

How Should We Respond to Shame?

Madeleine Shield

Abstract: How one should respond to shame is a moral consideration that has figured relatively little in philosophical discourse. Recent psychological insights tell us that, at its core, shame reflects an unfulfilled need for emotional connection. As such, it often results in psychological and moral damage—harm which, I argue, renders shaming practices very difficult to justify. Following this, I posit that a morally preferable response to shame is one that successfully addresses and dispels the emotion. To this end, I critique two common responses to shame, compliance and anger, and then propose an alternative: the practice of emotional vulnerability.

Keywords: shame, virtue ethics, punishment, compliance, anger, emotional vulnerability

I. Introduction

At a basic level, most philosophers agree that shame is a highly unpleasant feeling which is tied to a negative assessment of oneself, and which subsequently fuels a desire for self-concealment. Shame can be thought of as either a momentary feeling or as a more established trait or belief about oneself, while the act of shaming constitutes a deliberate attempt to invoke this feeling or activate this belief in another person (or sometimes within oneself). It remains controversial as to what extent a person must ‘agree’ with a shaming judgement in order to experience shame, however it seems plausible to say that shame is not an exclusively external or internal phenomenon; rather, feelings of shame are informed by both the perspective of the self and the Other (Shield 2022).¹ Psychologists, though not always philosophers, generally recognise that shame is born from a failed attempt to fulfil one’s basic human need for social connection, which either creates or reinforces feelings of personal insufficiency. This picture is commonly contrasted with guilt, which is thought to result from individual acts a person has committed, and which is more often linked to a desire to make amends. Unlike feelings of guilt and remorse over moral wrongdoing, the criticism that is involved in shame is not localised, but rather appears to encompass the whole self; shame condemns *who one is* rather

1. Though contested, support for this view can be found in several philosophical works (see, for example, Sartre 2003: 302–03; Wurmser 1981: 45, 49; Kekes 1988: 283; Bartky 1990: 85–86; Zahavi 2020: 354).

than merely what one has done.² Thus, even when one is shamed for a specific behaviour or aspect of one's character, the feeling manifests as a global assessment of oneself as 'less than.' In this sense, the apparently local basis of different types of shame, such as body shame, can be understood as a projection of one's feeling of overall defectiveness onto specific parts of the self (Zahavi 2020: 351; DeYoung 2015: 21). While shame has received increasing philosophical attention in recent times, less considered by philosophers has been the question of how one should respond to shame.

In section one, I consider the moral context of this question.³ What we do with the feeling of shame is morally significant, not least because shame is always the product of intersubjective relations. As feminist and critical race theorists have long recognised, it is also frequently present in oppressive ones. While it is rarely, if ever, argued that oppression-based shame is morally justifiable, it is interesting to note that widespread disavowal of shame as a tool of oppression has done little to dissuade us of its moral desirability more generally. Indeed, some of the most vocal advocates of shaming practices today are those within political resistance movements, who view shaming as the most (and perhaps only) appropriate means for drawing attention to the wrongdoing of perpetrators, especially those culpable individuals or groups who appear unwilling to recognise such wrongdoing (Locke 2007: 153; Snyder 2020: 109–10). Here, the popular idea that shame offers us an effective method of regulating behaviour means that it is still considered by most to be morally useful or, at the very least, morally deserved. However, I will argue that we have reason to think this is often not the case.

Given the fact that shame is always experienced as a global self-assessment, its evaluation of the self as defective or worthless can never be contained to a specific transgression one has committed, but instead extends to include parts of oneself for which one should not be considered morally guilty. In this sense, I will argue, oppression-based shaming has much more in common with the general shaming of individuals than we might think. Indeed, the psychological effects are the same, whether or not one has committed a moral transgression; like trauma, shame can be considered a moral harm insofar as it causes psychological damage to its bearer. Employing a eudaemonistic framework of neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics, which prioritises healing and flourishing, I argue that this renders the use of shaming difficult to justify from a moral

-
2. Although the notion of shame as a global emotion has come under some recent criticism (see, for example, Deonna, Rodogno, and Teroni 2011), it is still widely held among both philosophers and psychologists (see for instance Locke 2007: 149; La Caze 2013: 89; Dolezal 2017: 424; León 2012: 193–211).
 3. It should be noted that the account of shame that I develop here is Eurocentric, based solely on manifestations of shame within Western culture, and is not intended to serve as a universalist or cross-cultural model of shame.

point of view. This is because shame generally interferes with an individual's ability to fulfil their moral duty toward others, and therefore their capacity to flourish—the end goal of virtue ethics. Following this, I conclude that a morally desirable response to shame is likely to be one which aids the ashamed individual in successfully addressing or dispelling the emotion.

So how does one best defy shame? In section two, I examine the moral permissibility of three potential responses to shame. The first of these, compliance, is explored by drawing upon Hannah Arendt's (1997) biography of the German Jewess Rahel Varnhagen (1771–1833). Under the increasing anti-Semitism of Berlin high society, Rahel suffered great shame at her Jewishness and, in an attempt to escape this feeling, sought assimilation into Christian society. This course of action, however, did not assuage Rahel's shame, but rather intensified it. The second reaction to shame which I explore, anger, takes its example from a real-life case study, "Murder of a Spouse," in Melvin R. Lansky's (1993) *Fathers Who Fail*. This concerns the shame-induced violence of a man, 'Mr C,' toward his wife, 'Mrs C,' as evidenced by a conjoint interview two months before the husband murdered his wife. As Lansky's psychiatric evaluation shows, it was Mr C's unchecked feelings of great inadequacy, overtly reinforced by his wife, which led to this disastrous consequence. Drawing on these cases, I argue that both compliance and anger can be considered forms of shame avoidance; more often than not, such responses not only fail to address the shame which caused them, but ultimately strengthen its hold on the individual. The third response to shame, the practice of emotional vulnerability, represents a viable alternative. Here I draw upon the (1946) work of Austrian psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl (1905–1997), whose prescription against the traumatic horrors of Nazi Germany, among them the phenomenon of 'survivor shame,' was to pursue the fulfilment of personal meaning. Here, one moves away from shame and toward self-worth; affirming one's basic longing for love and connection, one is better positioned to embrace their authenticity in acknowledging that which truly matters to them as an individual. It is this course of action which I will argue is most successful in dispelling the feeling of shame, and which thus offers a morally desirable way of responding to it.

II. Framing Moral Responsibility in the Context of Shame

II.1. *A Loss of Connection*

In evaluating how one should respond to shame, we must first consider the emotion's moral implications. Although an individual can experience shame in the absence of (real) others, scholars widely agree that a certain intersub-

jectivity is inherent to shame (see, for example, Sartre 2003: 296; Guenther 2012: 61–62; Zahavi 2014: 221–23; Dolezal 2017: 422; cf. Deonna, Rodogno, and Teroni 2011: 125–53). This clearly fits with shame being a negative self-assessment, since the values by which a person measures whether they are ‘good enough’ are culturally constructed. This is true both in that others are required in order to have a point of comparison to (fail to) measure up to, and in that the normative aspect of what constitutes a ‘good’ or a ‘bad’ value is not individually, but socially, ordained. As Luna Dolezal writes, “it seems clear that the primary locus of shame is social. Values and norms do not appear of out nowhere, they are constituted and continuously modified by relations of embodied social interaction” (2017: 425). Since the values through which we negatively assess ourselves can be externally imposed on us, and we can also internalise them, the ‘Other’ in shame can be both real and imagined. In the words of Sandra Bartky, shame thus “requires if not an actual audience before whom my deficiencies are paraded, then an internalized audience with the capacity to judge me.” She adds that this other can even be from one’s past; “a composite portrait of other and earlier [perpetrators of] . . . consistent shaming behaviour” (1990: 86, 90). While I mostly agree with this kind of characterisation of shame as being, in Dolezal’s words, “a painful awareness of one’s flaws or transgressions with reference to norms” (2017: 423), I argue that the overall picture it paints is remiss insofar as it neglects the emotion’s deeper psychological mechanics.

At the core of shame lies the reason that not being ‘good enough’ would even matter to us in the first place: our need to be understood and accepted by others. Our first instances of shame, which occur in early preverbal infancy, provide a clear example of this need. Here, developmental psychology has shown that infants experience shame when their “relations to others (namely caregivers) are threatened,” which precipitates “a sense of failure to attain some ideal state”—that ideal state being a feeling of social connectedness which is central to the infant’s wellbeing and even survival (Dolezal 2017: 433; see also Nussbaum 2004: 184). In ‘still face’ experiments, researchers have observed that bodily behaviour associated with shame (slumped posture, avoidant gaze, lowered head) occurs in infants whose caregiver has interrupted mirror-gazing with the child. This means that the caregiver has deliberately withdrawn physical, verbal or visual communication from the shared interaction, and subsequently ignored the smile, giggle, or gaze the infant uses to reestablish emotional contact. According to psychologist Andrew P. Morrison, this lack of engagement interrupts the baby’s neurological ‘pleasure-joy’ circuit, resulting in a “physiological letdown [which] is experienced by the infant as being the infant’s own ‘fault’—that something the baby did *caused* [their

caregiver's] lack of responsiveness" (1996: 59).⁴ Of course, as children mature, they are often less inclined to view themselves as personally responsible for the emotional responses of others. The ultimate psychological basis for shame, however, remains the same as in infancy.

Surprisingly few philosophers have recognised that this unintended disruption of an emotional bond is at the root of shame.⁵ Just as it occurs in an infant when mirror gazing with a caregiver is interrupted, so too is it experienced by adults when their cherished social bonds are threatened. Dolezal argues that, for humans, "Concerns regarding physical survival [in infancy] become transmuted [in adulthood] into concerns regarding *social* survival" (2017: 434, my emphasis). This is because as adults we are generally much less physically dependent on others, yet we still rely on a certain level of social interaction to fulfil our social needs and to reproduce. That is why shame usually manifests for us in a sense of failed adherence to social norms. When our close social bonds are threatened, and we conclude that this is due to some personal defect, we experience shame. At its heart, then, shame is as Gerhart Piers describes it: the fear of social exclusion, which "spells fear of *abandonment*, the death by emotional starvation" (1953: 16). Many philosophers acknowledge this vulnerability which is central to shame, but they incorrectly believe *it* to be shame's cause. Jean-Paul Sartre famously asserted that shame comes from "recognising myself in this degraded, fixed and dependent being which I am for the Other" (2003: 312). Giorgio Agamben, too, concludes that shame is my witnessing of my own desubjectification, which I am unable to escape or to assume (1999: 105). But we do not feel shame purely in virtue of recognising our vulnerable need for connection with others. For, when we *are* socially fulfilled, like the infant whose smile is mirrored in the caregiver, we are not ashamed of the need which drove those connections. Rather, shame occurs when this need has *failed to be met*, and we subsequently conclude that this is due to some lack within ourselves. As Hegel wrote in the nineteenth century: "Shame does not mean to be ashamed of loving, say on account of exposing or surrendering the body . . . but to be ashamed that *love is not complete*, that . . . there still be something inimical in oneself which keeps love from reaching completion and perfection" (cited in Piers 1953: 16, my emphasis). Perhaps this is also

-
4. One might object here that the baby's response being based on "something the baby did" might well indicate that it is guilt the baby is experiencing here, not shame—however, I believe that Morrison is merely referring to the baby's perception that its own insufficiency of self, rather than some external factor (such as the caregiver's mood), is responsible for the physiological letdown; not that it has committed a moral transgression toward the caregiver.
 5. Some philosophers have touched on this way of conceptualising shame, though only briefly (see Biddle 1997: 227, 229; Nussbaum 2004: 177–89; Mann 2014: 113–17; Dolezal 2017: 435; Zahavi 2020: 353–54).

what Levinas meant when he wrote that “Being naked is not a matter of [not] wearing clothes” (2003: 64)—our exposed body is not shameful to us purely on account of being exposed and thus vulnerable to the judgements of others. Nor would we be likely to be ashamed about the fact that these judgements matter to us, were they overwhelmingly positive and affirming. This need for validation and connection only becomes shameful to us when it is unfulfilled; when “we cannot hide *what we should like to hide*” (Welz 2011: 70–71, my emphasis) on account of it having been socially rejected. Characterising shame as ontological, as Sartre and Agamben do, also does a further disservice to those especially vulnerable to shame because it seems to forget that we are not all equally likely to experience it.

II.2. The Black, White, and Grey Zones of Shame

Shame is diverse in its manifestations: just as it can occur within a perpetrator of moral transgressions, it appears just as likely to be experienced by an apparently innocent party. The use of shaming practices as a tool of oppression is a case in point, given that members of marginalised groups “are more marked out for shame than others” (Nussbaum 2004: 174), not as a result of their wrongdoing but simply because they deviate in some way from the privileged norm. This stigmatisation produces a concentration of feelings of great inadequacy within marginalised groups, which works to reinforce their alleged inferiority both within themselves and society at large. The often profoundly disempowering nature of shame—its immobilising effect, isolating feeling, and desire to hide—is hardly conducive to a sense of solidarity among victims. In this sense, shame helps to create “people who are weaker, more timid, less confident, less demanding, and hence more easily dominated” (Bartky 1990: 97).

If one believes in the moral potentialities of shaming in general, it may be tempting in light of this consideration to divide its occurrences into two separate forms: just, and unjust. In the former circumstance, the ashamed person has committed a moral transgression, and is shamed as a result; in the latter, no moral transgression has been committed by the ashamed person, and they most likely experience shame as a result of disrupting arbitrary, oppressive norms. This is a distinction often favoured by political resisters, who have historically endorsed ‘non-oppressive’ shaming practices for their “apparent clarity and ability to convey righteous indignation” (Locke 2007: 146). For example, Jill Locke cites Berenice Fisher, who argues that shaming white feminists can help remedy the racism and classism endemic to feminist circles; and also Jennifer Manion, who espouses updating traditionally shameful behaviours to be more progressive (like shaming a cisgender man for not ‘helping’ with housework). I think this clear-cut distinction between ‘just’ and ‘unjust’ shame is well-

intentioned in wanting to accommodate differentiations in victimhood status within shame experiences—I certainly have no desire to conflate the shaming of marginalised groups with the shame that, say, a perpetrator of great evil experiences. In my view, however, there are two important senses in which oppression-based shaming has much more in common with the general shaming of individuals than we might think.

Firstly, the dichotomy between ‘just’ and ‘unjust’ shame rests on a narrow-minded conception of innocence and guilt which, to borrow from Primo Levi, “shuns [the] half-tints and complexities” of reality (2013: 32). Both Claudia Card and Lisa Tessman have recently emphasised the importance of remembering that moral guilt is rarely a matter of black and white; that “many parties are both victims of some evils *and* perpetrators of others” (Card 2002: 188, my emphasis). This “gray zone” has most famously been identified by Levi, a Holocaust survivor and author, in his memoir *The Drowned and the Saved*. Here, he details the profoundly disturbing case of the *Sonderkommando* group in the Nazi extermination camps. These “crematorium ravens” were camp prisoners elected to oversee the cremation of their fellow prisoners once they had been gassed, in order to gain some privileges. They did not escape the fate of the other prisoners, but merely postponed it; in fact, every few months the squad was replaced, the new one initiated through burning the corpses of its predecessors. It is hopefully clear how insufficient the notion of ‘victimhood’ proves to be to us here. In their book *The Empire of Trauma*, Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman (2009) argue that, following the Holocaust, this notion of victimhood allowed us to socially inscribe the extraordinary pain endured by survivors within collective memory. However, as they aptly point out: it was “still inextricably linked to the moral qualities ascribed to survivors—their *innocence* and their weakness in the face of the brutal forces that overwhelmed them—and to the empathy they inspired” (95, my emphasis). This shortcoming is, I believe, partly why Levi asks that we suspend our judgement of the *Sonderkommando*, who “were deprived of even the solace of innocence” (2013: 52)—lest we find ourselves unable to acknowledge their pain at the same time as we condemn their misdeeds. It should not be forgotten that the Holocaust is, of course, *sui generis*. In a sense, however, the extreme example of the *Sonderkommando* points to a more pervasive feature of human morality. Given “the fact that oppressions interlock,” as Tessman writes, “many people are both the agents and the victims of oppression” (2005: 122). Most, if not all, of us have in some moments perpetrated wrongs and at other times been the victim of them; thus, there is one sense in which we are all—in some way, at some stage—inhabitants of this grey zone.

The global nature of the negative self-assessment made in shame means that the emotion does not discriminate between these morally innocent or

guilty parts of ourselves, but rather encompasses them all. This means that shame is, in a sense, always also shame for that which we are not morally culpable, or are perhaps even victims. Since this is one reason that the shaming of oppressed groups is considered so immoral, it strikes me as an element of the shame experience which is particularly difficult to justify. Even if one could identify a case of moral guilt with no claims to innocence or victimhood, the globality of shame appears rather ill-equipped to target specific behaviours or traits. How does one shame a perpetrator exclusively for their transgression, when feeling shame entails a global assessment of the whole self? As Brenè Brown observes, shame attaches not only to the ‘bad’ parts of ourselves, but also to the good; in targeting the whole of *who we are*, shame also “corrodes the very part of us that believes we can change and do better” (2012: 71).⁶ For this reason, I propose that we look at shame through the lens of psychological impact, as is done within recent theory on trauma. This overcomes the dilemma at hand because it encompasses, rather than collapses, distinctions of innocence and guilt—and everything before, beyond, and in between that we find in the grey zone. This is because the notion of trauma itself is able to articulate diametrically opposed values. Fassin and Rechtman (2009) elaborate:

The broad application of the concept of trauma makes it possible today to both *recognize and go beyond the status of victim*. . . . By applying the same psychological classification to the person who suffers violence, the person who commits it, and the person who witnesses it, the concept of trauma profoundly transforms the moral framework of what constitutes humanity. (23, 280, my emphasis)

In the next section, I explore the second shortcoming of the distinction between ‘just’ and ‘unjust’ shame; namely, that shame, like trauma, is a form of moral harm that causes psychological damage to its bearer, irrespective of their level of wrongdoing.

II.2.3. Shame as a Moral Harm

Contrary to what many have argued, I consider it unlikely that shame can really be used for ‘good.’ Primarily, this is because of its psychologically damaging effects. While shame may occur in varying degrees of intensity, it is considered an especially intense emotion. Many psychologists and philosophers have recognised the detrimental effects it can have on the psyche of the ashamed individual, and on their resultant treatment of others. For example, Zlatan Filipovic writes that “shame has been considered as equivalent to trauma, an

6. Some scholars have claimed that it is precisely *because* of shame’s global nature that it is more morally useful in addressing one’s character than guilt (see, for example, Williams 1993: 94; Nussbaum 2004: 181). For a critique of this position, see Bonnie Mann (2014: 112–14).

affective watershed that drains our agency and sinks us to the bottom of the world . . . an inhibitive power of disturbance” (2017: 99). I contend that, like trauma, shame can generally be characterised as having a negative effect on one’s wellbeing. Shame is both pervasive and insidious—even in cases where one’s shame is felt to be relatively mild, for instance, its more painful effects are often being unconsciously circumvented or hidden from one’s conscious awareness through avoidance or denial (Lewis 1971: 38–39; Pattison 2000: 44, 113–17; Dolezal and Lyons 2017: 258). Since shame occurs in a person when their desire for social connection has failed to be met, it is in that sense the disappointment of an anticipated positive outcome. Having our expectations met, especially in early childhood, is essential to our sense of coherence in ourselves and in the world. This is why shame effectively shatters “trust in the dependability of one’s immediate world,” which also “means loss of trust in other persons, who are the transmitters and interpreters of that world” (Lynd 1958: 45, 47). Indeed, deep, unremitting shame is overwhelmingly present in most mental illnesses. Morrison argues that many of the common symptoms of “depression—withdrawal, low self-esteem, rejection sensitivity—reflect the deep belief in personal unworthiness, weakness, and defects” that constitute shame (1996: 183). He cites Melvin R. Lanksy, who goes so far as to contend that “Shame—not guilt, depression, anger, stress, or unspecified psychic pain—is . . . the most significant affect for the clinician to consider with the suicidal patient” (1992: 196). Shame is further akin to trauma in that, unless resolved, it is often passed down generationally. Morrison observes that most shaming practices in parenting come from “Parents who are insecure or easily shamed themselves,” and whose shame-based convictions would often have formed in the context of their own upbringing (1996: 155). According to Daniela F. Sieff, this is because “our identity, and implicit sense of who we are, is created through the mirror we receive from parents, siblings and significant others. If any of them carry unconscious and unprocessed shame they have no choice but to inadvertently pass it on. Psychologically, there are no secrets in families” (2014: 27). The psychological damage so often caused to us by shame also interferes with our ability to fulfil our moral duty toward others which, as we will see, in turn impedes our capacity to flourish.

Drawing upon a eudaemonistic framework of neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics,⁷ I argue that shame in general constitutes a form of moral damage which prevents flourishing, and that its deliberate invocation within others is therefore difficult to morally justify. Virtue ethics, as Tessman writes, “assumes that the pursuit of flourishing—qualified in certain ways and especially by the requirement that one develop and maintain the virtues—is morally praiseworthy” (2005: 3). Tessman, who uses Aristotelian and neo-Aristotelian virtue eth-

7. As it is formulated by Lisa Tessman (2005).

ics to think about oppression and liberatory political struggles, acknowledges that this ethical framework is one which requires some reform, given that it “is in its unfiltered [or original] state not suited for feminist or other liberatory purposes” (3). Hence she adds an important detail to the theory—namely, that moral damage (such as that resulting from oppression) can prevent an individual from properly developing or exercising virtues in the first place, and therefore from flourishing. Here, then, the role of wellbeing is twofold: one must heal sufficiently from moral damage in order to act virtuously, and, as Aristotle emphasised, one must act virtuously in order to truly flourish—the end goal of virtue ethics.

Shame in general can be seen as constituting a form of moral damage. This notion can be conceptualised in a few different ways—for example, Ned Dobos distinguishes between moral trauma, which refers to the debilitating inundation of one’s moral emotions, and moral degradation, which is the corruption or corrosion of one’s moral emotions. The moral injury to which I refer is the former kind, in which the feeling of being “morally tainted” impedes upon a person’s ability “to function or to live a flourishing life” (2015: 75). This struggle results from both the psychological damage that shame so often causes, and its subsequent interference with one’s ability to act virtuously. It is a widely acknowledged observation that shame disables our initiatives (Nathanson 1987: 25; Mann 2014: 113–14; Filipovic 2017: 100). Locke has described this “poisonous consequence” of shame as “the way in which it overwhelms the subject so that she is unable to think beyond herself” (2007: 151). Unlike the moral conscience behind guilt, the narcissistic self-focus of shame is not conducive to exercising one’s capacity for empathy or reparative action. Rather, it often traumatises those it affects, leaving them unable to access basic ethical processes. As Luna Dolezal and Barry Lyons have written, shame in this sense “overrides rational thought and moral reasoning. . . . [A] shamed individual often does not have the cognitive resources to act as a responsive and responsible agent, authentically attuned to the needs of itself and its community of others” (2017: 258; see also Zahavi 2014: 222). In this sense, shame can thus be understood as consistent with the notion of moral harm, defined by Tessman as that which interferes with one’s ability to cultivate the “certain sort of a self that one ought to be” (2005: 4). Since under a virtue ethics framework one must act virtuously in order to flourish, shame in this sense is likely to impede upon a person’s capacity for happiness—hence the difficulty in asserting that it is morally justified.

Some critics of eudaemonism argue that a moral agent whose end goal is their own happiness appears selfish (Hursthouse and Pettigrove 2018). On the contrary, the highest good espoused by this framework is not a happiness resulting from mere personal or material gain, and certainly not one which can

be realised at the expense of others. Rather, it constitutes a kind of ‘flourishing’ which is intimately tied to leading a virtuous life. Free from the narcissistic confines of moral damage, the moral agent who flourishes does so because they act virtuously towards others, fulfilling their moral responsibility to these others and to themselves. In this sense, virtue ethics does not aim toward the wellbeing of just one person, but of many—for we would only value acting with virtue toward others insofar as it strengthens their chances of being free from moral harm, and therefore, of flourishing.

Psychological damage aside, many would still contend that shame remains a useful social force. Some proponents of ‘good’ shame, for example, argue that the propensity to experience shame denotes a certain capacity for moral or social sophistication. Hannah Arendt (1958: 72) argues that shame is necessary in upholding the concept of privacy by respecting the boundaries between public and private, while Cheshire Calhoun (2004: 129) sees shame as signalling moral maturity by symbolising that one shares a moral world with others. And Krista K. Thomason asks, “If we would be better off without shame, then why are shameless people so obnoxious? There seems to be *something wrong* with the person who never feels shame” (2018: 4–5; see also Nussbaum 2004: 215). While these arguments for shame praise its specific role in the socialisation process, others simply commend the positive human desire for love and acceptance they think shame reveals (see, for example, Ramos 2012: 108–21). There are several good reasons to be wary of such positive characterisations of shame. Firstly, the fact that infants experience shame means that it can hardly imply a kind of moral sophistication. As Nussbaum writes, “shame is on the scene already even before we are aware of the ‘normal’ perspective of the particular social value-system within which we dwell” (2004: 173; see also Hollier 2019: 86). Secondly, even if shaming did lead to desirable social outcomes, this does not mean that it carries positive moral potential. Like feelings of humiliation and horror, one’s ability to experience the emotion may indicate a level of successful socialisation. However, this does not in itself justify the moral harm it causes, nor the coercive means through which it is often implemented. Furthermore, since shame is the unintended loss of social connection, it does not represent something affirming about humanity—the fulfilment of our need for love—but rather its absence. When we speak of shame as indicative of a person’s social awareness or maturity, as Calhoun does, we neglect the role of emotional empathy and understanding that should instead belong to the process of socialisation (Stolorow 2013). Other proponents of shame as a tool for ‘good’ commonly argue that it at the very least causes the ashamed to recognise the moral fault in their actions.

This view hopes that the ashamed person is motivated by their shame to repent, and to adjust their subsequent behaviour accordingly—a characterisa-

tion of shame which, I argue, is better used to describe *guilt*. Philosophers are increasingly recognising that the feeling of guilt, which is attached to a specific action, motivates its bearer toward repentance, while shame, which concerns the whole self, moves them instead to hide.⁸ This is because guilt, as the feeling of having committed a wrong, evokes a concomitant desire for another's forgiveness through which that feeling may be resolved; a resolution which, as Morrison notes, "can only come through *confessing*, not *hiding*" (1996: 11–12; see also Card 2002: 206–07; Locke 2007: 149; Hollier 2019: 85–86). Shame, on the other hand, is rarely associated with a desire for forgiveness. As Helen Block Lewis writes, shame demands "That you be a better person, and not be ugly, and not be stupid, and not have failed" (cited in Karen 1992: 5). These feelings are unlikely to be resolved through forgiveness from others; how can one apologise and be forgiven for being 'ugly' without further validating the shame one feels surrounding one's appearance? Not to mention that the fear of social retribution evoked by shame is hardly conducive to open confession. Rather, "The only thing that suits [shame] at this moment is for you to be nonexistent," to disappear (Lewis, cited in Karen 1992: 5). This consequence of shame has been widely recognised, particularly when it is used as a tool of oppression. However, this highlights a contradiction within the political resistance movements that espouse shaming practices against oppressors. As Locke has pointed out, these movements hope that in shaming perpetrators they will adhere to more progressive social norms; yet, "As the scholarship and activism of feminists and racial, ethnic, religious, and sexual minorities make clear, repetitive shame wears on the subject's ability to inhabit, much less participate in and transform, the political world" (2007: 153). The use of shaming for moral regulation is difficult to justify when shame is unlikely to motivate its bearer to atone for moral transgressions. Instead, it seems plausible to say that, when we shame others in order to elicit their recognition of personal wrongdoing (and hopefully their subsequent repentance), what we should really be asking them to feel is not shame, but guilt.

Furthermore, if repentance ever does result from shame, it is motivated by fear, rather than by conscience. Since it originates in social disconnection, "shame seems to be more about threats to our reputation or social standing than about our moral failings" (Thomason 2018: 2; see also Rotenstreich 1965: 67–68). Psychoanalyst Robert Stolorow uses Sartre's keyhole scenario as an example. Here, the peeping tom only experiences shame at hearing the footsteps of another, and at the resultant possibility of their moral transgression having been discovered, not by virtue of realising that spying on another violates that person's privacy (this, Stolorow argues, would be guilt). Any repentance that

8. Of course, the two often accompany each other and can be difficult to distinguish (see Lewis 1971: 426–27; Stocker 2007: 146–53; Zahavi 2014: 221).

person could make that was driven by their feeling of shame would therefore be inauthentic: “To repent for being vulnerable, for example, is absurd” (2013). This explains why shaming practices are so morally ineffective. Even when it achieves the intended outcome of repentance, shaming can only ever hope to influence another’s behaviour in a merely regulative sense (controlling behaviour output through fear of punishment); rather than a constitutive one (reshaping behaviour input through moral incentive). Since shame cannot be relieved through confessing or forgiveness in the way that guilt can, shaming practices also fail to properly reward behaviour when it *is* ethical; a shortcoming which, as Card points out, “interfere[s] with the possibility of redemption by achievement” (2002: 206–07). If the ashamed individual is therefore not morally incentivised, in a constitutive sense, to act virtuously towards others, it becomes difficult to see how one might justify shaming practices on the basis of moral effectiveness.

Of course, one might accept that shaming another is unlikely to result in a positive moral outcome, while nonetheless considering it justified on the view that the shame is deserved. This kind of retributivist thinking, which holds that individuals deserve to suffer as a result of their wrongdoing, regardless of the consequences of this suffering, is the leading justification for criminal punishment in neoliberal societies. The carceral system does not operate on premises of reparation or restoration, but instead functions almost exclusively on the basis that punishment in response to crime is itself inherently good or just. The high rates of recidivism alone point toward the fact that sending wrongdoers to jail is designed to satisfy punitive, rather than reparative, motivations. As the recent work of prison abolitionists and anti-carceral scholars demonstrates, however, the notion that perpetrators deserve to be punished in proportion to their wrongdoing faces several moral complications (see, for example, Kim et al. 2018; Ben-Moshe 2020; Montford and Taylor 2022). Central to such abolitionist accounts is the recognition that, like the politics of shame, the politics of incarceration serves to maintain existing power structures insofar as it frames acts of wrongdoing as individual events that are disconnected from wider structural issues. As Debra Parkes explains: “By punishing interpersonal violence with state violence through incarceration we locate the responsibility for that violence solely in individuals and we leave untouched the structures and cultures that facilitate and perpetuate it, such as heteropatriarchy, colonial dispossession, white supremacy, capitalism, and the like” (2022: 156–57). The same is often true of shaming, which holds perpetrators (individuals or groups) accountable but does not itself entail any kind of recognition, or therefore redress, of the systemic issues which led to their perpetration in the first place (Soldatic and Morgan 2017: 114; Maglione 2019: 665–67).⁹ This individuali-

9. For criticism along these lines of the #MeToo movement, see Alison Phipps (2019: 64–72).

sation of wrongdoing highlights a problem with the retributivist justification of punishment, which is that it relies on the punishable individual being held entirely morally responsible for their actions, and is thus unable to account for the influence of forces beyond the individual's control. Thus, as Henrique Carvalho and Anastasia Chamberlen conclude: "If punishment provides any remedy at all to social problems, it is one that deals only with certain symptoms of these problems, never with the causes" (2018: 228; see also Waller 2019: 77–79; Caruso 2020: 15–16). In any case, it is ultimately unclear how the decision to inflict suffering and moral harm upon others in response to their wrongdoing—even, and especially, when this does *not* result in a positive moral outcome—is a choice that moves us toward a more morally just world.

III. The Moral Desirability of Different Responses to Shame

III.1. Compliance

The first response to shame that I explore, compliance, is perhaps the most common reaction one can have (Stolorow 2013; Thomason 2018: 118–19). Although it manifests in myriad ways, this reaction is characterised by the ashamed person's acceptance of their shame as an accurate reflection of who they are, and their subsequent compliance with its demands. Most often, this is done in order to maintain the social bond with the shaming Other which is threatened by the shame; to avoid the emotional pain associated with social isolation (Morrison 1996: 128–29; Doctors 2017: 49). By accommodating the shame in this way, the ashamed person effectively adopts and internalises the Other's 'shaming gaze.' The paradox here is that, by accepting the pronouncement of shame, they attempt to convince others of their own worth (to win their acceptance) at the same time as they validate their shame, and thus internalise the view that they are unworthy. Psychoanalysts who have observed this kind of behaviour in early childhood refer to it as "pathological accommodation" (Brandchaft 2007: 667–87). In their observations, children whose caregivers continually fail to acknowledge or validate their emotional experiences sense that the attachment bond to their caregiver has become threatened, as in the experience of shame. They then attempt to ensure their own emotional safety by adjusting "to what is available in their attachment relationship"—that is, by adopting "the views and feelings of a parent at the expense of [their] own self-experience" (Doctors 2017: 47). Complying with shame in adulthood similarly involves a degree of self-subjugation, in which we sacrifice our own wellbeing to maintain social approval. As Donald Nathanson writes:

It is too simple to say that shame involves a moment of exposure . . . that we handle by 'withdrawing in embarrassment.' [Compliance with] Shame is also

the way we let people take advantage of us in order that we avoid the feeling of isolation, and the way we escape 'hurt feelings' . . . demean[ing] ourselves in order to maintain association with others, ranging from simple deference to pathological masochism. (1993: 554)

Accommodating shame can also be an attempt to undermine the sense of powerlessness it evokes within us, insofar as it encourages us to oblige shame's demand that we hide. As Thomason notes, "If we can remove ourselves from sight or if we can hide the thing that causes us shame, we can regain a sense of power or control" (2018: 118–19). In a similar vein, survivors of sexual violence sometimes subconsciously feel ashamed that they are somehow responsible for what happened to them, not just out of social pressure, but in order to feel that they have some agency over what happened (and, crucially, whether or not it could happen again). It is important to make clear, however, that any 'power' we might feel over our shame through compliance is a false one. In pathological accommodation, the alleviation of unpleasant feelings is often that which result from an avoidance, and therefore an implicit validation, of our shame, rather than its dissolution.

The life story of Rahel Varnhagen provides us with a real-world example of how one can be compelled to adhere to shame. Jack Danielian and Patricia Gianotti observe that "Forsaking the authentic self is easily understood in light of the pain one suffers when encountering feelings of shame" (2012: 156). This is even more true for victims of structural oppression. Rahel, who is the target of the anti-Semitic racism popular within nineteenth-century Berlin, is made to feel tremendous shame over her Jewish origins. She does "not forget this shame for *a single* second"; overwhelmed by self-hatred and despair, Rahel feels that her "life is a slow bleeding to death" (cited in Arendt 1997: 175, 88). In spite of her many efforts, Rahel's shame isolates her: she finds herself unable to form lasting friendships and constantly feels set apart from the world. German-Jewish assimilation was appealing to Jews in the nineteenth century because it offered to alleviate the effects of their marginalisation. Rahel, like many of her Jewish contemporaries, is understandably desperate to gain the approval of anti-Semitic high society. Like the pathologically accommodating child, she believes that, in order to belong to her community, she must comply with the shame they pronounce upon her. In Arendt's words, "she needed only to annihilate herself and her origin, her 'sensuous' existence" (1997: 183). Accordingly, Rahel seeks to assimilate into German society, to conceal that part of herself which is most shameful: her "infamous birth." She converts to Christianity, marrying a Gentile, August Varnhagen, and changing her last name (from Levin). Through her compliance, Rahel comes to internalise the same views of her own unworthiness held by those who shame her. Now, "An-

ti-Semitic mores coursed through her body” (Locke 2007: 151). As is often the case with shame accommodation, this course of action ultimately fails Rahel.

Since Rahel’s assimilation is focused on accommodating or avoiding her shame, rather than redressing it, it fails as a genuine solution. In assimilating, Rahel attempts to deny aspects of herself, and thus the world, which she is in fact powerless to control. Arendt warns us against this form of denial, reminding us that should we try to “circumvent unpleasantness,” history will always “take its revenge” (cited in Cutting-Gray 1991: 240). This proves true for Rahel, whose attempt to avoid her shame through compliance is not ultimately successful but, in fact, only makes things worse. This is unsurprising, given that the very character of denial or avoidance is that it does not redress issues, but rather unwisely attempts to bypass them. “[W]hether self-delusion or erasure of outward signs,” Kimberley Maslin observes, this method “never allows an individual to [truly] escape” (2013: 87; see also Cutting-Gray 1991: 233). Rahel’s form of avoidance, her attempted assimilation, is reminiscent of the Heideggerian concept of ‘fallenness,’ which arises out of one’s denial of the contingency and inescapability of one’s own ontic situation. In fallenness, observes Maslin, one seeks escape from reality into the inauthentic, becoming preoccupied with mundane trivialities such as “idle chatter and material objects”—the “everyday mode of taking care of things” (2013: 84). According to Heidegger, fallenness constitutes a tragic move away from the search for transcendence and authentic selfhood. Rahel’s version of the inauthentic appears to be her increasing tendency toward narcissistic introspection, in which she develops an “exclusively self-referential” and “insatiable preoccupation with [her]self” (Maslin 2013: 87; Cutting-Gray 1991: 234). It is clear that this introspectiveness is a result of Rahel’s failure to address her shame. As I have mentioned, narcissistic tendencies are consistent with shame generally, wherein one feels isolated, but also exposed and therefore, in a sense, unique; as psychologists know, however, this is especially true of those who deal with their shame through avoidance. “Narcissism,” as Michael Lewis said, “is the ultimate attempt to avoid shame” (cited in Danielian and Gianotti 2012: 155).

Rahel’s shame compliance is ultimately one of great self-sacrifice—in accommodating her shame through assimilation, she ends up validating, and therefore intensifying, it. Pathological accommodation “comes at a great cost” to the one who initiates it (Doctors 2017: 54). For Rahel, this is because she must shame herself in order to comply with the social demands of, and thus be accepted by, those who invoke it in the first place. This is most aptly demonstrated by the “double-edged sword of assimilation” with which Rahel is eventually forced to reckon (Maslin 2013: 91). This is the inescapable paradox that was inherent to German-Jewish assimilation, in which the “Jews could be emancipated only if they confessed their inferiority. At the same time, as Jews,

they would have to prove how exceptional and human they were” (Leibovici 2007: 915). And yet, despite all their efforts, their appeal “I am not like them” would never be heard; they would never truly belong to the society whose acceptance they craved. This is what Arendt means when she writes that “In a society on the whole hostile to the Jews . . . it is possible to assimilate only by assimilating to anti-Semitism also” (1997: 253, 256). What Rahel fails to recognise is that, in attempting to avoid or deny her shame in this way, she ends up strengthening its hold over herself. This course of action only serves to isolate Rahel further, as the very racial discrimination she sought to escape from dominates the world she has desperately tried to become part of, and she now feels even more alone in her nonconformism. Thus her “effort to escape . . . only destines her to existential homelessness and alienation” (Cutting-Gray 1991: 240). This psychological struggle is compounded by the fact that, although Rahel succeeds somewhat in concealing her Jewishness, at least for a time, the global reach of her shame means that it can hardly be localised to one part of herself. As Arendt writes: “Rahel’s struggle against . . . having been born a Jew, very rapidly became a struggle against *herself*.” Not only can assimilation offer no solution for this—“she could not very well deny her existence”—it only exacerbates her obsession with self-despair (1997: 92). This has clear moral consequences too, for Rahel’s insatiable need for introspection leaves her unable to consider the needs of others or to resist her shame in a political sense. Rahel herself admits this: “Every step I want to take and cannot does not remind me of the general woes of humanity, which I want to oppose. Instead I feel my *special misfortune* still, and double, and tenfold” (Arendt 1997: 251). While it is understandable that Rahel chose to respond to her shame with compliance, this path unfortunately only strengthened her belief in her own unworthiness.

III.2. Anger

If compliance is meant to defend oneself against the onset of shame, then it could be said that anger is designed to attack it. Both psychologists and philosophers have noted the common trajectory from shame to anger; a phenomenon that Helen Block Lewis has famously labelled “humiliated fury” or “shame-rage” (1971: 430). In this case, the person who experiences shame reacts with mild to extreme anger, often directed toward others whose actions have triggered the onset of shame. Although it may be seen as rather disparate from compliance, anger can likewise be seen as an attempt to oblige the shame-induced desire to escape or to hide, since it masks one’s true feelings (Morrison 1996: 12; Hollier 2019: 90). At first blush, it might not seem a logical way to avoid shame’s painful effects. “If I am worried about how I look to

others when I feel shame,” asks Thomason, “then why would I want to look even worse in their eyes by doing something aggressive?” (2018: 119). However, anger represents an appealing emotion to replace shame with because it is arguably furthest from the feeling of powerlessness that shame engenders. As in shame accommodation, the angry individual is thus attempting to avoid the painfulness of their shame: to not only hide it behind another, less embarrassing emotion but, crucially, to escape its wrath by momentarily reasserting the sense of control felt to be lost in the vulnerability of shame (Nathanson 1993: 554; Morrison 1996: 7, 12, 198). This sense of control is not only that over oneself, but over others—anger often shifts blame onto other people and punishes those whose actions are seen to have triggered the shame in the first place. Replacing the weakness of shame with the strength of anger, this response is often one which aims to “*engage the battle* rather than risk suffering a sense of self-loss” (Doctors 2017: 54). Even if one’s aggression causes hatred or resentment in others, Thomason points out that such reactions at least assume the person they are directed at is a moral agent; the ridicule or disgust that meets an ashamed person does not (2018: 119–20; see also Spelman 1989: 266).

While few might hasten to defend the shame-fuelled rage of the privileged, many consider anger a necessary tool against shame for targets of oppression. Anger in response to shame is perhaps most common to white, cisgender men, primarily because their aggression is often culturally rewarded. For them, most forms of powerlessness are seen as humiliating, while expressions of anger, and sometimes even violence, are socially acceptable. This is why “the purpose of [their] violence is to banish shame and replace it with pride” (Hollier 2019: 89). The extreme violence against women and others that this so often leads to is clearly morally indefensible. But anger can also be utilised against shame by targets of oppression. As Tessman observes, anger is commonly championed as a virtue essential to the act of political resistance. Here, it is seen to not only provide a powerful motivation for activism, but to most effectively resist one’s unjust subordination to privileged others. Unlike that of perpetrators, the anger of victims or survivors is an act of rebellion because it “marks oneself as the [oppressor’s] equal, as someone to be respected as a moral agent” (2005: 120; see also Peterie et al. 2019: 796). Historically, it has widely been considered unacceptable for oppressed groups to have a voice at all, let alone one as critical and demanding as that of anger (Perlow 2018: 103–04). Since shame is often used to oppress marginalised groups, it seems to follow that this act of insubordination would be useful against it. However, when anger alone is used to respond to shame—even oppression-based shame—it carries with it several concerns.

Even within political resistance movements, it seems unlikely that anger on its own can be successfully deployed to address or dispel shame. The most basic concern against using anger relates to the effectiveness of its mobilisation: it is notoriously difficult to determine or to control the degree to which one is, or should be, angry; it is also very easily mistargeted (Tessman 2005: 119–22). Even if these variables could be effectively managed, untempered anger usually carries a burden for its bearer in that it can be corrosive to their wellbeing. Often, “anger too is a form of suffering. . . . [It] generates a hardness in the heart, general restlessness, and all the associated disadvantages of a cruel mind” (Yeshe and Rinpoche, cited in Stabile 2012: 169). Although anger is often considered preferable to passivity in the face of oppression, Tessman argues that this does not necessarily make it praiseworthy in itself—in her view, it would still “unlikely be a part of the good life that liberatory movements are trying to enable” (2005: 124; see also Grier and Cobbs 1968: 209–10). Anger can also be psychologically burdensome for those it is directed against. While in some cases this could be seen as warranted (see Spelman 1989: 266), when anger alone is used to deal with shame, it often involves shaming others. As John Deigh writes, citing Nussbaum: the “fragile ego . . . finds affirmation of its own precarious sense of worth in the humiliation and dehumanisation of others” (2006: 411). A further shortcoming of using anger as one’s only response to shame is that this rarely succeeds in addressing or dispelling shame.

The case study offered by Melvin Lansky in his chapter “Murder of a Spouse: A Family Systems Viewpoint” offers a real-life example of how anger can manifest as a response to shame. Lansky’s psychiatric evaluation centres around a couple, Mr and Mrs C, and their baby, who are conjointly interviewed after Mr C has presented at the hospital during a “nervous breakdown,” admitting to a history of depression and severe physical abuse against his spouse, Mrs C (1992: 184). As is clear from the chapter’s title, Mr C’s violence eventually escalates to disastrous heights—after months of “threatening his wife with guns, knives, and blunt weapons . . . [as well as] actual violence,” he finally murders her, only six weeks after the interview. That the husband’s violence originates in unchecked feelings of great inadequacy is evidenced by the interview script. In this sense, Mr C fits the profile of most domestic homicide perpetrators, whose lives are “steeped in shame—particularly [that of] compromised masculinity” (Websdale, cited in Hollier 2019: 84). This appears to stem partly from his traumatic upbringing—his father was a “stern disciplinarian” who abused both him and his mother—and from his perceived inferiority as a man who is unable to “keep up with [his wife] academically, vocationally, or sexually” (Lansky 1992: 181, 192). Mrs C appears to not only have difficulty empathising with his troubled past; she also overtly shames

him several times during the interview (183, 184, 188). Lansky's psychiatric explanation of their dynamic is thus: "overt shaming restor[ed] the narcissistic equilibrium of one spouse (Mrs C) but capsiz[ed] that of the other (Mr C), who, in turn, reestablished his feeling of narcissistic intactness by violent acts. His unacknowledged shame turned to rage, then to violence" (191). The fact that Mr C had planned to suicide after murdering Mrs C is testament to his lack of self-worth.

Like pathological accommodation, anger often constitutes a form of shame avoidance which ultimately validates the original pronouncement of shame. If one fails to explicitly acknowledge or address one's shame, the sense of relief provided by anger is usually short-lived—for, as Nathanson reminds us, "no one can really avoid shame successfully" (1992: 359). The example of Mr C attests to this. While an act of violence momentarily "provide[s] him with an opportunity to reverse and triumph over his basic sense of shame," he is unable to recognise this weakness; indeed, "consider[ing] the sources of his vulnerability frightens [him]" (Lansky 1992: 193, 187). It is easier for him to be angry, even violent, than to be hurt. Mr C's shame-induced rage hides a deeper truth: that at the heart of his struggle lies a basic vulnerability, his unfulfilled desire for love and belonging. Inside, he is "weak and . . . relentlessly attache[d]" to others from whom he craves acceptance (191). Despite the dominance he may exert over Mrs C in his violence, in reality he is far from powerful. By not only acting from a place of unacknowledged shame, but obliging with its demands to hide or escape, his anger does little to assuage his shame—instead, it ends up implicitly validating it. In failing to overcome this inability to realise his self-worth and to subsequently embrace his vulnerabilities, Mr C effectively allows shame to rule his actions. The avoidant, violent behaviour that results does not just have disastrous consequences for him, the bearer of shame: the collateral damage is the life of his spouse and the wellbeing of their four-month-old baby. I will now turn to an alternative way of responding to shame—the practice of emotional vulnerability.

III.3. The Practice of Emotional Vulnerability

Emotional vulnerability is characterised here as a conscious attempt to redress one's shame by openly acknowledging the emotion, and thus embracing the vulnerability underlying it. As historian Peter N. Stearns observes, the notion of "speaking shame" is one increasingly favoured by psychologists (2017: 105–07). Unlike the previous two responses to shame, this approach deliberately rebels against the demands of shame that one conceal oneself (and, often, one's shame) from the world. Instead, it involves embracing the very aspect of ourselves which allowed us to experience shame in the first place, and

of which we are consequently most ashamed: our fundamental, inescapable *vulnerability*. This “defiant appropriation” of one’s vulnerability effectively invalidates the pronouncement of shame (Burrus 2011: 151). This is because shame is affirmed through our concealment of ourselves, in which we act out the belief that our unfulfilled need for acceptance reveals us to be unworthy of love (Morrison 1996: 112; Brown 2010: 40; Danielian and Gianotti 2012: 182; Stearns 2017: 106). To openly speak the need for love at the heart of one’s shame, on the other hand, is to assert contra shame that one *is* worthy of social recognition; that despite character flaws, social abnormalities, or even past transgressions, the judgement of shame is ultimately invalid. As Virginia Burrus writes, embracing one’s mark of shame is an act of rebellion that “both contests shaming—*shames shame*—and renders it unexpectedly productive, for the stigma opens the site of a yet-to-be-defined identity” (2011: 151). Given its tendency toward openness, I would argue that this ‘new’ identity is likely to be closer to one’s authentic self—the realisation of which is often obstructed in shame.

The emotional vulnerability at the heart of shame cannot be ‘overcome’ in any authentic sense—it is an inescapable and highly necessary aspect of human intimacy. When it refers to emotionality, the term ‘vulnerability’ describes that which is susceptible to emotional damage, pain, or loss.¹⁰ Culturally, we often perceive this susceptibility to be directly equated with weakness and, consequently, to be undesirable and even pitiable. This is unsurprising, given patriarchal preoccupations with dominance and mastery which privilege rationality over emotionality (see Fineman 2008: 8; Drichel 2013: 5; Butler 2016: 26). It also appears to derive from fears over the uncertainty of harm which is inherent to the state of vulnerability (Brown 2012: 30; Gilson 2014: 146). The resulting association between emotional vulnerability and weakness, however, is problematic. As Nussbaum reminds us, “mastery never really works” (2004: 194). Firstly, upholding emotional invulnerability as superior overlooks the fact that, as humans, we are necessarily inherently vulnerable. We constantly depend on others to fulfil our social and emotional needs—when these needs fail to be met, we suffer; and even when they are met, we cannot guarantee this will last. “Vulnerability,” as Brenè Brown says, “is the core of all emotions and feelings” (2012: 30). Secondly, viewing emotional exposure as weakness also neglects the fact that vulnerability is essential to fulfilling our need for intimacy. Hiding oneself in an attempt to avoid feelings like shame comes at an emotional cost: it insulates one from being truly seen—and therefore, loved and accepted. As Burrus writes, “One who seeks, however vainly, the impenetrable cloak of total privacy cannot be *known* any more than [they] can be

10. See the second entry on ‘vulnerability’ in the Oxford English Dictionary. See also Mackenzie, Rogers, and Dodds 2014: 20; Oliver 2015: 479.

shamed” (2011: 152). Addressing one’s shame through emotional vulnerability is therefore not only conducive to the intimacy that the ashamed individual craves; it is also necessary to self-knowledge. “Repressed shame must be experienced,” writes Robert Karen, “if we are to know ourselves more fully . . . to come to terms with the good, the bad, and the unique of what we are” (1992: 55). In this sense, a move away from shame is one toward greater authenticity; an increased understanding and acknowledgement of one’s ‘true’ self. For Stolorow, this is “a shift from a preoccupation with how one is seen by others to a pursuit of *what really matters* to one as an individual” (2011: 286, my emphasis); for Morrison, “a new willingness to be observed *as we are* instead of *as we would like to be*” (1996: 112). The importance of self-authenticity in the face of shame is emphasised perhaps nowhere as much as in the work of psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor Victor Frankl.

Frankl’s book, *Man’s Search for Meaning*, offers one example of how the practice of emotional vulnerability can aid in redressing shame. As a psychiatrist, Frankl advocated a form of psychotherapy called logotherapy, which unlike traditional psychoanalysis does not view human fulfilment as being achieved through the mere gratification of the senses or the reconciliation between id, ego, and superego. Instead, it is primarily concerned with the human fulfilment of *meaning*—“not the meaning of life in general but rather the specific meaning of a person’s life at a given moment” (2004: 113). It was this pursuit of personal meaning that Frankl believed could bear “witness to the uniquely human potential . . . to transform a personal tragedy”—even that as horrific as imprisonment in the Nazi camps—“into a [personal] triumph” (116). As this harrowing passage, set on the long march to the camp work site one morning, illustrates:

[W]e stumbled on for miles, slipping on icy spots, supporting each other time and again, dragging one another up and onward, nothing was said, but we both knew: each of us was thinking of his wife. Occasionally I looked at the sky, where the stars were beginning to spread behind a dark bank of clouds. But my mind clung to my wife’s image . . . then more luminous than the sun which was beginning to rise.

A thought transfixed me: for the first time in my life I saw the truth. . . . The truth—that *love* is the ultimate and the highest goal to which [humans] can aspire (48–49).

Frankl’s pursuit of meaning embodies the practice of emotional vulnerability because it involves rejecting feelings like shame through the affirmation of both personal meaning and self-worth. Among the immense psychological difficulties faced by Holocaust survivors was the commonly-identified phe-

nomenon of ‘survivor shame’¹¹ which they sometimes experienced on account of being “alive in the place of another, at the expense of another” (Levi 2013: 87; see also Bettelheim 1980: 297–98). By imploring his fellow prisoners “to realize that life was still expecting something from them; something . . . [that] could not be done by anyone else,” (2004: 87) Frankl hoped to imbue their lives with a sense of purpose and, therefore, greater self-worth. Here, the emphasis was on *dignity* rather than shame. In reality, he writes, “there was no need to be ashamed of tears, for tears bore witness that a man had the greatest of courage, the *courage to suffer*” (86). It was this approach which Frankl saw as the best psychological aid against the prisoner’s extreme circumstances, giving them some semblance of agency in an otherwise powerless position.

Given its association with weakness, emotional vulnerability has traditionally been constructed in opposition to agency—when it is mobilised against shame, however, I would argue that the contrary is true. Firstly, since it actively resists the pronouncement of shame, this response increases one’s sense of self-worth and, therefore, one’s independence. “In shame,” Stolorow reminds us, “we are held hostage by the eyes of others; we belong, not to ourselves, but to them” (2011: 286). In this sense, practicing emotional vulnerability against shame does not actually undermine one’s moral agency, as might be expected; rather, it increases it. This response assumes a greater responsibility for one’s own healing than avoidance-based responses, and in this sense promotes emotional independence. Secondly, this response to shame entails a kind of subjecthood insofar as it represents an act of subversion. This is not only in the psychological sense of rebelling against shame itself; by deliberately embracing that which is (wrongly) seen as weak, and therefore shameful, emotional vulnerability also subverts arbitrary cultural norms. Burrus encapsulates this perfectly when she writes that the appropriation of one’s “mark of shame . . . manifests as a turning or conversion *within* shame, whereby the subject performs . . . the fragility of dignity as well as the dignity of fragility” (2011: 150–51). In any case, the need for intimacy can hardly be incompatible with moral agency in the sense that it is a need shared by almost all human beings. Frantz Fanon, for example, has argued that loving restores the agency of the oppressed subject because it returns them, in Kelly Oliver’s words, “to the world of subjectivity and *humanity*” (2001: 42–43, my emphasis). It is important to note here, as Oliver does, that any attempt to ground human subjectivity in this notion of vulnerability would do well to remember that, given social and political hierarchies, some are more vulnerable than others (2015: 474–75, 478). Indeed, even in the practice of emotional vulnerability, external impinge-

11. Also termed ‘survivor guilt’—as Ruth Leys (2007: 20) notes, some survivors such as Levi use the two terms interchangeably, although following the standard distinction this concept is more consistent with shame than guilt.

ments upon one's freedoms remain; and for particular groups these limitations are immense. Frankl's experiences in the camps attest to this in a unique sense. Although he claims that finding meaning in one's life offers one a sense of freedom, he is clear about its physical limitations. Far from "suggest[ing] that those who died were not strong enough to bear camp conditions, while the key to survival was maintaining a sense of destiny," as Timothy Pytell (2003: 102) has very narrowly concluded,¹² Frankl's work emphasises that the liberty one finds in embracing vulnerability "is not freedom from conditions, but it *is* freedom to take a stand toward the conditions" (2004: 132). This considered, Frankl's approach wisely prescribes embracing, rather than avoiding, one's deepest vulnerabilities, in order that one might finally liberate oneself from at least the shackles of shame.

IV. Conclusion

Shame is an inherently intersubjective emotion; one which, upon closer analysis, reflects the deeper emotional pain of failing to be loved or recognised. The moral question of shame's deserved place within our cultural landscape is an important one, not least because shame is spread disproportionately in its use as a tool of oppression against marginalised groups. Given the fact that the global nature of shame encompasses acts or parts of oneself for which one is not morally guilty, I have argued that non-oppressive shaming practices have more in common with oppression-based shaming than we might think. In fact, taking into account the moral and psychological damage caused by shame reveals the difficulty of morally justifying shaming practices at all. Under an eudaemonistic framework, the mental trauma that is often inflicted by shame can be considered immoral: it greatly impedes a person's ability to act virtuously toward others and, therefore, to ever truly flourish. Furthermore, shame is unlikely to promote genuinely moral behaviour because it motivates us through fear, rather than conscience; its influence on behaviour therefore only ever occurs in a regulatory, rather than a constitutive, sense.

Although relatively unexplored by philosophers, the question of how one responds to shame is an important moral consideration. Given my doubts over the moral permissibility of shaming in general, I have argued that a response which might successfully redress one's shame is morally preferable. As I have explored, attempts to deal with shame which are avoidance-based, such as compliance and anger, appear to be overwhelmingly unsuccessful. Both the failed German-Jewish assimilation of Rahel Varnhagen and the shame-fuelled homicide of Mr C demonstrate how concealing one's authentic self because one is ashamed often allows only momentary, superficial relief from the emo-

12. This criticism of Frankl's work also appears in Lawrence Langer (1982: 24).

tion's painful effects. On a deeper level, these approaches can also serve to validate the pronouncement of shame, and to thereby perpetuate it. The practice of emotional vulnerability, embodied by Frankl's logotherapy, is my proposed alternative—this response to shame seems capable of successfully addressing shame and resisting its demands for concealment. Through openness, this approach embraces, rather than denigrates, the vulnerable need for love which lies at the heart of shame, encouraging the pursuit of authenticity and personal meaning. Ultimately, it is this course of action which I find to be morally preferable—that which can guide us away from shame, and towards love.

University of Queensland
madeleineshield@gmail.com

Acknowledgments

Thank you to the audience of the Australasian Post-Humanities Digital Seminar Series where this paper was presented online in 2020, to three anonymous reviewers for this journal, and to Marguerite La Caze for her thorough and dedicated feedback on earlier versions of this paper.

References

- Agamben, Giorgio. 1999. "Shame, or On the Subject," in *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen, 87–135. New York: Zone Books.
- Arendt, Hannah. 1958. *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Arendt, Hannah. 1997 (1957). *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewess*, ed. Liliane Weissberg, trans. Richard and Clara Winston. London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Bartky, Sandra. 1990. *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression*. London: Routledge.
- Ben-Moshe, Liat. 2020. *Decarcerating Disability: Deinstitutionalization and Prison Abolition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
<https://doi.org/10.5749/j.ctv10vm2vw>
- Bettelheim, Bruno. 1980 (1952). *Surviving and Other Essays*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Biddle, Jennifer. 1997. "Shame," *Australian Feminist Studies* 12(26): 227–39.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08164649.1997.9994862>
- Brandchaft, Bernard. 2007. "Systems of Pathological Accommodation and Change in Analysis," *Psychoanalytic Psychology* 24(4): 667–87.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0736-9735.24.4.667>
- Brown, Brené. 2010. *The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are*. Center City: Hazelden Publishing.
- Brown, Brené. 2012. *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent and Lead*. New York: Gotham Books.

- Butler, Judith. 2016. "Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance," in *Vulnerability in Resistance*, ed. Judith Butler, Zeynep Gambetti, and Leticia Sabsay, 12–27. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11vc78r.6>
- Burrus, Virginia. 2011. *Saving Shame: Martyrs, Saints, and Other Abject Subjects*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Calhoun, Cheshire. 2004. "An Apology for Moral Shame," *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 12(2): 127–46. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9760.2004.00194.x>
- Card, Claudia. 2002. *The Atrocity Paradigm: A Theory of Evil*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/0195145089.001.0001>
- Caruso, Gregg D. 2020. "Justice without Retribution: An Epistemic Argument against Retributive Criminal Punishment," *Neuroethics* 13: 13–28. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12152-018-9357-8>
- Carvalho, Henrique, and Anastasia Chamberlen. 2018. "Why Punishment Pleases: Punitive Feelings in a World of Hostile Solidarity," *Punishment & Society* 20(2): 217–34. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1462474517699814>
- Cutting-Gray, Joanne. 1991. "Hannah Arendt's Rahel Varnhagen," *Philosophy and Literature* 15(2): 229–45. <https://doi.org/10.1353/phl.1991.0023>
- Danielian, Jack, and Patricia Gianotti. 2012. *Listening with Purpose: Entry Points into Shame and Narcissistic Vulnerability*. New York: Jason Aronson.
- Deigh, John. 2006. "The Politics of Disgust and Shame," *The Journal of Ethics* 10: 383–418. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10892-006-9001-4>
- Deonna, Julien, Raffaele Rodogno, and Fabrice Teroni. 2011. *In Defense of Shame: The Faces of an Emotion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199793532.001.0001>
- Dobos, Ned. 2015. "Moral Trauma and Moral Degradation," in *Moral Injury: Unseen Wounds in an Age of Barbarism*, ed. Tom Frame, 75–78. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press.
- Doctors, Shelley R. 2017. "Brandchaft's Pathological Accommodation—What It Is and What It Isn't," *Psychoanalysis, Self and Context* 12(1): 45–59. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15551024.2017.1251184>
- Dolezal, Luna. 2017. "Shame, Vulnerability and Belonging: Reconsidering Sartre's Account of Shame," *Human Studies* 40(3): 421–38. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10746-017-9427-7>
- Dolezal, Luna, and Barry Lyons. 2017. "Health-Related Shame: An Affective Determinant of Health?," *Medical Humanities* 43: 257–63. <https://doi.org/10.1136/medhum-2017-011186>
- Drichel, Simone. 2013. "Reframing Vulnerability: 'So Obviously the Problem . . .?'," *Substance* 42(3): 3–27. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sub.2013.0030>
- Fassin, Didier, and Richard Rechtman. 2009. *The Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry Into the Condition of Victimhood*, trans. Rachel Gomme. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Filipovic, Zlatan. 2017. "Toward an Ethics of Shame," *Angelaki* 22(4): 99–114. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0969725X.2017.1406050>
- Fineman, Martha. 2008. "The Vulnerable Subject: Anchoring Equality in the Human Condition," *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism* 20(1): 1–24.

- Frankl, Victor E. 2004 (1946). *Man's Search for Meaning*, trans. Ilse Lasch. London: Rider.
- Gilson, Erinn. 2014. *The Ethics of Vulnerability: A Feminist Analysis of Social Life and Practice*. New York: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S2753906700001066>
- Grier, William, and Price Cobbs. 1968. *Black Rage*. New York: Basic. <https://doi.org/10.1001/archpsyc.1968.01740100126023>
- Guenther, Lisa. 2012. "Resisting Agamben: The Biopolitics of Shame and Humiliation," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 38(1): 59–79. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0191453711421604>
- Hollier, David. 2019. "Shame," in *See What You Made Me Do: Power, Control and Domestic Violence*, ed. Jess Hill, 84–100. Victoria: Black Inc.
- Hursthouse, Rosalind, and Glen Pettigrove. 2018. "Virtue Ethics," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta. Available at <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-virtue/#ObjVirtEthi>.
- Karen, Robert. 1992. "Shame," *The Atlantic Monthly* (February): 40–70.
- Kekes, John. 1988. "Shame and Moral Progress," in *Midwest Studies in Philosophy: Ethical Theory, Character and Virtue*, ed. Peter A. French, Theodore Edward Uehling, and Howard K. Wettstein, 282–96. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4975.1988.tb00127.x>
- Kim, Alice, Erica Meiners, Jill Petty, Audrey Petty, Beth E. Richie, and Sarah Ross, eds. 2018. *The Long Term: Resisting Life Sentences Working toward Freedom*. Chicago: Haymarket.
- La Caze, Marguerite. 2013. "At First Blush: The Politics of Guilt and Shame," *Parresia* 18: 85–99.
- Langer, Lawrence. 1982. *Versions of Survival: The Holocaust and the Human Spirit*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Lanksy, Melvin R. 1992. *Fathers Who Fail: Shame and Psychopathology in the Family System*. London: The Analytic Press.
- Leibovici, Martine. 2007. "Arendt's *Rahel Varnhagen*: A New Kind of Narration in the Impasses of German-Jewish Assimilation and *Existenzphilosophie*," *Social Research* 74(3): 903–22. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sor.2007.0035>
- León, Felipe. 2012. "Shame and Selfhood," *Phänomenologische Forschungen* 2012: 193–211. <https://doi.org/10.28937/1000107812>
- Levi, Primo. 2013 (1988). *The Drowned and the Saved*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal. London: Abacus.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. 2003 (1982). *On Escape: De l'évasion*, trans. Bettina Bergo. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Lewis, Helen Block. 1971. "Shame and Guilt in Neurosis," *Psychoanalytic Review* 58(3): 419–38.
- Leys, Ruth. 2007. *From Guilt to Shame: Auschwitz and After*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Locke, Jill. 2007. "Shame and the Future of Feminism," *Hypatia* 22(4): 146–62. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2007.tb01325.x>
- Lynd, Helen Merrell. 1958. *On Shame and the Search for Identity*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company.

- Mackenzie, Catriona, Susan Dodds, and Wendy Rogers, eds. 2014. *Vulnerability: New Essays in Ethics and Feminist Philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199316649.001.0001>
- Maglione, Giuseppe. 2019. "The Restorative Justice Apparatus: A Critical Analysis of the Historical Emergence of Restorative Justice," *Social & Legal Studies* 28(5): 650–74. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0964663918806561>
- Mann, Bonnie. 2014. *Sovereign Masculinity: Gender Lessons from the War on Terror*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199981649.001.0001>
- Maslin, Kimberly. 2013. "Rahel Varnhagen: Arendt's Experiential Ontology," *New German Critique* 40(2): 77–96. <https://doi.org/10.1215/0094033X-2077708>
- Morrison, Andrew P. 1996. *The Culture of Shame*. Northvale: Jason Aronson Inc.
- Nathanson, Donald L. 1987. "A Timetable for Shame," in *The Many Faces of Shame*, ed. Donald Nathanson, 1–63. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Nathanson, Donald L. 1992. *Shame and Pride: Affect, Sex, and the Birth of the Self*. New York: Norton.
- Nathanson, Donald L. 1993. "About Emotion," *Psychiatric Annals* 23(10): 543–55. <https://doi.org/10.3928/0048-5713-19931001-07>
- Niedenthal, Paula M., June P. Tangney, and Igor Gavanski. 1994. "'If Only I Weren't' versus 'If Only I Hadn't': Distinguishing Shame and Guilt in Counterfactual Thinking," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 67: 585–95. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.67.4.585>
- Nussbaum, Martha C. 2004. *Hiding from Humanity: Disgust, Shame, and the Law*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Oliver, Kelly. 2001. *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*. London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Oliver, Kelly. 2015. "Witnessing, Recognition, and Response Ethics," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 48(4): 473–93. <https://doi.org/10.5325/phlrrhet.48.4.0473>
- Pattison, Stephen. 2000. *Shame: Theory, Therapy, Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511612411>
- Perlow, Olivia N. 2018. "Gettin' Free: Anger as Resistance to White Supremacy Within and Beyond the Academy," in *Black Women's Liberatory Pedagogies: Resistance, Transformation, and Healing Within and Beyond the Academy*, ed. Olivia N. Perlow, Durene I. Wheeler, Sharon L. Bethea, and BarBara M. Scott, 101–23. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-65789-9_6
- Peterie, Michelle, Gaby Ramia, Greg Marston, and Roger Patulny. 2019. "Emotional Compliance and Emotion as Resistance: Shame and Anger among the Long-Term Unemployed," *Work, Employment and Society* 33(5): 794–811. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017019845775>
- Phipps, Alison. 2019. "The Fight against Sexual Violence," *Soundings: A Journal of Politics and Culture* 71: 62–74. <https://doi.org/10.3898/SOUN.71.05.2019>
- Piers, Gerhart. 1953. "Shame and Guilt: A Psychoanalytic Study," in *Shame and Guilt: A Psychoanalytic and a Cultural Study*, ed. Gerhart Piers and Milton B. Singer, 5–44. Springfield: Charles C. Thomas.

- Pytell, Timothy. 2003. "Redeeming the Unredeemable: Auschwitz and *Man's Search for Meaning*," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 17(1): 89–113.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/hgs/17.1.89>
- Ramos, Alice. 2012. "The Experience of Vulnerability and Shame," in *Dynamic Transcendentals: Truth, Goodness, and Beauty from a Thomistic Perspective*, 108–21. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt2850z7>
- Rotenstreich, Nathan. 1965. "On Shame," *Review of Metaphysics* 19(1): 55–86.
- Sartre, Jean Paul. 2003 (1943). *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes. London: Routledge.
- Shield, Madeleine. 2022. "Can We Force Someone to Feel Shame?," *Philosophy Today* 66(4): 817–828. <https://doi.org/10.5840/philtoday2022711464>
- Sieff, Daniela F., ed. 2014. *Understanding and Healing Emotional Trauma: Conversations with Pioneering Clinicians and Researchers*. London: Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315747231>
- Soldatic, Karen, and Hannah Morgan. 2017. "'The Way You Make Me Feel': Shame and the Neoliberal Governance of Disability Welfare Subjectivities in Australia and the UK," in *Edges of Identity: The Production of Neoliberal Subjectivities*, ed. Jonathon Louth and Martin Potter, 106–33. Chester: University of Chester Press.
- Spelman, Elizabeth V. 1989. "Anger and Insubordination," in *Women, Knowledge, and Reality*, ed. Ann Garry and Marilyn Pearsall, 263–73. Boston: Unwin Hyman.
- Stabile, Susan J. 2012. *Growing in Love and Wisdom: Tibetan Buddhist Sources for Christian Meditation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:osobl/9780199862627.001.0001>
- Stearns, Peter N. 2017. *Shame: A Brief History*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Stocker, Michael. 2007. "Shame, Guilt, and Pathological Guilt," in *Bernard Williams*, ed. Alan Thomas, 146–53. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511611278.007>
- Stolorow, Robert D. 2011. "Toward Greater Authenticity: From Shame to Existential Guilt, Anxiety, and Grief," *International Journal of Psychoanalytic Self Psychology* 6(2): 285–87. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15551024.2011.552411>
- Stolorow, Robert D. 2013. "On Valorizing Shame: There Is Nothing Positive about Shame!," *Psychology Today*. Available at <https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/feeling-relating-existing/201310/valorizing-shame>.
- Struthers Montford, Kelly, and Chloë Taylor, eds. 2022. *Building Abolition: Decarceration and Social Justice*. New York: Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429329173>
- Tessman, Lisa. 2005. *Burdened Virtues: Virtue Ethics for Liberatory Struggles*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/0195179145.001.0001>
- Thomason, Krista. 2018. *Naked: The Dark Side of Shame and Moral Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190843274.001.0001>
- Waller, Bruce N. 2019. "Beyond the Retributive System," in *Free Will Skepticism in Law and Society: Challenging Retributive Justice*, ed. Elizabeth Shaw, Derk Pereboom, and Gregg D. Caruso, 73–95. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108655583.004>

- Welz, Claudia. 2011. "Shame and the Hiding Self," *Passions in Context 2*: 67–92.
- Williams, Bernard. 1993. *Shame and Necessity*. Berkeley: University of California Press. <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520915282>
- Wurmser, Léon. 1981. *The Mask of Shame*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Zahavi, Dan. 2014. *Self and Other: Exploring Subjectivity, Empathy and Shame*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199590681.001.0001>
- Zahavi, Dan. 2020. "Shame," in *The Routledge Handbook of Phenomenology of Emotion*, ed. Thomas Szanto and Hilge Landweer, 349–57. Abingdon: Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315180786-34>