization, but the details do not matter. What matters is that there is an emotional component to the feeling that is separable from the accompanying belief.

(as opposed to fear, anger, or sadness). Second, you would know that this emotional state was about, or caused by, a situation in which some minor social norm (or something like this) was violated.

There is nothing about a situation that we would describe as eliciting a feeling of awkwardness that is incomprehensible to a native Italian speaker. However, there is no word for the feeling of awkwardness in Italian. Rather, in describing the emotion of the situation, one might say something like “I didn’t know what to say!”<sup>9</sup> It would be absurd to claim that native speakers of Italian do not have the emotion of awkwardness; of course they do, even though they do not have a single word for the emotion. In my framework, awkwardness is an example of a feeling, but not an emotion. The term “awkwardness” is used to convey both an emotional state—which may have some degree of variability—and information about the cause or object of that emotional state. And while it may be more expedient to have a single word to convey this pair of emotion and object/cause, it is far from the case that those without that single word would be unable to understand the situation.

There are many more examples, but I will name just one more. The German word “schadenfreude” refers to the feeling of happiness or joy due to someone else’s misfortune. It conveys an emotion (happiness/joy) and its object or cause (another’s misfortune). There is no single-word English equivalent, but this feeling is not incomprehensible to those who do not speak German. In fact, some people have adopted this word into their everyday lexicon, precisely *because* it is more convenient to express a particular feeling using just a single word than expressing the emotion and its cause.

On the present account, would it be possible for non-human animals to have feelings? Ultimately this is an empirical question, but we can examine what would be required. For an animal to have a feeling in the sense I offer here, it would require, along with an occurrence of an emotion, some representation of the kind of thing that is the emotion’s object or cause. At first this might seem to be something that at least some animals have: when a gorilla roars at another gorilla, it seems natural to say that the first gorilla is experiencing—and expressing—a feeling of anger or rage, which has the second gorilla as its object. Another example might be found in alarm calls: certain species of meerkats, for example, emit a particular sound when a predatory bird is seen overhead. That sound, being particular

---

<sup>9</sup>Thanks to Gualtiero Piccinini for discussing this with me.

to that kind of bird, might be called the expression of a feeling; the meerkat is experiencing fear, and not just fear in general, but fear of a specific kind of bird.

This issue becomes more complicated, however, when we attend to some details. For example, the alarm call of the meerkat might not be an expression or indication of an affective state at all, but a simple instinctive response to a certain stimulus. To be sure, there is little doubt that non-human animals can experience emotions, or at least something similar enough to human emotions that they warrant the label “emotion.” For example, work by Joseph LeDoux, among others, has offered a tremendously detailed account of the neural mechanisms underlying fear. Interestingly, the neural circuitry involved in fear and fear conditioning is homologous: among vertebrates, it appears that the amygdala is crucially involved in the experience and learning of fear. That is not conclusive evidence that rats, for example, experience genuine fear, but at this point the burden seems to be on those who would deny that rats experience fear to proffer an argument to that effect. Thus, given that animals *do* experience emotions (as argued very well in (de Waal, 2011)), the next step is to determine whether they have the additional component required to have feelings.

One reason to doubt this possibility is that non-human animals may well lack the expressive means to indicate their feelings to one another. While some *emotions* can be communicated non-verbally via movements and facial expressions, it is unclear whether *feelings* (in my sense) can be communicated without verbal expression. To take just one small example, Keltner and Buswell (1996) found that there is no reliable facial expression of guilt, whereas there is a reliable facial expression of shame (and on my account, guilt is a feeling, while shame is an emotion). This is not decisive: we may well discover, say, a species of non-human primate whose repertoire of grunts and other noises is complex enough to express not just emotions, but the type of object or cause of those emotions. As it stands, however, while a preponderance of evidence suggests that animals have emotions, there are no clear examples of animals experiencing or expressing feelings as described in the current framework.

In another chapter I discussed a rough linguistic guide to how we can distinguish emotions from feelings, which I will reiterate here for the sake of completeness. In the case of emotions, there is not a semantic difference between saying that one is *feeling* that emotion term, and that one *is* that emotion

term. For example, saying that one is feeling angry is identical to saying that one is angry; saying that one feels angry but isn't angry, or that one does not feel angry but is angry, are incoherent. Now, this works for other states that one probably does not want to call emotions, such as being hungry, or being in pain.<sup>10</sup> But for states that are emotions, such as sadness, anger, fear, and joy, there is no difference between feeling these things and being in those states.

Feelings, however, work quite differently. Consider feeling rejected. On the framework I am advocating here, this feeling consists of some negative emotion (or combination of emotions), plus the belief that one has been (or perhaps is being, or will be) rejected in some situation. Of course that belief could be mistaken, and the person feeling rejected has not, in fact, been rejected. We might say that this person feels rejected, even though she has not been rejected. Thus there *is* a semantic difference between saying that one *feels* rejected and that one *is* rejected.

In short, I call this the feeling/being distinction, which is a rough guide to distinguishing emotions from feelings. Admittedly, there are problematic cases according to this guide: there is not an obvious difference between being jealous and feeling jealous, and it is unclear whether jealousy should count as a feeling or an emotion. And while that difficulty is one that will have to be addressed, for my purposes it is enough that this feeling/being distinction admits of clear cases of emotions and clear cases of feelings. This would not be a satisfactory result if this were the only distinction between feelings and emotions, but as I have argued above, there are other principled reasons to distinguish emotions from feelings.

One point of contact between the feeling/being distinction as a method of determining whether particular affective states are emotions or feelings is that what I called "sensations" above are more akin to emotions in this regard. Just as there is no difference between feeling sad and being sad, there is no difference between feeling pain and being in pain, or feeling hungry and being hungry, or feeling nauseated and being nauseated. Insofar as these different affective states can be seen in a kind of hierarchy, this accords well with the idea that sensations and emotions are, in some sense, more

---

<sup>10</sup>Of course, one may mean something more specific by "being hungry" than what is meant in ordinary usage, for example. One might believe that she does not need to eat, and is therefore not hungry, although she feels hungry in the sense that she *wants* to eat. But we can set these idiosyncratic usages aside.

basic than feelings. The feeling/being distinction marks those things which are more complex than emotions, as well as sensations.

The distinction I have made between emotions and feelings in this section is, I think, useful for understanding an important difference in affective states that has not otherwise been made clear. Prior theories of emotions have offered accounts of, for example, primary and secondary emotions, which roughly map onto the distinction I offer here. However, the framework I have proposed offers a useful, underexplored distinction that does not involve the complexity of different emotions, but the fact that those things I call feelings have information built into them in a way that emotions do not.

### 4.3.3 Alignment with Other Theories

The distinctions I have made between emotions and feelings captures some of the insights that other theories have made, albeit in different terms. Here I want to examine these points of similarity, and highlight points where the framework I propose has benefits relative to those other positions.

Darwin's investigations of emotions focused on what were later called the basic emotions by the influential psychologist Paul Ekman (1999).<sup>11</sup> The original six basic emotions (happiness/joy, sadness, anger, fear, surprise and disgust) were further characterized as "affect programs," meaning that emotions are complex, coordinated, automated responses involving changes in facial and vocal expression, as well as physiological changes such as particular patterns of body movement, hormone release, and the activation of certain parts of the autonomic nervous system (Griffiths, 1997, 77). Different authors use different terms for this most basic set of emotions: Ekman calls these basic emotions, while Damasio calls them primary emotions (Damasio, 2000). Furthermore, there is disagreement about what emotions should count as basic. Ekman, for example, amended his original list to include amusement, anger, contempt, contentment, disgust, embarrassment, excitement, fear, guilt, pride, relief, sadness/distress, satisfaction, sensory pleasure, and shame (interestingly, he questions whether guilt belongs on this list or not) (Ekman, 1999, 55). Emotions that are not basic are variously referred to as complex emotions, secondary emotions, or just non-basic emotions; not surprisingly, there is

---

<sup>11</sup>Ekman's debt to Darwin is even indicated by the fact that Ekman wrote the preface to Darwin's *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, originally published in 1872, but here references as (Darwin, 2002).

even more disagreement about how to characterize these emotions. Some believe that self-conscious emotions, such as guilt, shame, and embarrassment, should be classified as, in some sense, non-basic (e.g. Tracy and Robins (2004)). Others take non-basic emotions to be the result of cognitive activity, rather than environmental stimuli (e.g. Damasio (2000)).

An entirely separate theoretical approach to emotions does not take Darwin as its starting point. According to social constructionist theories of emotion, which have garnered less attention from philosophers (but not none: e.g. Chapter 6 of (Griffiths, 1997) and (Robinson, 2004)), the starting point for an understanding of emotions is *not* to take note of the similarity of emotional experiences across cultures (and perhaps even across species of primates), but instead to start by accounting for the amazing diversity of emotions among and across different cultures. This diversity, according to the social constructionist, suggests that cultural influences are indispensable for an account of emotions. Emotions are shaped within the individual by, among other things, the responses others have to her emotional episodes, including the language they use, and whether the emotion is one that others approve or disapprove of (or neither). As Prinz notes, social constructionists take the fact that there is no characteristic expression of guilt or love as evidence that these emotions are culturally constructed (Prinz, 2004). In other words, expressions of guilt or love vary widely within a particular culture, as well as across cultures (and in the case of guilt, there is no emotion term that corresponds to guilt).

It appears that we are far from reaching a consensus about the correct way to characterize emotions, including whether it is even best to begin with our pre-theoretical, folk psychological terms for emotions (LeDoux, 2012; Scarantino, 2012). Or, as Prinz more pithily puts it: “In sum, everybody is wrong and everybody is right,” (Prinz, 2004, 88). I will not attempt to adjudicate these debates, nor will I offer anything novel in the way of a complete theory of emotion. However, the framework I propose—distinguishing emotions from feelings—fits well with other theories of emotion, and does not present any novel points of disagreement with other theories.

As I characterize them, emotions are analogous to what others have generally called basic emotions. As mentioned earlier, there are several reasons to consider these emotions more basic than others, including their universality in experience and expression, and their analogs with non-human primates.

Given their place in our emotional psychology, a reasonable research strategy is to start with those emotions shared by all humans, and determine how they relate to those emotions (what I call “feelings”) that are not universal. Feelings, in my framework, accord well with what others have called non-basic emotions in various guises, and also fit well with the social constructionist insight that some “emotions” vary in a number of ways across cultures.

There is, of course, much more to say about emotions and feelings, but the basic picture I offer—that emotions are basic, and that feelings are a complex of an emotion plus an intentional object or belief about the cause of the emotion—does some work toward explaining why all cultures experience sadness and have a term for that emotion, but not all cultures have the oft-cited example of *amae*, a Japanese term for a feeling of, roughly, an indulgent desire to be dependent upon someone, or in submission to that person.

One way in which the framework I offer here could be misguided is if it turns out that the basic project of characterizing emotions in terms of discrete states, labeled by our pre-theoretic, folk psychological terms is in turn misguided. It may be that we are wrong to think of emotions in terms of sadness versus anger; rather, there may be some dimensions along which emotions vary, perhaps in a continuous manner. These hypothetical dimensions may not correspond to any way in which we ordinarily characterize emotions, such as pleasantness versus unpleasantness. However, views like this are quite unpopular, although several psychologists have proposed similar views in the past (e.g. Wundt (1980) and Schlosberg (1954)).

In short, nothing about the framework I have offered here is in conflict with the most popular approaches to emotion theorizing. Rather, I think it is worth focusing attention on the fact that the more basic affective states (emotions) have features that the more complex affective states (feelings) do not, and vice versa. By making this distinction clear, we can resolve some confusions about why some “emotions,” but not others, have intentional objects, or are found in some cultures but not others.

## 4.4 Making Sense of Guilt and Shame

With the framework I have sketched between emotions and feelings, we can return our attention to guilt and shame once more. I briefly argued in the chapter on guilt that guilt is a feeling, while shame is an emotion. This accounts for several facts. First, many cultures do not have a term for guilt (in the sense of a feeling, rather than the mere fact that one has violated a rule), while all known cultures have a term for shame. Second, this explains why there is no characteristic facial or bodily expression of guilt, while there is a well established characteristic behavioral expression of shame. Third, given my claim that emotions are more basic than feelings, it is not surprising there is no analog of guilt in non-human primates, although we do find an analog of shame.

The distinction I have offered helps to make sense of guilt and shame considered individually, but also together. The two terms go hand-in-hand in everyday, North American English. As the actor Kevin Kline is quoted as saying:

I've got the Jewish guilt and the Irish shame and it's a hell of a job distinguishing which is which.

In earlier chapters, I emphasized the importance of distinguishing guilt from shame, which is something that psychologists have only done in recent decades. I also argued that guilt is a feeling, while shame is an emotion. First I will discuss guilt. On my general account of feelings, to experience the feeling of guilt is to feel as if you are guilty of some kind of norm violation that you care about. The feeling of guilt is thus parasitic on the general notion of being guilty of a norm violation. The phenomenology of guilt can thus be varied: for some people, the emotional component of guilt may be sadness, for others anger, and for others some combination. Furthermore, for some people, the feeling of guilt entails that they deserve punishment, but for others there will not be this entailment. These differences would be very difficult to account for if we were to consider guilt to be what I call an emotion. But as a feeling, we can quite easily understand how guilt can vary as much as it does.

In Western culture, different children learn—and are taught—different ways to respond to their wrongdoings. As mentioned in the chapter on guilt, the parents of some children tell them that, when

they misbehave, they are bad. Others respond to their child's bad behavior by explaining why the behavior is bad, or if the misbehavior results in someone being hurt, they might direct the child's attention to the pain that they have caused. There are certainly many other possibilities. The point, however, is that there is considerable variation in how children respond to wrongdoings, and how parents make children feel after they have committed those wrongdoings. This variation explains why different people experience guilt as consisting of different emotions.

But what justifies calling all of these experiences *guilt*; what justifies classifying them as all of one type? On my framework, all of these instances count as guilt because they are all the same feeling. Specifically, they are all instances in which the person feels as if she has violated a norm that she cares about. And it may simply not be true that the person feeling guilt has actually violated any norms at all; it is only necessary that she feels *as if* she has. While the emotional component of guilt varies, this underlying "feeling as if" is constant across instances of feeling guilt.

One might still wonder why we should consider the feeling of guilt as a single feeling when there is so much emotional variation but only one unifying "as if" component. There is value in having this knowledge, both for oneself and for the purposes of communication. For example, suppose I feel bad or uneasy in some way but cannot identify why. After talking to others about this emotion (perhaps with a therapist), I determine that I actually feel guilty about some past incident that escaped my attention at the time. Knowing that I feel guilty about this is valuable knowledge: not only is my own emotional experience less mysterious, but now I can act to repair the harm that I might believe I have done. Also, consider what we learn when someone tells us that he feels guilty for having done something (or for having failed to do something). We may not know the exact emotion that the person is experiencing, simply because some people will be sad, and others angry at themselves.<sup>12</sup> We do know, however, that the person feels as if he has violated some norm, and we know that the norm in question is one that he cares about. We might infer that the person has, in fact, violated a norm with further information. In any case, we know that the person is experiencing a negative emotion and that that negative emotion is the one he normally feels when he has violated a norm he cares about.

---

<sup>12</sup>Interestingly, some authors, but not others, focus on the self-directed anger aspect of guilt. Harman (2009) includes the feeling of beating oneself up as a component of guilt; Velleman (2003) focuses instead on anxiety.

Shame, as I argued in an earlier chapter, is not a feeling, but an emotion. One must be careful to distinguish shame from affective states, such as embarrassment, and the sense of “being ashamed” that is synonymous with “being embarrassed.” Once being clear about shame is, we find that it has the hallmarks of being an emotion. Shame is universal. Shame has an analog in non-human primates, as well as other social animals. And shame need not have an object. This fact about shame is not obvious, however, given that it seems shame is always about one’s self. While this is, in some sense true, I think it is better to consider the possibility that shame need not have an object.

Many instances of shame have intentional objects, as do many instances of sadness or fear. I may well be ashamed of my performance after giving a talk, feeling that I am in some way inferior to my peers, that they are in a position of dominance over me. But people often feel shame with no intentional object at all, even though there is a cause. As mentioned in the earlier chapter on shame, examples include survivors of assault, particularly sexual assault. After certain kinds of violent, interpersonal assault, victims sometimes experience intense shame. To be sure, in some of these cases we might be able to account for the occurrence of this emotion in terms of the victim being ashamed of himself: perhaps he should have fought harder, or been more careful about where he was going. But other cases just do not fit this model. In fact, victims in situations such as these may very well believe that there is *nothing* for them to be ashamed about—no way in which they did anything wrong. Nevertheless, the person feels shame.

My claim is that these are cases of shame without an intentional object. Rather than thinking of shame as always having the self as an intentional object, it is better to think of shame as always *involving* the self. Shame may or may not have an intentional object, and it often happens that the self is also the intentional object. This is similar to other emotions, such as anger. I may be simply angry: not at anything, but simply experiencing an instance of anger, perhaps caused by a drug or because of an internal pain. Or I may be angry at my university’s basketball team for making stupid plays in the playoffs. Or I may be angry at myself for forgetting to set an alarm. Shame works the same way. Thus, I may be experiencing shame *because* I have been beaten up, although the intentional object is not myself, and not the fact that I have been beaten up. This sounds rather strange at first: surely

when someone is assaulted, it is quite natural to imagine them being ashamed that they were assaulted. But there are cases in which the person experiences shame while not being ashamed of anything at all. Examples include survivors of intimate partner violence and soldiers experiencing PTSD (Wong and Cook, 1992; Beck et al., 2011). Other than being theoretically interesting, these cases of shame are particularly pernicious; shame about something can be addressed by attending to the thing the person is ashamed of. But when the shame has no intentional object, it is difficult to have the patient alter their thoughts about what they are ashamed of: there is nothing there.

Using this framework, we can make sense of the differences we find between shame and guilt. Many have claimed that (so-called) guilt cultures are somehow more advanced or mature than (so-called) shame cultures. One supposed reason is that shame is all about the self, while guilt is about the other who has been harmed. Shame leads people to hide, to be depressed; guilt leads people to repair and make amends. And in shame cultures, we often find that there is no concept of the feeling of guilt, while guilt cultures always have the concept of shame. The thought is that guilt cultures have developed beyond the primitive moral emotion of shame, focusing on what we should do to make things better when we do something wrong, rather than just feeling bad about ourselves.

However, there is no justification for claiming that guilt is simply better than shame *tout court*. One of the ways in which we teach children the concept of guilt is intimately bound with reparation. In the earlier chapter on guilt, I cite research in which psychologists compare different parental disciplining strategies. One involves having the mother, after her child has done something wrong to another child, focus her child's attention on how she would feel if that child had done the same thing to her, explaining that she would not like it. This disciplining strategy is called "guilt-induction." The strategy called "shame induction" involves telling the child that she is a bad person for doing the wrong thing. People in our culture then tend to isolate themselves after experiencing shame, rather than trying to make things better.

In shame cultures, however, things work quite differently. As mentioned in the shame chapter, shame cultures tend to be oriented on collectives, including family, rather than the individual. In these cultures, individuals have much more support from others. As such, people who experience shame are

supported by their family and friends. A full story will have to wait for another time, but I speculate that this functions much like the psychiatrist Randolph Nesse's conception of depression (Nesse, 2009). Shame, like depression, is usually the result of a traumatic experience, often life-changing. One of its functions may well be to "shut down" the person's ability to go about her usual, everyday routine, allowing for her to re-evaluate and reassess the things about her life relevant to the cause of the shame. In collectivist cultures, family and friends are able to take care of the person's affairs, at least temporarily, until she is able to function once again. So the shamed person's close others, rather than she herself, can repair the damage done to others. However, this does not work in individualistic cultures, because the network of close others is absent. Again, like the case of depression, the shamed person can sit alone in her apartment without any help from others at all.

Shame thus can function perfectly well in the right kind of environment. It is a mistake to say that, because shame is dysfunctional in our culture, shame cultures are all "doing it wrong." Shame is not dysfunctional in other cultures, because there are social networks in place that allow the shamed individual to recover. Tangney, mentioned in the chapter on guilt, is simply wrong to say that guilt is the moral emotion of choice. In certain cultures, yes: guilt does seem to be the right thing to experience, but it is not an emotion at all. And the reason why it is the right thing to experience is because the feeling of guilt is nothing more than feeling as if one has violated a norm that one cares about. If I care about a norm, and I have violated it, I will normally try to make amends. But in other cultures, shame is the right thing to feel. The social structures are in place such that my expression of shame indicates to close others that I need help (Sheikh, 2014).

Finally, this difference suggests a way to make sense of the clashes that can result when different groups interact. (Giner-Sorolla et al., 2010) presents fascinating evidence that suggests that guilt and shame play different roles when a representative of one group (group A) attempts to make amends or apologize to another group (group B) for a wrong that group A committed against group B. When group A's representative includes an apology that expresses a feeling of guilt, members of group B are less willing to accept that apology than they are when the apology includes an expression of shame, and more willing to interpret the apology as insulting. On my account of shame, this can be explained

by the fact that a display of shame is partially about appeasement, and showing that you have been lowered in some respect. Displays of shame are thus less open to interpretation than displays of guilt, simply in virtue of the fact that different people experience very different emotions. An expression of shame clearly indicates that one is in a position of inferiority, while an expression of guilt only indicates that one acknowledges that they think a norm has been violated. For some offenses against entire groups, merely admitting that something wrong was done—which is all one can infer from a display of guilt—may not be enough.

## 4.5 Conclusion

There are reasons to separate emotions from feelings, independent of my own motivation to understand the difference between guilt and shame. Emotions—if they are a natural kind at all, worthy of scientific study—are universal: a set of emotions is shared by all known human cultures. Evidence suggests (but is far from conclusive) that distinct physiological systems underlie distinct emotions. All cultures have terms for the emotions. Experiences of the same emotion across people and across time are the same (modulo other concurrent emotions and cognitions). Finally, there are analogs of emotions in other animals, most obviously in non-human primates.

Feelings, however, are more complex. They are not universal in the sense that different cultures have terms for feelings that others do not, suggesting that different cultures have different complexes of feelings. Experiences of feelings may well differ, if not across time within a person, then certainly across people (e.g. the different emotions underlying guilt: anger in some, anxiety in others). Given this divergence, it is unlikely that we will find *the* neurophysiological system underlying guilt. And there are no analogs of guilt in non-human animals.<sup>13</sup>

Understanding shame as an entirely different kind of thing as guilt allows us to better understand the roles that each play in our psychology and our culture. Dismissals of shame as an emotion to be avoided or eradicated altogether are misplaced: while shame may be dysfunctional in our culture, it

---

<sup>13</sup>Some offer the guilt expression in domestic dogs as a counterexample. However, this is a mistake. This is a classic display of shame.

functions perfectly well in others. Furthermore, understanding the variability of feelings helps us to understand some of the theoretical difficulties involved in studying guilt. What unifies experiences of guilt is not a particular emotional experience, but the “as if” aspect: feeling as if you have violated a norm that you care about. Thus we should not be surprised that there is disagreement among emotion theorists about the nature of guilt. If my suggestion is correct, there is no nature of guilt beyond its being the feeling as if one is guilty.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

Despite their common co-occurrence in everyday language, guilt and shame are two very different things. I have argued that guilt is not the same kind of thing as shame. As a feeling, guilt is composed of an emotion, along with the belief that the emotion is of the kind that one feels when one feels as if she has violated a norm that she cares about. There are numerous feeling terms that function in a similar way. When I express that I feel vindicated, others can rightly infer that I am experiencing a positive emotion (or set of emotions), and that I feel as I do because that is what it feels like to be vindicated. It may be that I feel this way because I have actually been vindicated, or I believe that I have been vindicated. Or I might just feel something indistinguishable from how I normally feel when I have been vindicated. In any case, others can infer from my expression much more than that I am merely experiencing an emotion; there is also some information about why I am in the emotion that I am.

Shame is much simpler. Shame is an emotion. When I express that I feel shame, others can infer that I have a certain negative affective experience. But, as I have argued, once shame is clearly distinguished from other related concepts, such as embarrassment and humiliation, we cannot infer anything beyond the emotion that I am feeling. I may well be experiencing shame because I failed to live up to some ideal. But I may also feel shame because I have been physically dominated by someone else against my wishes. Knowing that someone feels shame allows us to infer that they feel inferior in

some way, that they have been dominated in some way. But unlike feeling guilt, or feeling abandoned, or betrayed, we cannot infer anything beyond the emotional experience. Similarly, if I express to you that I am sad, you can infer that I am experiencing a particular negative emotion. I may well be sad because of an insult, or the fact that my dog died. Or I may be sad for no reason at all, or because sadness is a side effect of a drug I have taken.

This distinction helps to explain why shame, but not guilt, is found in all cultures: what I call emotions are universal to all humans, but feelings are not. It also explains why guilt is described differently by different people: the only thing consistent across instances of feeling guilty is that the person experiencing the feeling feels as if she has violated a norm that she cares about. The underlying emotion may be sadness, or anger, or anxiety, or even shame (which might explain why guilt and shame have so often been taken to be very closely related). Plus, it helps to explain why we do not see analogs of guilt displays in non-human primates, but we do see analogs of shame displays (as well as sadness, anger, and happiness). Feelings are more complex, and while there is strong evidence to suggest that non-human animals are capable of experiencing emotion, that capacity alone is not sufficient for experiencing feelings.

What I hope to have done here is to further our understanding of the nature of guilt and the nature of shame. In the course of doing so, I have offered an account of an important distinction between two kinds of affective state. This distinction between emotions and feelings accords well with most other theories of emotion; as such, it generates no new problems for a complete theory of affective states to address. If successful, this project helps to pave the way for what could be a fruitful line of further research: what place guilt and shame have in moral philosophy, and how we should conceive of guilt and shame in moral psychological research. Additionally, the distinction I have proposed between emotions and feelings may be useful more generally in understanding an important way in which affective states differ. More questions lie ahead! I hope this dissertation allows us to address them more clearly.

# Bibliography

- Beck, J. G., McNiff, J., Clapp, J. D., Olsen, S. A., Avery, M. L., and Hagewood, J. H. (2011). Exploring Negative Emotion in Women Experiencing Intimate Partner Violence: Shame, Guilt, and PTSD. *Behavior Therapy*, 42(4):740–750.
- Brandt, R. B. (1992). *Morality, Utilitarianism, and Rights*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.
- Calhoun, C. (2004). An apology for moral shame. *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 12(2):127–146.
- Carroll, J. M. and Russell, J. A. (1996). Do facial expressions signal specific emotions? Judging emotion from the face in context. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 70(2):205–218.
- Cohen, T. R., Panter, A. T., and Turan, N. (2012). Guilt Proneness and Moral Character. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 21(5):355–359.
- Conradt, M., Dierk, J.-M., Schlumberger, P., Rauh, E., Hebebrand, J., and Rief, W. (2008). Who copes well? Obesity-related coping and its associations with shame, guilt, and weight loss. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 64(10):1129–1144.
- Costa, D. L. and Kahn, M. E. (2007). Deserters, Social Norms, and Migration. *The Journal of Law and Economics*, 50(2):323–353.
- Cunningham, W. A. and Kirkland, T. (2012). Emotion, Cognition, and the Classical Elements of Mind. *Emotion Review*, 4(4):369–370.
- Curhan, K. B., Levine, C. S., Markus, H. R., Kitayama, S., Park, J., Karasawa, M., Kawakami, N., Love, G. D., Coe, C. L., Miyamoto, Y., and Ryff, C. D. (2014). Subjective and Objective Hierarchies and Their Relations to Psychological Well-Being: A U.S./Japan Comparison. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 5(8):855–864.
- Damasio, A. (1994). *Descartes' Error*. Penguin Books, New York, NY.
- Damasio, A. R. (2000). *The feeling of what happens: Body and emotion in the making of consciousness*. Random House.
- Darwin, C. (2002). *The expression of the emotions in man and animals*. Oxford University Press.
- de Hooge, I. E., Zeelenberg, M., and Breugelmans, S. M. (2007). Moral sentiments and cooperation: Differential influences of shame and guilt. *Cognition and Emotion*, 21(5):1025–1042.

- de Hooge, I. E., Zeelenberg, M., and Breugelmans, S. M. (2010). Restore and protect motivations following shame. *Cognition and Emotion*, 24(1):111–127.
- De Sousa, R. (1990). *The rationality of emotion*. MIT Press.
- de Waal, F. B. M. (2011). What is an animal emotion? *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1224(1):191–206.
- Deonna, J. A., Rodogno, R., and Teroni, F. (2011). *In Defense of Shame*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK.
- Ekehammar, B., Sidanius, J., and Nilsson, I. (1987). Social Status: Construct and External Validity. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 127(5):473–481.
- Ekman, P. (1992). An argument for basic emotions. *Cognition and Emotion*, 6(3):169–200.
- Ekman, P. (1999). Basic Emotions. In Dalgleish, T. and Power, M., editors, *Handbook of Cognition and Emotion*. John Wiley & Sons, New York, NY.
- Ekman, P. and Friesen, W. V. (1971). Constants across cultures in the face and emotion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 17(2):124–129.
- Ekman, P., Friesen, W. V., and Ellsworth, P. (1972). *Emotion in the Human Face: Guidelines for Research and an Integration of Findings*. Pergamon, New York, NY.
- Freud, S. (1961). *Civilizations and its Discontents*. W. W. Norton, New York, NY.
- Fusé, T. (1980). Suicide and culture in Japan: A study of seppuku as an institutionalized form of suicide. *Social Psychiatry*, 15(2):57–63.
- Gibbard, A. (1990). *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Gibbard, A. (1992). Moral concepts: substance and sentiment. *Philosophical Perspectives*, 6:199–221.
- Gilbert, P. E. and Andrews, B. E. (1998). *Shame: Interpersonal behavior, psychopathology, and culture*. Oxford University Press.
- Gilligan, J. (1976). Beyond Morality. In Lickona, T., editor, *Moral Development and Behavior*, pages 144–158. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Giner-Sorolla, R., Kamau, C. W., and Castano, E. (2010). Guilt and Shame Through Recipients’ Eyes. *Social Psychology*, 41(2):88–92.
- Greenspan, P. S. (1995). *Practical Guilt*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK.
- Griffiths, P. E. (1997). *What Emotions Really Are: The Problem of Psychological Categories*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.
- Harman, G. (2009). Guilt-Free Morality. In Shafer-Landau, R., editor, *Oxford Studies in Metaethics, Volume 4*, pages 203–214. Oxford University Press.

- Heavey, C. L., Hurlburt, R. T., and Lefforge, N. L. (2012). Toward a phenomenology of feelings. *Emotion*, 12(4):763–777.
- James, W. (1884). What is an emotion? *Mind*, (34):188–205.
- James, W. (1890). *The principles of psychology*. Dover Publications, New York.
- Kaufmann, W. A. (1973). *Without Guilt and Justice*. P. H. Wyden, New York, NY.
- Keltner, D. and Buswell, B. N. (1996). Evidence for the Distinctness of Embarrassment, Shame, and Guilt: A Study of Recalled Antecedents and Facial Expressions of Emotion. *Cognition and Emotion*, 10(2):155–172.
- Kemeny, M. E., Gruenewald, T. L., and Dickerson, S. S. (2004). Shame as the Emotional Response to Threat to the Social Self: Implications for Behavior, Physiology, and Health. *jstor.org*, 15(2).
- Ketelaar, T. and Au, W. T. (2003). The effects of feelings of guilt on the behaviour of uncooperative individuals in repeated social bargaining games. *Cognition and Emotion*, 17(3):429–453.
- Kochanska, G., Gross, J. N., Lin, M.-H., and Nichols, K. E. (2002). Guilt in Young Children: Development, Determinants, and Relations with a Broader System of Standards. *Child Development*, 73(2):461–482.
- Kordi, R., Maffulli, N., Wroble, R. R., and Wallace, W. A. (2009). *Combat Sports Medicine*. Springer.
- Krevans, J. and Gibbs, J. C. (1996). Parents' use of inductive discipline: relations to children's empathy and prosocial behavior. *Child Development*, 67(6):3263–3277.
- Lamb, R. E. (1983). Guilt, shame, and morality. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 43(3):329–346.
- Lange, C. G. (1885). *Om sindsbevaegelser; et psyko-fysiologiske studie*. Lund.
- LeDoux, J. (1998). Fear and the brain: where have we been, and where are we going? *Biological Psychiatry*, 44(12):1229–1238.
- LeDoux, J. (2012). A Neuroscientist's Perspective on Debates about the Nature of Emotion. *Emotion Review*, 4(4):375–379.
- Leith, K. P. and Baumeister, R. F. (1998). Empathy, Shame, Guilt, and Narratives of Interpersonal Conflicts: Guilt-Prone People Are Better at Perspective Taking. *Journal of Personality*, 66(1):1–37.
- Lewis, H. B. (1971). *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis*. International Universities Press, New York.
- Lowinger, T. and Solomon, Z. (2004). PTSD, Guilt, And Shame Among Reckless Drivers. *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, 9(4):327–344.
- Luby, J., Belden, A., Sullivan, J., Hayen, R., Mccadney, A., and Spitznagel, E. (2009). Shame and guilt in preschool depression: evidence for elevations in self-conscious emotions in depression as early as age 3. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 50(9):1156–1166.

- Lyons, W. (1999). The philosophy of cognition and emotion. *Handbook of cognition and emotion*, pages 21–44.
- Maibom, H. L. (2010). The Descent of Shame. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 80(3):566–594.
- Manfredi, M., Bini, G., Cruccu, G., Accornero, N., Berardelli, A., and Medolago, L. (1981). Congenital Absence of Pain. *JAMA Neurology (formerly Archives of Neurology)*, 38(8):507–511.
- Masuda, T., Ellsworth, P. C., Mesquita, B., Leu, J., Tanida, S., and Van de Veerdonk, E. (2008). Placing the face in context: Cultural differences in the perception of facial emotion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 94(3):365–381.
- Mulligan, K. and Scherer, K. R. (2012). Toward a Working Definition of Emotion. *Emotion Review*, 4(4):345–357.
- Nesse, R. M. (2009). Explaining depression: neuroscience is not enough, evolution is essential. *Understanding depression: A translational approach*, pages 17–35.
- Nietzsche, F. (1995). On the Genealogy of Morals. In *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, pages 437–599. The Modern Library, New York, NY.
- Ortony, A. (1987). Is guilt an emotion? *Cognition and Emotion*, 1(3):283–298.
- Piers, G. and Singer, M. B. (1971). Shame and guilt: A psychoanalytic and a cultural study.
- Prinz, J. (2004). Which emotions are basic? In Evans, D. and Cruse, P., editors, *Emotion, evolution, and rationality*, pages 69–88. Oxford University Press New York.
- Prinz, J. (2005). Are Emotions Feelings? *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 12(8-10):9–25.
- Prinz, J. J. and Nichols, S. (2010). Moral Emotions. In *The Moral Psychology Handbook*. Oxford University Press, New York, NY.
- Robinaugh, D. J. and McNally, R. J. (2010). Autobiographical memory for shame or guilt provoking events: Association with psychological symptoms. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 48(7):646–652.
- Robinson, J. M. (2004). Emotion: Biological fact or social construction.
- Rodogno, R. (2010). Guilt, anger, and retribution. *Legal Theory*, 16(1):59–76.
- Scarantino, A. (2012). How to Define Emotions Scientifically. *Emotion Review*, 4(4):358–368.
- Scarnier, M., Schamder, T., and Lickel, B. (2009). Parental shame and guilt: Distinguishing emotional responses to a child’s wrongdoings. *Personal Relationships*, 16(2):205–220.
- Schlosberg, H. (1954). Three dimensions of emotion. *Psychological Review*, 61(2):81.
- Sheikh, S. (2014). Cultural Variations in Shame’s Responses: A Dynamic Perspective. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 18(4):387–403.

- Tangney, J. P. (1990). Assessing individual differences in proneness to shame and guilt: Development of the Self-Conscious .... *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 59(1):102–111.
- Tangney, J. P. (1991). Moral affect: the good, the bad, and the ugly. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 61(4):598–607.
- Tangney, J. P. (2001). Constructive and destructive aspects of shame and guilt.
- Tangney, J. P. and Dearing, R. L. (2002). *Shame and Guilt*. Guilford Press, New York, NY.
- Tangney, J. P., Stuewig, J., Mashek, D., and Hastings, M. (2011). Assessing Jail Inmates' Proneness To Shame and Guilt: Feeling Bad About the Behavior or the Self? *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 38(7):710–734.
- Tangney, J. P., Stuewig, J., and Mashek, D. J. (2007). Moral Emotions and Moral Behavior. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 58:345–372.
- Tomkins, S. S. (1987). Shame. In Nathanson, D. L., editor, *The Many Faces of Shame*, pages 133–161. Guilford Press, New York.
- Tracy, J. L. and Robins, R. W. (2004). Putting the Self Into Self-Conscious Emotions: A Theoretical Model. *Psychological Inquiry*, 15(2):103–125.
- Velleman, J. D. (1999). A rational superego. *Philosophical Review*, 108(4):529–558.
- Velleman, J. D. (2001). The genesis of shame. *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 30(1):27–52.
- Velleman, J. D. (2003). Don't worry, feel guilty. *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement*, 52:235–248.
- Williams, B. (1993). *Shame and Necessity*. University of California Press, Los Angeles, CA.
- Wollheim, R. (1999). *On the Emotions*. Yale University Press, New Haven, CT.
- Wong, M. R. and Cook, D. (1992). Shame and its contribution to PTSD. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 5(4):557–562.
- Wright, K., Gudjonsson, G. H., and Young, S. (2008). An investigation of the relationship between anger and offence-related shame and guilt. *Psychology, Crime & Law*, 14(5):415–423.
- Wubben, M. J. J., Cremer, D. D., and Dijk, E. v. (2009). When and how communicated guilt affects contributions in public good dilemmas. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 45(1):15–23.
- Wundt, W. (1980). *Outlines of psychology*. Springer.
- Zeelenberg, M. and Breugelmans, S. M. (2008). The role of interpersonal harm in distinguishing regret from guilt. *Emotion*, 8(5):589–596.
- Zylicz, P. O. (2009). Guilt in psychotherapy: ideological connection. *Archives of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy*, 2:5–11.