Shaming as a Key Factor in the Process of Personality Disintegration

David Krámský, Petr Nesvadba, Tomáš Římský

Abstract
The text interprets shame as a fundamental way of social-moral experience of the world. This moral emotion is then crucial for self-awareness and the constitution of relationships with others. It is in this specific bodily experience of Self and relation to others that the ambiguity of the depersonalised Self opens up.

Keywords
shamed; shame; guilt; integrity; living body

Shame in the psychological and philosophical tradition

When Aristotle (1927, 5), in his *Metaphysics*, identified wonder and doubt as the "roots of philosophizing", he was referring to the fact that it is only at the moment when man steps away from the phenomenal form of the world, breaks through the "self-evident" of the unself-evident and problematizes it, only in this liminal situation that he embarks on the path of knowing the truth and not on the path of defending his (necessarily partial) subjective opinion. Thus, only the restrained man aims at true knowledge (i.e., he strives to grasp the general context, the essence, not just the individual, external form), whereas the Unrestrained man is "tempted" by mere Opinion (i.e., knowledge of the phenomenal aspects of things, their randomly individual form). In the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1937), Aristotle takes this observation to the moral level; we read there that "the unrestrained man when he succumbs to the temptations of pleasure possesses not Knowledge but only Opinion."

Those who step back show that they somehow do not feel fully "competent", that they have yet to properly "consider everything" and only then act (or do not act). Having distance is honest, because it shows that the person in question knows his presumptions; he knows that – as with everyone – his understanding of the world is necessarily biased. I think it is meaningful to speak also of a certain degree of scepticism, which I understand not as resignation, but – in the words of Wilhelm Weischedel (1999, 29) – as "open scepticism", as a questioning arising from the experience of radical uncertainty.

According to Sigmund Freud, the founder of the psychoanalytic tradition, shame is a reaction to the formation of sexually exhibitionist impulses (Tagney, 2002, 12). Shame in this conception is not understood as a cognitive construct. Guilt, unlike shame, is a cognitive construct based on the conflict of the Id or Ego with the moral standards of the Superego.

In the psychoanalytic concept represented by Helen B. Lewis (1971), both emotions are closely linked to neuroses. According to Lewis, the experience of shame is tied directly to the Self on which the evaluation is focused. In contrast to guilt, where the Self is not the central object of negative evaluation, attention here is rather focused on the object of thinking.

Shame occurs when the individual experiences himself as a failure in terms of his own (socio-cultural) standards, rules and goals, and especially in regard to the person as a whole (the globalized self). The ashamed or shamed person longs to hide, to disappear, to shrink into himself, to "to sink into the floor" (Lewis, 1971). It is a highly negative and painful state of mind[1] that also disrupts the normal behavioural flow and causes confusion in thinking and the ability to articulate the whole matter. The body of the ashamed person appears "withdrawn into itself" until the person disappears from the eyes of others.

Sartre speaks of the situation of the displacement of the others' sight in shame as the objectification of our body for others (*corps pour autrui*, Sartre, 1956, 566, 620). These are situations where we experience our blushing due to the realization of some awkwardness, e.g., in dress, makeup, arbitrary gesture or facial expression, or during a physical examination at the doctor's office when the doctor objectifies our living body. According to Merleau-Ponty (1962), shame highlights the polarity of the living and embodied body, which is closely linked to the interpersonal sphere. The lived body becomes a body in a pure sense only when it is seen by others. This is a particular ambiguity associated with the phenomenological understanding of corporeality – being a body and having a body.

Shame and loss of face

In Greek-Homeric society, emphasis was placed on the practice of doing and living well (*eudaimonia*) – to live a good life one must be virtuous, one must know one's place and role in the society to which one belongs. According to good judgment *(orthos logos*), he should thus find the measure of his action – to distinguish the reasonable from the unreasonable, find the centre of *the mesotheos*. In Greek society, this applies to heroes as well as to any persons living in the *polis*.

According to Dodds (1951, 18), Homer in his texts deliberately associates honour and awareness of this measure with *aidós* – shame. *Aidaomai Troas kai Troadas* – Hector exclaims, "Now my army's ruined, thanks to my own reckless pride, I would die of shame to face the men of Troy and the Trojan women trailing their long robes … Someone less of a man than I will say, 'Our Hector – staking all on his own strength, he destroyed his army!'" What Hector fears more than his own death, according to Dodds, is losing Face to others, in the eyes of others.

[1] Erikson notes in this context that shame burns, as opposed to guilt which weighs down. Similarly, shame tends to be associated with sight and guilt with voice.

Intercorporalization in the eyes of others

According to Thomas Fuchs (2003, 228), shame is characterized by being "embodied in the eyes of others". The primordial *lived physical Self* is *split* and becomes a *body-object* for the others. Shame arises as an experience of this ambiguity constituted by the view of others. The lived body is *depersonalized* and experienced as *unworthy*. Similarly, in Genesis, knowledge (fruit from the tree of knowledge) grows out of the primordial experience of nakedness and shame mediated by the intercorporalized gaze of the Lord. Original sin objectifies the body as naked in the Lord's view. The consequence is shame coupled with a compulsive need to cover one's previously unseen nakedness.

The shame that comes from nakedness is constituted as an interruption of immediate self-expression (self-experience) in the reflection of our own primordial corporeality, growing in the intercorporalized view of others. Equally interesting, then, are the correlations with guilt, since it is possible to believe that shame always carries the germ of guilt. It transforms into guilt the moment we *internalize* our social norms as our own experiences of values and when our self-judgment anticipates public exposure. Erikson (1993) notes that visual shame precedes auditory guilt. First, we relate to the sight, then to the voice. The voice of (others') conscience represents guilt. Both shame and guilt substantially regulate our interpersonal relationships. Shame protects us from *injury* in self-exposure and self-disclosure *to others*. Guilt and conscience alert us to harm towards others that would lead to the disruption of our relationships with them.

Shame and depersonalization – clinical and pedagogical implications

A very important correlative theme is the clinical consequences associated with disruption of the "appropriate" level of shame. In addition to social anxiety disorder, self-body and disintegrative self-perception is primarily associated with dysmorphophobic disorder. Its main manifestation is a problematic or even pathological perception of one's own body leading to its rejection. The cause, then, can be seen precisely in the way the embodied gaze of others is constituted.

The social consequence of such shaming is the avoidance of social contact. In one study, Barrett et al. (1993, 483) showed a difference in the way shame and guilt are processed. Two-year-old toddlers played with a doll that was designed to be prone to being breaking. After the doll was automatically broken, two behavioural patterns then emerged as the predominant ways in which the children coped with the situation.

Some children *apologetically* showed the broken doll to their parents, others simply hid it from their parents' *view* to avoid getting into trouble. Some turned inward, refusing and avoiding what they had done – *avoiders*. Others admitted mistakes and actively sought to correct and change – *amenders*. The corrective behaviours were then interpreted by the authors of the experiment as *guilt*, while the error-hiding behaviours were interpreted as *shame*.

In a further elaboration of the research, it turned out that the shame-avoiding children, unlike the actively problem-solving children, consistently exhibited other problems in social

behaviour and upbringing. According to Tangney, the crux of the problem lies in the nature of self-evaluation. Shame grows out of an evaluation of the whole self – WHO I AM, whereas with guilt the focus is primarily on WHAT I DID. This, according to Lewis, has fatal consequences for the constitution of the integrity of the self and for the core of our self-concept. You did SOMETHING wrong in shame means you ARE a bad person. This negative self-concept makes shame emotionally painful and, unlike proactive corrective guilt, leads to regressive withdrawal into themselves.

According to Tangney (2002), then, in line with these two self-conscious 'processes' of experiencing the intersubjective bodily Self, we can also see a dual conception of education. Thus, education in the regulative sense should primarily articulate issues concerning WHAT you did WRONG, WHAT happened, rather than you did the wrong thing ergo YOU ARE WRONG, or YOU ARE WRONG and therefore you did the wrong thing. Such an upbringing cannot then be understood as anything other than a systematic depersonalization and disintegration of the personality that can lead to nothing but problems with self-esteem, self-identity, and correlated social behaviour disorders. A teacher, parent, or any educator in general who has the welfare of his or her young person in mind should be aware that prolonged exposure to a supercritical environment may do more harm than good in the end. Even if outwardly the child may appear to be obedient and well-behaved, there may be grievous wounds within him or her which will be very difficult to heal.

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doc. PhDr. David Krámský, PhD.
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5745-7453
Police Academy of the Czech Republic
Faculty of Security Management
Lhotecká 559/7, 143 00 Prague, Czech Republic
david.kramsky@icloud.com

PhDr. Petr Nesvadba, CSc.
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6754-8650
Police Academy of the Czech Republic
Faculty of Security Management
Lhotecká 559/7, 143 00 Prague, Czech Republic
nesvadba@polac.cz

Mgr. Bc. Tomáš Římský
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6883-224X
Police Academy of the Czech Republic
Faculty of Security Management
Lhotecká 559/7, 143 00 Prague, Czech Republic
tomas.rimsky@polac.cz