Krista K. Thomason, *Naked: The Dark Side of Shame and Moral Life*, Oxford University Press, 2018, 236pp., £61.00 (hbk), ISBN 9780190843274.

In *Naked*, Krista K. Thomason offers a multi-faceted account of shame, covering its nature as an emotion, its positive and negative roles in moral life, its association with violence, and its provocation through invitations to shame, public shaming, and stigmatization. Along the way, she reflects on a range of examples drawn from literature, memoirs, journalism, and her own imagination. She also considers alternative views at length, draws a wealth of important distinctions, and articulates many of the most intuitive objections to her own view in order to defend it more thoroughly. As such, the book’s subtitle, *The Dark Side of Shame and Moral Life*, undersells its scope and ambition. This is an exploration not just of shame’s dark side but a kaleidoscopic appreciation of both the nature and the (dis)value of shame and shaming. Somewhat undercutting this breadth, Thomason relies heavily on Kantian intuitions about equal respect and recognition for persons and their dignity; in several key arguments, she tells us to disregard predictable and systematic consequences of emotions, practices, and institutions so that we can better focus on their constitutive or internal aspects. Of course, every philosopher inevitably brings theoretical commitments to bear when writing about moral psychology, but non-Kantian readers should be forewarned that — despite the fact that Thomason says that she does “not assume any particular moral theory” — her ethical conclusions about shaming and stigmatizing are likely to be plausible only to those who are already snugly tied into a web of “Kantian commitments” (p. 9). Full disclosure: I am not a Kantian, so I was predisposed to disagree with many of Thomason’s arguments. Nevertheless, I found much of value in her book and hope that this review manages to shed some light on it.

The book is divided into five chapters, bookended by a brief introduction and an even shorter conclusion. The first chapter lays out three alternative accounts of shame:

* the “traditional view,” on which shame is “a painful emotion we feel in response to our own failures to live up to our ideals or values” (p. 19),
* the “naturalistic view,” on which shame “is an emotion that both responds to the disapproval of others […] and communicates to those others that the person who feels shame recognizes she has violated their norms” (p. 41), and
* the “pessimistic view,” on which shame is “a dangerous and psychologically crippling emotion” (p. 15).

Thomason also offers arguments against both the traditional and the naturalistic view in this chapter. In the next chapter, she explores the dark side of shame, especially its association with violence. This association might tempt one to conclude, with the pessimists, that shame is something we would be better without. However, in chapter three, Thomason lays out her own account of shame, the “constitutive view,” which contradicts the pessimistic conclusion. Shame, we are told, is the emotion we feel when we experience a “tension between our *self-conception* and our *identity*” (p. 87). In particular, shame arises when some aspect of one’s identity overshadows one’s self-conception. I thought I was this sort of person, but that image of myself pales in comparison to some other looming aspect of my identity. In chapter four, Thomason turns from the descriptive account of the nature of shame to an evaluative account of its appropriateness. When — if ever — should someone feel shame? In other words, under what conditions is it morally right for one’s self-conception to be overshadowed by one’s identity? Thomason’s answer is a middle road between pessimism and optimism. On her account, “a liability to shame is constitutive of valuable moral commitments. As such, we should not wish to be rid of shame unless we also wish to be rid of other important parts of our moral psychology” (p. 133). Given this, one might expect Thomason to be more sympathetic to social expressions intended to induce shame in others. After all, what’s the use of embodying a liability that one never manifests? In chapter five, Thomason argues to the contrary: it is good for people to be liable to shame but not, except in very specific cases, for this liability to be manifested. Of the three practices under consideration in this chapter (invitations to shame, shaming, and stigmatization), she rejects the latter two and accepts only a highly circumscribed range of the former. This is a timely discussion, as online shaming and so-called call-out culture have received a lot of attention in popular media recently. Thomason’s arguments in this chapter are therefore sure to garner interest from both philosophers and other researchers.

In the remainder of this review, I discuss and evaluate details of the five main chapters of the book at greater length.

Returning to chapter one, consider Thomason’s taxonomy of competing views of shame: traditional, naturalistic, and pessimistic. This is puzzling way of dividing up the conceptual space, verging on a category error. The three views are pairwise compatible. For instance, one might argue that shame, as traditionally conceived, is so devastating that we should be pessimistic about it. Or one could contend, on naturalistic grounds, that the traditional view is largely correct. Or one could light upon an empirically-informed theory of shame that one then harnesses to draw pessimistic conclusions (as Thomason admits on p. 48). Indeed, one could even put all three views together by arguing that the relevant science supports the traditional view, and that this in turn means we should be pessimists about shame.

At the same time, the pat labels suggest unity within each of the views. Is there really only one view of shame in the vast and global traditions of philosophy? Geaney (2004) argues that, while Western conceptions of shame tend to incorporate the idea of exposure (as suggested in the title of Thomason’s book), Confucian shame is grounded in metaphors of contact and contamination (and consequently in careful boundary-guarding). Do all social scientists (psychologists, neuroscientists, sociologists, political scientists, anthropologists, and others) agree on a univocal naturalistic interpretation of shame? Google Scholar indicates that, in the last two decades, there were nearly 12,000 scientific publications with the word ‘shame’ in the title.[[1]](#footnote-1) It’s hard to imagine that these 12,000 voices sang in unison. Indeed, cross-cultural naturalistic research indicates that diversity in conceptions and expressions of shame between different communities (Sheikh 2014). Are all pessimistic conclusions about shame motivated by the same arguments? This seems unlikely. My concern here is that Thomason has chosen an idiosyncratic range of evidence on which to draw: literature from classical Athens (especially *Ajax* by Sophocles), American literature and theatre, and American and French memoirs. She pointedly declines to engage “extensively” with the scientific literatures on shame (p. 10). For those who consider Martha Nussbaum the be-all and end-all in the philosophy of emotion, this selectivity will be familiar and even comforting. Others may find it cramped or downright Procrustean.

In any event, Thomason goes on in chapter one to consider and reject several competing alternatives for explaining the dark side of shame. There are those, such as Rawls (2003), who distinguish types of shame, then stuff all dark cases into a pigeonhole that they subsequently ignore or declare irrelevant. Then there are those, such as Taylor (1995), who distinguish rational from irrational shame, then stigmatize all dark cases as irrational so that they can ignore them or declare them irrelevant. Thomason convincingly argues that both strategies are opportunistic and mangle our portrait of shame. Someone who experiences dark or irrational shame still thereby experiences shame, and any adequate account of this emotion needs to make space for the full range of its expression — even if the philosopher ultimately concludes that it would be morally better if certain manifestations of shame were curtailed.

Against both the traditional and naturalistic views, Thomason observes that people can feel shame for living up to or exceeding values and social standards, as for example a painter’s nude model who is so beautiful that she attracts the painter’s sexual attention (p. 46). The model might think that it is good to be beautiful and, in other contexts, feel pride in her beauty. She might think that her community prizes beauty. Nevertheless, when subject to the lascivious eyes of the painter in a context where this attention is unwelcome, she blushes with shame.

Elsewhere in chapter one, Thomason tries to make some room between what she has labeled the traditional and naturalistic views, arguing that “the ideals to which someone fails to live up to on the naturalistic view do not have to be moral ideals or character ideals,” as the traditional view says they must (p. 41). This is true, but it presupposes that naturalists are bound to a heteronomous interpretation of shame. Thomason cites philosophers, such as Maibom (2010), who take this position, but this argumentative move is sound only if naturalists are all necessarily committed to the heteronomy of shame. We have been given no reason to think that they are. Nevertheless, if we grant that prominent naturalistic accounts of shame do posit it as heteronomous, Thomason has another, to my mind decisive, reason to think that they are mistaken: we feel shame about being exposed even when we take our exposure not to violate a public norm. Thomason points out that we rarely feel shame about nudity or defecation when we are alone (or about sex when we are only with our partner or partners), though most people would feel shame if someone inadvertently barged in on them while they were naked, masturbating, shitting, or fucking (p. 45). In such cases, the person violating the norm is, if anyone, the onlooker. Nevertheless, shame is highly likely when this happens.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Chapter two is a meditation on the connection between shame and violence. Thomason points out how puzzling it is that the disgraced Ajax, who in a fit of madness slew domesticated animals instead of the real targets of his vengeful plan, “would rather be a murderer than a madman” (p. 52). In other words, Ajax sees that he has done something shameful (capturing and slaughtering animals while under the delusion that they were enemies) when he could have done something criminal (mutinous murder of his compatriots), and wishes that he had done the latter. His shame leads him to commit suicide, still another act of violence.[[3]](#footnote-3) What leads him down this path? And how does this square with the idea that shame is about failing to live up to values (on the traditional view) or social norms (on the naturalistic view)? We are given no indication in Sophocles’s play that Ajax thinks that being a murderer and mutineer are generally good, nor that he sees his community as valuing these traits. Theories of shame that refer to the agent’s own values or the norms of their community therefore have trouble accounting for Ajax’s shame. “If,” Thomason asks, “shame is supposed to warn us that we are not as virtuous as we should be, why would we react to that warning with hate and anger, which is itself not virtuous?”

Against the traditional view, this argument has purchase. There are only two ways to defend the view, as far as I can tell. First, one could say that what prompts violence in cases like Ajax’s is something other than shame, for example humiliation (Deonna, Rodogno, & Teroni 2012). Thomason compellingly argues that we have no theoretical reason to draw this distinction. Second, one could argue that being and having a reputation for violent reprisal is itself a virtue — at least in the eyes of individuals like Ajax. While Thomason does not address this argument, I think it has some plausibility, though I confess to finding it difficult to retrodict motives to fictional characters whose psychologies were constructed by playwrights thousands of years ago.[[4]](#footnote-4) Against the naturalistic view, Thomason’s argument is less compelling. She points out that this view envisions shame as playing a role in regulating hierarchies of domination and subordination, then says that we “are still faced with the problem of explaining why doing something violent helps us get over feelings of powerlessness or domination.” Perhaps this betrays something about me, but I don’t see the problem. There are two viable strategies in the hawk-dove game (Maynard Smith & Price 1973). Someone who feels shame may respond by humbly deferring (the dovish strategy), but they may instead react with violence in an attempt to reestablish their position in the hierarchy (the hawkish strategy). As any alpha chimp would tell you, violence is the most direct, crude, and obvious way of asserting power within a hierarchy. Thomason’s assumption here seems to be that violent actions an agent takes are judged the same regardless of the agent’s place in a hierarchy. Naturalists would counter by saying that those in higher positions enjoy license that those in lower positions do not. Doing what someone in a dominant position would do or would be allowed to do (e.g., committing an act of violence) is a way of performatively insisting on one’s place in the hierarchy. Failure to do so, or impotence in the attempt, reinforces one’s subordinate status. One senses the subterranean intrusion of the categorical imperative in Thomason’s arguments here: she seems to presuppose that norms are universal, while naturalists are happy to admit that in many or even all cases they apply only to a subset of the population.

In any event, Thomason goes on in chapter two to tee up her own view of shame, arguing that the “source” of this emotion and the violence it sometimes leads people to is “not simply their failures to be the kinds of people they wanted to be. Instead, the source of their shame may be that their actions reveal to them that they are not the kinds of people they thought they were” (p. 69). Put differently, “The common sources of shame are not simply aspects of ourselves we do not control, but aspects of ourselves that we see as part of who we are in more intimate ways […] our *nonvoluntary identities*” (pp. 69-70). These nonvoluntary identities, when they loom too large, lead to “a kind of bewilderment and yet recognition” (p. 72). In the face of them, we say, with Prospero, “this thing of darkness I / acknowledge mine” (*The Tempest* 5.1.275-6). In such cases, Thomason goes on to say, “shame seems to arise in response to the negative judgments or attitudes from others” and “to occur either in front of an actual audience or with reference to an imagined audience” (p. 75).[[5]](#footnote-5) These negative judgments are typically emotional and include contempt and disgust. In the next chapter, Thomason explains how all this makes sense of the connection between shame and violence.

Chapter three distinguishes between “our *self-conception* and our *identity*” (p. 87). Someone’s self-conception is “made up of the characteristics that she sees as central to her own life, whereas the characteristics that she sees as peripheral are part of her identity” (p. 92). This does not mean that self-conceptions or identities are fixed. My self-conception evolves over time, as does my identity. Thomason also points out that one’s self-conception is not formed all at once and in solitude. Instead, we learn who we are through social interactions and exchanges. This picture of the development of agency is deeply in tune with the phenomenon of self-fulfilling trust, through which someone becomes trustworthy by adopting and expressing the picture of herself projected by someone who trusts her (McGeer 2008, Alfano 2016). And like self-conceptions, identities also evolve over time and in interaction with other people. My gender, my race — but also my age, my education, my family history, my physical appearance, and my disability status — are components of my identity. Thomason argues, correctly I think, that neither social forces nor one’s own self-image enjoys absolute sovereignty in determining someone’s identity (p .98). However, she goes on to point out that there are moments when aspects of our identities obtrude so aggressively that “our self-conception can become shaken,” which leads to “self-doubt” (p. 99). Such doubt may pass without one’s self-conception changing in a significant way, but in many cases one does modify one’s self-conception.

According to Thomason, the ongoing interplay between self-conception and identity, mediated by social interaction that is at times friendly and at times hostile, is how “we *negotiate*” who we are (p. 100). This idea puts Thomason in the same camp as John Doris (2015), who recently argued for a position he calls “anti-reflective, dialogical agency.” Others’ contempt and disgust — or just their imagined contempt and disgust — for aspects of our identities that are not incorporated into our self-concepts is liable to force us to confront the tension between self-conception and identity from which shame arises. Thomason’s account thus helps us to make sense of the connection between contempt and disgust, on the one hand, and shame on the other (p.105). A further advantage of her view is that it helps makes sense of the higher prevalence of shame among marginalized groups: “Feeling as though my entire identity can be ‘read off’ of my gender presentation, my skin color, or my socioeconomic class understandably makes my self-conception feel overshadowed even if I do not agree with or internalize the assumptions they make” (p. 107). Such non-voluntary identities can become the focus of others’ exclusive attention and overshadow whatever we take ourselves to be independently. This is an important feature of Thomason’s account, which helps it make sense of the frequency with which people feel shame on behalf of others to whom they are attached. If the last two hundred years of Anglophone books as indexed by Google ngram viewer are any clue, such shame is common. The most common ways to complete the phrase ‘ashamed of my —’ include ‘weakness’, ‘country’, ‘ignorance’, ‘name’, ‘dependence’, and ‘self’.[[6]](#footnote-6) Shame at one’s body or some part of one’s body works in the same way: “body shame arises when we feel defined by some aspect of our bodies that both is part of who we are and yet overshadows our own self-image” (p. 110). Shame over sex, being very drunk, being sick or disabled, and suffering a mental illness are all explained in the same way: when we feel such shame, some aspect of our identity overshadows our self-conception (p. 115). The versatility of Thomason’s view is on display here, as it can also account for cases of moral shame. When I experience moral shame, “I represented myself one way — as a person who would not do what I have just done — and yet I see that I have done it and now I know I am or could be that type of person” (p. 117).

The way that Thomason’s view accounts for the connection between shame and violence is less clear. She says that “we respond to shame with violence because it allows us to once again feel defined by our self-conception” (p. 118). In particular, since almost everyone regards themselves as an agent, violent action is a dramatic way of asserting one’s agency and thus of reinforcing one’s self-conception. It forces others to see one as a source of action, not merely an object of derision or disgust. Thomason’s own cases do not provide as much support for this interpretation as one might expect. For example, she refers to the main character in John Merrick’s *The Elephant Man*, who responds to shame by shouting at onlookers. Is such shouting a case of violence? I think not. Ajax kills himself out of shame. Does this impress his compatriots with his agency? Again, I think not. Hester Prynne, the main character of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*, is mentioned despite the fact that she does not resort to violence. Thomason refers to the phenomenon of victims of sexual assault and rape insisting that in fact they consented; she says that, in so doing, they reassert their agency (p. 122). But once again, this is not a *violent* assertion of agency, and it also undercuts Thomason’s claim that her view can account for shame “without attributing […] widespread irrationality” (p. 106, 124). All this said, the account on offer is an impressive achievement and surely captures *something* about the nature of shame, even if it would be an exaggeration to call it a complete account of shame.

In chapter four, Thomason argues that shame, as she has explained it, has moral value, and that we should therefore not try to pluck it from our moral lives. She considers two objections to shame: the idea that it is immature and that it is downright corrupt (p. 127). Neither argument holds much water, and Thomason dispatches them easily. She then goes on to make a positive case for shame — or, to be more specific, shame-proneness — arguing that “a liability to shame is constitutive of valuable moral commitments. As such, we should not wish to be rid of shame unless we also wish to be rid of other important parts of our moral psychology. This is an attractive way of understanding the moral value of shame and other negative emotions.[[7]](#footnote-7) Just as it is very bad to lose all your loved ones and be wracked by grief, so it is very bad to be overwhelmed by feelings of shame associated with one’s various identities. Nevertheless, just as it betrays a pathological lack of love and attachment to not be liable to grief should your loved one die, so it betrays a pathological lack of respect for others to not be liable to shame over one’s own moral violations (p. 147). If this is right, then the moral value of shame lies not in its particular manifestations but in the underlying dispositions (shame-proneness and respect for others) that give rise to it. While it’s too quick to argue that, since shamelessness is bad, shame-proneness is good, Thomason sensibly shifts the discussion from occurrent emotional states to dispositional commitments and character traits (p. 149). The deplorability of shamelessness “reveals someone’s failure to recognize the limitations of her own self-conception” (p. 149). A shameless person is never disturbed or shaken by the intrusion of his non-voluntary identities. He insists on a total right to self-definition, damn the torpedoes and full speed ahead. This has many bad consequences. As Thomason points out, a danger “of shamelessness is our tendency to estimate ourselves in a flattering light” (p. 150). In addition, “shamelessness is not a failure to care about ideals of character. It is a failure to entertain other points of view about who we are” (p. 151). Shameless people refuse (or at least pretend to refuse) to play the game of negotiating their self-conceptions and identities with other people. In this way, they embody contempt or disrespect for other people as conspecifics, compatriots, and interlocutors. By contrast, “Our liability to shame is partially constitutive of our respect for others as moral agents” (p. 155). Since respect is a fundamental moral value (in the Kantian framework, but also in others), destroying our capacity to experience shame would strip us of one of a central moral value.

We can already see how Thomason manages, in chapter five, to come to a split verdict about practices meant to induce shame in others. Shame is like grief, in that the liability is the main thing of moral value. This obviously does not entail that we should go around killing people’s loved ones so that they can manifest their disposition to grief. Nor, argues Thomason, does it mean that we have good reason to engage in shaming and stigmatization. Presumably, though, if someone’s best friend just died, it would be wrong not to tell them or to hide it from them, just to stave off their grief. Indeed, such coddling would arguably be disrespectful. By the same token, if someone has done or omitted something for which they should be ashamed, it may be wrong not to tell them or to hide it from them, just to stave off their shame. Again, such coddling would arguably be disrespectful, at least in cases where the offense is great. Thomason agrees, but only to a small extent. In this chapter, she distinguishes among invitations to shame, shaming, and stigmatization and argues that private invitations to shame are permissible when they are motivated by moral self-defense but not otherwise. In addition, she argues that both public shaming and stigmatization are never morally defensible.

An invitation to shame is a private intervention in another person’s emotional life; it is “an invitation to unseat or shake our own view of ourselves” (p. 179). Thomason suggests that such interventions are only permissible when they are motivated by moral self-defense (basically, insisting on one’s own dignity when a shameless person tramples on it), not by an intention to improve the other person morally. Invitations to shame that aim at the improvement of the shamed party are morally wrong, according to Thomason, because in making them we assume that “we ought to be in the business of leading others to moral self-improvement in the first place” (p. 185) and thus betray a lack of “humility” (p. 186). This is because “holding up a mirror on another person’s flaws can carry the implication that I would not be susceptible to the same” problems I have diagnosed in her (p. 186). I confess myself confounded by this argument. Surely we very much *are* in the business of improving others morally, at least sometimes. Third-party punishment is one of the cornerstones of morality (Jordan et al. 2016). And while invitations to shame *can* come from a place of smug self-certainty, they needn’t. For example, I might shame someone for doing something that I myself have done in the past. Doing so might be part of my own self-improvement while simultaneously taking advantage of my sullied history to empathize with the offender. Thomason says there is something arrogant about shaming. We could just as easily turn this around and say that the real arrogance is in thinking that there are lofty standards and norms that are for me only, and that I shouldn’t expect others to live up to them.

Unlike invitations to shame, shaming is necessarily public and performative: it induces third-parties to join the pile-on (p. 180-1). Thomason distinguishes between the shaming of rich and powerful corporations and other large organizations, such as the Susan G. Komen Foundation for its defunding of Planned Parenthood, and the shaming of individuals (whether powerful or not). In the former case, she admits that shaming may be one of the few tools that people have to effect change. “It is tempting to cast the shaming of powerful groups as giving power to the powerless,” Thomason admits, but this is “often just moral theater” (p. 195). When it succeeds, it is merely “strategic coercion through manipulation of public image” (p. 196). The consequentialist and the pluralist would, at this point, ask, “Well, does it work?” But for Thomason this is already an objection. She goes on to suggest, without empirical evidence, that corporations’ responses to shaming are typically just window dressing. These might include, for example, hiring more union workers and treating union workers better, but without being “serious about treating workers fairly” (p. 196). I imagine that most union organizers would tell you that they don’t care what the commitments of management are, provided workers get a fair shake. Union organizers, though, are rarely Kantians. When it comes to shaming individual people rather than corporations, Thomason’s arguments are more persuasive. She points to examples of individuals being publicly shamed on Twitter and other social platforms, and the catastrophic effects that eventuated for their careers, their self-image, and their mental health. In part, this is a technological and legal problem rather than a moral problem. *Disproportionate* shaming is, by definition, wrong. Popular social platforms like Twitter more or less guarantee that shaming will be disproportionate: either too little or too much. The vast majority of racist shitposters receive no shaming at all. The few people who are shamed tend to become the object of tens or even hundreds of thousands of people’s ire and scorn. It may be possible for computer scientists, working in collaboration with computational linguists and philosophers, to come up with a solution to this problem. In the meantime, we should indeed be wary of public, online shaming. In addition, some countries have developed legal remedies for disproportionate shaming, at least as a matter of redress. In particular, the European Union and several other countries have recognized a right to be forgotten, which enables people to demand that negative information about them that is no longer relevant or newsworthy be made invisible to search engines. This at least ensures that one mistake, even a huge mistake, does not destroy someone’s future with no chance of redress, rehabilitation, or forgiveness. Supposing these problems could be addressed, though, Thomason’s objections would remain. She objects to the very idea that “we are responsible for *enforcing* community values as well as upholding them” (p. 203). This objection ignores the fact that we fine-tune our shame-proneness (the virtue that Thomason celebrates) through social interaction: through being shamed and seeing others shamed, and learning how to do this well versus poorly. In essence, Thomason asks, “Who am I to judge?” (p. 205). It’s hard to stomach such quietism in the midst of the #MeToo movement, the presidency in the United States of a confessed sexual harasser, and the elevation to the Supreme Court of the United States of a man credibly accused of multiple counts of sexual assault. In her discussion of shaming racists, Thomason makes a similar move. She suggests that there are two claims one might make in this context: “One claim is that we should mock or deride racism. The other claim is that we should mock or deride people who say racist things” (p. 204). Another word for such people, when they say (and *do* — and support politicians who do) racist things like separating immigrant and refugee parents from their children at the border, is ‘racists’. It seems a bit precious in the current political environment to insist on shaming the sin while respecting the sinner.

Finally, stigmatization aims to manipulate someone’s social standing through institutional markers of shame. Thomason rejects stigmatization, shaming, and invitations to shame aimed at improving the other person for the same reason: each of these practices betrays, she suggests, a lack of respect for the dignity of others and arrogates moral authority that one does not and should not have. Here we see a stark example of the Kantian commitments grounding Thomason’s arguments. In the case of stigmatization, it is true that the stakes are very high. Instead of people or groups of people shaming large corporations, the power roles are reversed here: the state or some other powerful institution labels people with stigmata. In my own work (Alfano 2013), I’ve written about how such labels — whether positive or negative — tend to function as self-fulfilling prophecies. They lend an imprimatur of permanence and objectivity to subjective judgments about shamefulness and contemptibility that can be hard to counter, correct, or outweigh. As such, we should be careful about deploying them, even if they are occasionally merited when they can be applied with due attention to proportionality and something like the right to be forgotten.

In conclusion, there is much to like about this book. Kantians will like it more than the rest, but there is also much to be appreciated by anyone with an interest in moral psychology. It formulates an understanding of the emotion of shame and advances powerful but controversial arguments about the permissibility of inducing shame in others. I could envision it being used as a main text in a seminar on moral psychology, in conjunction with other books or papers that bring alternative perspectives (consequentialist, virtue theoretic, pluralist) to bear.

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1. Search conducted 11 October 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For those who believe in an omnipresent God — and who thus never consider themselves truly alone — such shame is inevitable. In section 4 of the preface to *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche (1887 / 2001) points this out: “‘Is it true that God is everywhere?’ a little girl asked her mother; ‘I find that indecent!’” Nietzsche is not alone in remarking on the shame induced by an omnipresent God. Martin Luther claimed that the Holy Spirit graced him with his theological insights when he was at his most degraded and shameful: while he was sitting, constipated, on the toilet (Oberman 1990). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. One oddity in the account here is that Ajax’s shame-induced violence is self-directed, whereas most of the other cases of shame-induced violence in Thomason’s book are other-directed. Framing the book, as she does, around Ajax thus casts it in a light that she does not intend. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. In this, I find myself at odds with Thomason (following Nussbaum), who argues that cases “from literature are important because they provide a rich description of the conceptual possibilities of feelings of shame” (p. 55). My impression is that we are as likely to “misimagine” (Morton 2006) as to imagine in these cases, and that naturalistic study of actual manifestations of shame in diverse, living populations is a better path forward. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. For an insightful discussion of this idea, see Morton (2013, p. 161): “In shame one experiences the contempt that could be directed at one from an external or impartial point of view.” [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Search conducted 13 October 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Thomason says that this shows that shame is a moral emotion. By her test (i.e., is liability to it grounded in moral commitments?), one could make a case that *every* emotion is a moral emotion. This is not meant as an objection. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)