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THEORETICAL / PHILOSOPHICAL PAPER

Is Shame a Global Emotion?

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Abstract
The notion that shame is a global emotion, one which takes the whole self as its focus, has long enjoyed a near consensus in both the psychological and philosophical literature. Recently, however, a number of philosophers have questioned this conventional wisdom: on their view, most everyday instances of shame are not global, but are instead limited to a specific aspect of one's identity. I argue that this objection stems from an overemphasis on the cognitive dimension of shame. Its proponents cannot make sense of global shame because they only understand the emotion in terms of an intellectual self-evaluation, where I am ashamed upon assessing myself to have disappointed a particular standard or ideal. However, when shame is understood as arising early on in life from one's threatened connection with others, and as having affective, embodied, and unconscious aspects alongside its later cognitive ones, the intuition that it feels all-encompassing makes more sense. Our earliest experiences of shame, which are largely devoid of complex cognitive content, are global because they are experienced as casting doubt upon our lovability in general. It is only later, as cognition develops, that we learn to hang this sense of overall defectiveness, which is reawakened in subsequent shame experiences, onto specific parts of the self. While this might lead us in adulthood to intellectually understand our shame as having a local basis, such as a failed norm or ideal, its global phenomenology will remain.

Keywords Shame · Globalism · Self-assessment · Cognition · Phenomenology · Substantialism

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Introduction

This article considers a question about shame which, although uncontroversial in social psychology, has come under increasing contention in philosophical circles: is it a global emotion? Emotions that are considered global in scope are those which are thought to take the entire person as their object. When the global emotion is an other-directed one, this person will be an external figure; when it is self-directed, it will be one's own self. Admiration and contempt are commonly held up as examples of the former variant since they are thought to be based on an assessment of another person as a whole, rather than a more localised evaluation of a specific trait or behaviour that the person has displayed (see, for example, Kauppinen, 2019: 29–44; Bell, 2013: 64–95). Pride and shame are the usual suspects in discussions of self-directed global attitudes since they are similarly thought to be about one's character in general and, in that sense, not limited to an individual aspect of the self.

When the feature of globalism is attributed to shame—which, until fairly recently, it very often has been—it is commonly taken to be shame's major point of departure from guilt, which is alternatively characterised as involving a local self-assessment, usually of a specific action that one has taken. Conventional wisdom has thus summarised the distinction between them in the following way: guilt tells me *I did something bad*, whereas shame holds that *I am bad*. The dichotomy between evaluative attitudes which are actional, in that they assess a person for what they do, and those which are agential, in assessing a person for who they are, has a long precedent in philosophy (Keller, 2022: 252–254). While this distinction has often been conflated with that between local and global assessments, it can be questioned whether agential or person-centred evaluations are necessarily global, or whether they can in fact apply to a person in some respects and not others. The present article explores this objection in relation to shame.

Here, I defend the notion that shame is a global emotion, at least when it occurs in a modern, Western context. This defence responds to two recent proposals: that our everyday experiences of shame are usually not all-encompassing, since often we are ashamed of only some aspects of our identity, and that the idea of global shame commits one to a substantialist conception of the self. In my view, these objections are based on an overly cognitive impression of shame. Their proponents cannot make sense of shame being global because they only understand the emotion in terms of an intellectual self-evaluation, in which one is always ashamed of having failed a particular standard or ideal. On this view, shame would rarely (if ever) concern one's whole self, since it is clearly tied to only those aspects which are seen as relevant to the standard or ideal in question. However, when shame is psychoanalytically understood as arising early on in life from one's threatened connection with others, and as thereby having affective, embodied, and unconscious aspects alongside its later cognitive ones, I claim that its global phenomenology makes more sense.

Simply put, this is because our earliest experiences of shame, which are largely devoid of complex cognitive content, are experienced as casting doubt upon our lovability in general. It is only later, as cognition develops, that we learn to hang this original sense of overall defectiveness onto specific parts of the self. While this might lead us in adulthood to intellectually understand our shame as having a local basis,

such as a failed norm or ideal, its global phenomenology will remain. Understanding shame in this way thus allows us to consider that its globalism inheres in aspects other than cognitive processing. As such, it also provides a useful framework for situating some previous observations that have been made about the sense in which shame *feels* global to its subject. The first of these comes from Bell (2011) and Thomason (2015), who suggest that shame is global not in the sense that it requires us to evaluate ourselves as shameful in every respect, but because it affectively overshadows the non-shameful parts. The second is León's (2012) idea that shame is global because it individuates us—a felt separation that, I argue, is brought about not because we failed some standard, norm, or ideal, but because in shame we experience ourselves as being rejected or abandoned.

The Self in Shame and Guilt

Any attempt to arrive at a definitional distinction between two closely related emotions is, as both philosophers and psychologists are well aware, a somewhat complex task. The demarcation between shame and guilt is no exception: as two self-conscious, unpleasant-feeling emotions, they would appear to share a range of phenomenological features. As Zahavi (2014) points out, the family of emotions that shame belongs to is extensive, and philosophers have not been hard-pressed to think of scenarios which illustrate the often blurred distinctions that exist between its members. Following Miller (1985), he suggests that we would do well not to presume "that the study of shame is the study of an absolutely clear and well-bounded category of experience" (2014: 221). Labelling an emotional experience is not like labelling a piece of furniture, Miller reminds us; there is no objective method for determining if one is experiencing one particular emotion over another.

It is this inescapable element of ambiguity which leads Miller to the view that what ultimately matters in the study of emotions is our ability to describe emotional experiences, rather than accurately label them. "If someone else feels that the writer is mislabeling a state as shame rather than embarrassment, or guilt rather than shame," she argues, "that will not be of great importance as long as the reader can recognize the state itself from the descriptions given" (1985: 28). While I am sympathetic to this view, ultimately I think it *is* important for us to not only distinguish between such emotional experiences, but to collectively give considerable thought to, and thereby attempt to reach consensus on, our labelling of them. Otherwise, fruitful theoretical distinctions are too easily lost. Even philosophers who, as I explore in the following section, do not accept that shame requires a global evaluation of the self, still usually maintain that its element of self-focus should be used to distinguish it from guilt.[1] While there are cultures or social groups that do not linguistically differentiate between shame and guilt and, even in those that do, it can be common practice to use the two terms interchangeably, there does seem to be an important grammatical distinction between how these words can be employed in the English language.

[1] See for example Deonna et al. (2011: 83), Keller (2022: 253) and, to a lesser extent, Flanagan (2021: 135).

Although many English speakers do not observe a conceptual difference between shame and guilt, Julien Deonna, Raffaele Rodogno, and Fabrice Teroni point out that only shame can be used reflexively—I am ashamed of myself—however the same is not true of guilt—I cannot be guilty of myself (2011: 83).

For most philosophers and psychologists, this contrast reflects a central difference between the two emotions, which is that shame is uniquely self-focused. Lewis (1971) encapsulates this contrast nicely when she writes that "shame is directly about the self, which is the focus of evaluation… In guilt, the self is negatively evaluated in connection with something [such as an action] but is not *itself* the focus of the experience" (1971: 30; emphasis added). Unlike guilt, shame takes one's character or identity to be fundamentally implicated in its negative self-evaluation. If one is either ashamed of or feels guilty about, an action one has committed, for example, in both instances one will feel that the action was wrong; only in shame will one feel that the wrongful act has in turn revealed something wrong about the self. "We can be ashamed about what we have done, just as can feel guilty for what we have done," writes Michael Morgan, "but in such cases shame is about who we are for having done what we did; we are ashamed for having been the one who did what we did" (2008: 14f.). This perceived wrongness of the self is a characteristic of shame which, as we will see, is fundamentally connected to a concern over how one is viewed by others.

When experiencing guilt, one will conceive of the wrongness of one's actions as separable from the rightness or wrongness of one's character. This is because guilt is fundamentally concerned with the wrongdoing itself, rather than what it could be taken to reveal about the self more generally. Thus, as David Lester puts it: guilt is "I can't believe I did *that*"; shame is "I can't believe *I* did that" (1997: 353). It is for this reason that guilt is generally theorised in relation to an act that one has perpetrated. However, scholars have pointed out that it could equally be produced in relation to an action one merely thought or fantasised about doing, or an action that one should have taken but did not (Leys, 2007: 11). Many of us have also felt guilty about certain thoughts, emotions, or desires that we have had, even if we never gave expression to them (Smith, 2011: 235). Indeed, it seems plausible that we could feel guilt over a more enduring pattern of behaviour or personality trait, so long as we do not take that pattern or trait to be reflective of who we are more generally.

This way of differentiating shame and guilt maps onto other distinctions that have been observed by psychologists and sociologists. Following Janoff-Bulman (1979), for instance, we could think of the negative self-assessment involved in guilt as analogous to 'behavioural' self-blame, which finds fault with one's actions, and that involved in shame as parallel to 'characterological' self-blame, which holds one's character, rather than one's behaviour, responsible. Taylor (1985) has observed that a corresponding distinction is made in the field of sociology, between what is called primary and secondary deviance. Primary deviance, first theorised by Lemert (1972), describes cases of wrongdoing or norm violation in which the perpetrator conceives of their action as wrongful or deviant, but not as connected to anything wrongful or deviant about themselves as a person. In other words, their conception of their behaviour as bad does not extend to the belief or feeling that their self is subsequently bad: what they have done, writes Taylor, is alien to who they really are. This experience

has clear parallels with that of guilt, which does not necessitate that the normative evaluations one makes about one's behaviours also implicate the self. Secondary deviance, on the other hand, seems more reflective of shame experiences. This is when the perpetrator views their wrongdoing or deviant act as representative of their character: "What he has done is not alien to himself but on the contrary expresses what he really is" (Taylor, 1985: 90). If the secondary deviant is a burglar, the primary deviant is someone who, at some point, committed a burglary. In my view, the fact that distinctions such as these correspond to the primary method of distinguishing shame and guilt further suggests that it is a useful contrast to capture. While non-experts might continue to use the terms shame and guilt synonymously, it seems important that philosophers are more consistent in their usage, if only that we might more easily make sense of our emotional worlds together.

The Case Against Shame Being Global

The notion that shame, unlike guilt, takes one's character to be the focus of its negative evaluation is relatively uncontroversial. Indeed, the framing of shame as being about the self—*who one is*—and guilt as concerning behaviour—*what one did*—is virtually uncontested in both the philosophical and psychological literature.[2] What has recently come under increased criticism, however, is the concomitant idea that shame's focus on the self is necessarily global or all-encompassing. Deonna et al. (2011) and, more recently, Flanagan (2021) and Keller (2022), have all argued against this idea, contending that shame does not require a self-evaluation which encompasses one's entire identity or character.

One main concern of the first set of thinkers is that the very idea of a global self implicitly commits one to a substantialist view of selfhood, in which the self is not able to be conceived as complex and multilayered, but rather constitutes a single entity, integrally evaluated. "Taken at face value," they write, global shame "might suggest that the self is a substance, all aspects of which are evaluated negatively in shame" (2011: 85; see also Stocker & Hegeman, 1996: 223). In other words, conceiving of shame as necessarily all-encompassing commits us to an excessively dramatic account of what the emotion is, in that it discounts the possibility that one could simultaneously be ashamed of one aspect of the self and not others. This criterion seems implausible, or at least unable to account for many experiences that we would normally describe as involving shame. "It is simply not true," argue Deonna, Rodogno, and Teroni, "that most shame episodes are lived by the subject as encompassing each and every aspect of [their] identity… At the very least, mild cases of shame

[2] Throughout my own reading, I have only come across two accounts which would be less inclined toward this characterisation. Flanagan (2021) argues that, while "guilt typically focuses on acts, deeds, or doings," and shame "on aspects of the person that are personal or characterological weaknesses," this is not a necessary distinction for us to make between the two, and often does not reflect the fact that shame is regularly used in child-rearing practices to target behaviours, rather than personality traits (2021: 135). In a similar vein, Stocker (2007) has argued that in many cases, guilt and shame can both take acts *and* agents as their objects; thus, "If there is a difference between guilt and shame… the act/agent distinction fails to give it" (2007: 141).

are not accommodated within this picture" (2011: 85). Tied to this objection is their worry that, in global shame, the object of shame must always be understood as permanent, when it is more likely that its perceived inalterability or "stickiness" will vary depending on the circumstance (2011: 105f.).

That being said, Deonna et al. (2011) do want to retain two important attributes they think are captured by the notion of global shame; namely, the severity with which it is experienced, and the sense in which its evaluation, unlike that of guilt, extends beyond a specific action or trait to offer a "verdict on the self". The authors thus develop an account of shame which aims to capture their intuition that shame "speaks to the subject's identity while its scope within this identity remains circumscribed" (2011: 103f.). To this end, they contend that there is only *one* aspect of a person's identity at stake in shame, and that is the person's capacity to exemplify a particular value to which they are attached. On this view, shame is not all-encompassing because "it is only the capacity that goes with my attachment to this particular value that is put into question" (2011: 105). Although the doubt cast over this one capacity may spread to doubt over other, related capacities, there is no reason to assume that it necessarily will. "The shame I feel at the lack of patience I now display vis-à-vis my son," for example, "may manifest my perceived incapacity as an educator and not, or at least not necessarily, my incapacity to be a good father or a good person" (2011: 105). Even in such cases where this evaluation does spread, Deonna and colleagues argue, it does not follow that it needs to spread so far as to encompass one's entire self. As Keller points out, it is not a contradiction to claim that shame is an agent-centred emotion, but not a global one, so long as we understand 'agent-centred' to mean that it attaches to the agent in a specific respect (2022: 259).

Flanagan (2021) also takes issue with the notion that shame is necessarily global. Like Deonna, Rodogno, and Teroni, he finds it plausible that a person could be ashamed of only one aspect of the self and not others, given that the experience of the self in shame is culturally mediated and not all cultures view the self as indivisible or unchangeable. He explains:

> how the self receives an evaluation (from others or oneself) that some aspect or feature of the self is deficient, or could be improved, and thus how painful the evaluation is experienced, depends on what one thinks about prospects for changing and cultivating different aspects of oneself. There is considerable variation in views about the prospects for changing oneself inside cultures, across cultures, and between cultures. (2021: 175)[3]

According to Flanagan, most cultures—including so-called WEIRD ones—do not conceptualise shaming practices as being aimed at the whole self, so there is no reason to think that the emotion would be experienced that way by the people within those cultures. "[E]specially in cultures that use shame as their main socializing emotion," he writes, "children are not taught, and thus do not normally learn, that the entire self is the appropriate object of shame" (2021: 171). Most parents use shaming

[3] For further discussion on the extent to which globalism might be considered universal, see Doris (2002: 158f.).

not as a tool to teach their child that they are wholly defective, but to discourage a specific behaviour or personality trait the child has displayed. Flanagan concedes that one could, without context, interpret the widespread expression 'you should be ashamed of yourself' to mean that shaming practices do invite us to feel shame which encompasses the whole of who we are. More often than not, however, "context shows that a person is not being asked to be ashamed of their global self but, *at most*, about some global trait they possess—dishonesty, sloppiness, or lack of conscientiousness at work" (2021: 139; emphasis added). However, Flanagan does concede that under certain circumstances shame is likely to be experienced as global.

On his account, this particular kind of "penetrative, oily shame" is only likely to occur when it involves traits that are unable to be identified or altered. As an example, Flanagan shares his own experience with the global shame that he experienced over his alcohol addiction. In the midst of this shame, he writes, "I experienced the desire to die or kill myself… it felt global, about me, about the entire being I am" According to Flanagan, his addiction shame felt all-encompassing because its object was unclear: it seemed as if there were, in his words, "no good explanations in terms of a single, modifiable character trait that [could be] easily located as the cause that needs to be modified" (2021: 193f.). In his view, global shame only makes sense when it involves something about the self that is difficult to pinpoint, like the cause of one's addiction, or when it is located in an aspect of oneself that cannot be altered, such as one's country of birth. He seems to think that this absence of an identifiable or modifiable object is more likely to occur when the invitation to feel shame is explicitly framed as all-encompassing. An obvious example of this, as he notes, is oppression-based shame. In such occurrences, often "the social message is loud and clear that the whole person—slave, untouchable, woman—is the unit of disregard" (2021: 171). However, even in these kinds of cases, Flanagan maintains that the global reach of shame is more a product of "the ability of bad people and bad social practices to cause totalizing shame," than it is of shame's internal structure (2021: 171). Thus, while he does think that shame can be experienced as all-encompassing, especially when the invitation to feel shame is explicitly framed as such, he too considers global shame to be a relatively rare occurrence.

Early Shame: A World of Experience

Contrary to these recent objections, I want to defend the idea that shame is a global emotion, at least as it is experienced in the modern West. While I partly draw on arguments already made by philosophers to achieve this, I will be furnishing them with a much different understanding of shame than that which usually appears in philosophy. This alternative conception is one under which I think the inherent globalism of shame makes much more sense, and which is therefore particularly useful in explaining away the latest refutations to this idea. Simply put, it is the psychoanalytic notion that shame in its most fundamental form results not from the failure to

meet a certain standard, but from a rupture in interpersonal connection.[4] When we conceptualise shame purely in terms of one's perceived failure to adhere to a particular norm, standard, or ideal, as almost all contemporary philosophers do (Maibom, 2010: 569), then it does perhaps seem puzzling that shame would be global. On this account, it is unclear why shame over one aspect of the self would necessarily spread to encompass all others, especially when Western cultures do not necessarily promote a substantialist view of selfhood.[5] However, as I have argued elsewhere (Shield, 2023: 516–518), such a conceptualisation of shame's origins is superficial at best. If we instead understand the felt experience of shame, first emerging in childhood, to be fundamentally concerned with one's threatened emotional connection to others, and to only *later* become understood with reference to social norms and standards, then the idea of global shame becomes a lot less puzzling. This is partly because our earliest encounters with shame, in which the whole self is felt to be at stake, lay the groundwork for later experiences to feel all-encompassing.

As a profusion of findings from the developmental literature attests, it appears very likely that infants can experience shame before they are able to conjure up a mental representation or conceptual understanding of what shame, or indeed the self, is (Zahavi, 2014: 233). In this sense, when infants experience shame, their experience is not necessarily attended by any specific cognitive content; that is, shame does not require that they are thinking, 'I am being rejected because my whole self is bad'. Rather, as Yontef (1997) explains, early shame "is based in the earliest strivings and interpersonal experiences of the infant and toddler. Because the shame process starts before awareness becomes verbal, shame feelings are often either not in verbal awareness or at least are only diffusely so" (1997: 357). DeYoung (2015) describes this experience as one of visceral disintegration, a kind of shattering or falling apart in which the infant is "left struggling alone to recover a sense of who [they are] with the other" (2015: 20). These original experiences of shame, in its most fundamental form, clearly cannot be explained in (purely) cognitive terms. Even as our mental capacities develop, and our shame feelings do become attended by specific cognitive content, the experience of shame will not be limited to an isolated cognition or discrete mental state. Rather, as both DeYoung and Donna Orange emphasise, being ashamed—for adults as well as children—constitutes an entire phenomenological "world of experience" (DeYoung, 2015: 23; Orange, 2008: 87).

Scholars in the psychoanalytic literature have suggested that adult encounters with shame both build upon and reawaken one's initial experiences of the emotion, such that emotionally one returns to the pain and distress of infantile shame (DeYoung, 2015: 21; Karlsson & Sjöberg, 2009: 344, 351). I argue that the global nature of shame can be understood to inhere in these early experiences. Following a loss of connection with a caregiver experienced as a rejection or abandonment, the infant experiences shame as a felt sense of overall defectiveness, a feeling that one is gener-

[4] To my knowledge, this idea has only received sustained philosophical attention in the following works: Shield (2023); Laing (2022); Westerlund (2019); and Rukgaber (2018).

[5] I do not feel qualified to speculate about differing cultural views on selfhood which occur outside of a Western context and, as such, can only evaluate the possibility of global shame in so-called WEIRD cultures. It should be noted, however, that Flanagan's (2021) discussion on this topic extends much further.

ally unworthy of love or acceptance from others. In its original form, shame has to do with the breaking of the interpersonal bridge (Kaufman, 1992: 14); underlying the fundamental shame experience is thus a profound concern over our threatened connection with others. Shame, as Gerhart Piers puts it, "spells fear of abandonment, the death by emotional starvation" (1953: 16). While this understanding of shame as a loss of love is usual in psychoanalysis, however, it has been neglected by the majority of philosophers. By conceptualising shame exclusively in terms of a failed standard or ideal, they have overlooked the reason that fulfilling certain standards or ideals comes to matter so much to us in the first place: our need to be loved and accepted by others. Shame is what happens when this need goes unfulfilled, and we hold ourselves responsible; when the child, who has not yet internalised the relevant social norms, is given the sense that they are not capable of being loved in the way that they desire.

Of course, it is rarely the (conscious) intention of the caregiver to make the child feel this way. Many psychologists writing about early shame experiences emphasise that often they do not involve explicit or intentional shaming (Spiegel et al., 2000: 30). Shame can often arise in children as the result of more implicit instances of interpersonal rejection, which the infant takes to be their fault. "Although shame induction can be very intense and brutal," writes Yontef, "it can be as subtle as a slight parental coldness, hollowness, or look of disgust" (1997: 359). This is because even accidental failures in empathic attunement are likely to be experienced by the infant as shaming, insofar as such failures necessarily constitute a rebuff of their desire for closeness.

That children often hold themselves responsible for such instances of rejection, even when they have not done anything wrong, has long been recognised by psychoanalysts. Even in the face of severe neglect, children usually display a tendency to blame themselves, rather than their caregivers (Shaw, 2023: 5). One explanation for this occurrence, offered by Fairbairn's (1952) concept of moral defence, is that taking on the "burden of badness" allows the child to retain the illusion that their caregivers are actually good, which thereby rewards them with "that sense of security which an environment of good objects so characteristically confers" (1952: 65). This interpretation of events enables the child to stay attached to their caregivers, whom their survival depends on, even during moments of misattunement or outright neglect. Yet there is a downside since their faith in others comes at a cost: to believe that their environment is good, they must see themselves as bad. In moments of rejection and abandonment, the child must hold themselves to be *worthy of abandoning*; in these moments, they will feel themselves too unloveable—not just in one particular respect, but fundamentally. This is where global shame comes in.

Flanagan's (2021) argument that shame is unlikely to be global because people are not usually encouraged to receive it that way, is clearly misguided. Take the example of parental conditional regard, in which parents shame their children in relation to specific behaviours by withdrawing love and affection when such behaviours are displayed. Despite the fact that such instances of shaming are clearly not targeted at the child's whole self, they fail to communicate to the child that the child is generally a worthy and loveable being, who should nonetheless be ashamed of a specific aspect of themselves. Rather, conditional regard renders the child's "self-esteem and sense

of love-worthiness dependent on the attainment of specific attributes… [implying] that their parents do not accept them for who they are," *as they are* (Assor & Roth, 2007: 28; see also Nussbaum, 2004: 215). Here, the child's shame is experienced as all-encompassing because it has to do with who they fundamentally are, and whether that person deserves to be loved and accepted by others.

In coming to understand, and subsequently internalise, certain familial and cultural beliefs around what should be considered shameful, one will begin to conceptualise one's shame experiences with reference to such standards (Morrison, 1996: 70; Nussbaum, 2004: 185; Zahavi, 2014: 216). In this sense, the apparently local basis of shame in adulthood can be understood as a projection of one's feeling of overall defectiveness onto specific aspects of the self. "As I grow from child to adolescent," writes DeYoung, "I may hang that shame on challenging parts of my expanding self-experience—my body, my sexuality, my emotions, or my competence—that give me some reason for self-loathing" (2015: 21). However, the phenomenological experience of shame will resemble that of one's infancy. "As an adult one once again has these structurally similar experiences," Karlsson and Sjöberg (2009) observe. "And despite the fact that one is now grown up enough to intellectually realize their insignificance, emotionally one is drawn back to the childhood experiences" (351). This regressive aspect explains how shame can be precipitated by, and thus directed toward, specific actions or characteristics, and simultaneously feel as if it encompasses the whole self.

These actions or characteristics are experienced as revealing something shameful about the self precisely because they reactivate within us that same feeling from childhood, that *who one is* is fundamentally deficient, worthless, or unloveable. As Zahavi (2020) writes:

> I am ashamed of who and what I am. Obviously, the trigger might be a specific property or trait of mine, I might feel ashamed because of my weight, my speech defect, my lack of courage, my salary level, my dishonesty, etc., but importantly when feeling ashamed, I am never simply ashamed of that specific property. Rather, the property in question is taken to reveal something more fundamental about who I am, is taken to disclose a central flaw in my very being. (2020: 351)

This is the sense in which, as Karlsson and Sjöberg put it, shame goes straight through one's actions to reveal one's being (2009: 350).

Global Shame in Adulthood

The objection that everyday shame experiences do not involve the dramatic, far-reaching self-evaluation required by globalism, misses the point here. As Bell (2011) argues, it is a misconception that global emotions entail "that each and every trait of the target is evaluated under the guise of the globalist attitude, or… that it is impossible for the target to have traits that run counter to the evaluative valence of the attitude" (2011: 459). She cites Aaron Ben-Ze'ev, who uses the example of hate to

illustrate this point: "The negative evaluation in hate is global, not in the sense that every aspect of the hated person is considered to be negative, but in the sense that the negative aspects are so fundamental that other traits become insignificant" (2000: 382). To say that shame touches the whole self is not to say that, in the moment of shame, one assesses oneself to be worthless in every single aspect, such that being ashamed of oneself as an educator extends to being ashamed of oneself as a father. Rather, as Thomason (2015) puts it, in shame one's being feels momentarily overshadowed; "she feels this [shameful] thing defines her as a whole. That is, in episodes of shame she feels defined by, reduced to, or totalized by some feature of herself" (11). In this sense, the ashamed person may see themselves as having traits or attributes which are not shameful, but these are essentially swallowed up in the global experience of shame.

Keller (2022) interprets this wider conception of globalism to mean that shame involves an evaluation of oneself as shameful *all things considered*, rather than as shameful *in all respects*. As he notes, this account is favourable in allowing that a person can feel shame while still taking themselves to possess non-shameful attributes (2022: 257). However, he points out that this understanding of global shame still appears to discount milder experiences of the emotion. It seems possible, after all, that one could feel ashamed of a specific attribute without considering that attribute so significant as to render one an 'all things considered' shameful person. As I have noted, this objection is consistent with the dominant view of shame in philosophy: if, in feeling shame, what I feel bad about is having failed some particular standard or ideal, then why would I ever feel shame globally, unless that standard happened to concern my entire being? Furthermore, Keller argues, if we accept that shame requires us to see ourselves as shameful on the whole, then it is difficult to see how a person could have conflicting views toward themselves which involve shame. That is, if shame is global, it does not seem possible that a person could be both ashamed and proud of themselves (2022: 260; see also Archer & Matheson, 2022: 23).

Keller's (2022) objections to global shame have an advantage over those we have already seen from Flanagan (2021) and Deonna et al. (2011), in that he does not take globalism to require an 'in all respects' self-assessment. In this sense, his account can accommodate a more flexible understanding of global emotions. Despite this, I argue that Keller still interprets the phenomenon of globalism in overly cognitive terms and, like the other critics, thereby tends to overlook how one's shame can *feel* global, even if intellectually one does not conceive it as such. What makes this oversight possible is, in my view, the standard view of shame's origins to which these philosophers ascribe. In relating shame exclusively to one's perceived failure of standards, it is easy to end up formulating shame purely in terms of cognition; to be ashamed here is to intellectually evaluate that I have not lived up to a particular ideal that I am personally or socially bound to.[6] However, not only is this definition of shame unable to accommodate infantile encounters with the emotion; it allows, perhaps encourages,

[6] There is significant debate on the question of whether the judgment we make about ourselves in shame is autonomously or heteronomously determined, or if some shame experiences fit into the former category and others into the latter. Although I do not have space to argue for it here, it is my view that this debate rests on a false dichotomy and that we should instead be thinking about shame as necessarily being *both* a personal and an intersubjective phenomenon (see Shield, 2022).

one to overlook the non-cognitive aspects of the shame experience, such as those which are affective, embodied, or unconscious. In order to understand the sense in which shame is a global emotion, I argue that we need to look toward its phenomenology, rather than attempting to explain it purely in terms of intellectual processing.

It is an important observation that when we are ashamed, we do not have to believe ourselves to be shameful in every aspect, nor necessarily in those which are most central to our identity. An infant is unlikely to be capable of such a complex cognitive evaluation. However, that does not mean that shame does not *feel* as if it renders us shameful in a way that is fundamental and all-encompassing. As I have argued, that shame is about the whole self has at least partially to do with the fact that it is, at its core, about our general lovability as a person. However, it should also be emphasised that it is still possible for a person who rationally 'knows' that they deserve love and acceptance from others, to feel ashamed of themselves. People frequently experience shame in the absence of any corresponding discursive belief that such shame is warranted (Calhoun, 2004).

Such incongruence is made possible by the fact that what we hold to be true on an intellectual level, and what we feel as correct on an emotional one, are sometimes two different things (Bartky, 1990: 95). This distinction between thinking and feeling also explains how a person can be both ashamed and proud of (different aspects of) themselves in a discursive sense, but that, in the moment they are experiencing either shame or pride, it feels all-encompassing. One issue with these objections to global shame, then, is perhaps their failure to distinguish between one's intellectual or 'propositional' processing of shame and one's affective experience of it.[7] As Paul Gilbert explains:

> at the propositional level thoughts such as 'I am worthless' are simply statements of belief—propositions about properties of the self as an object. At the implicational level, however, such a statement represents a rich activation of affect and memories associated with experiences of being rejected or shamed. (1998: 16)

It is plausible, I think, that the former might involve a localised conception of one's shame, as pertaining to an isolated feature of oneself, and the latter a feeling that one's very worth as a person is nonetheless somehow implicated. Even Deonna, Rodogno, and Teroni acknowledge that the idea of shame involving the whole self does "intuitively ring true" (2011: 85), and Flanagan, who doubts that shame would reasonably require a totalising self-assessment, describes his own encounter with shame as precisely having felt that way: "global, about me, about the entire being I am" (2021: 193). It may be against our better judgement that our feelings of shame encompass all of who we are, but they do so anyway.

[7] Deonna et al. (2011: 107) anticipate this objection that their account of shame is "too complex and cognitively demanding," and subsequently attempt to make such a distinction, claiming that the self-evaluation required for shame need "not take the form of an explicit thought but constitutes rather the background of the emotional episode." However, as both Montes Sánchez (2015: 186) and Zahavi (2014: 220) have pointed out, their account of shame still seems to require so much in terms of cognition that it does not allow for the possibility of either pre-reflective or infantile shame.

The worry that this element of globalism presupposes a particular substantialist conception of selfhood is also unfounded. Contra Deonna, Rodogno, and Teroni, León (2012) argues that the notion of a global self need not commit one to substantialism; rather, shame's global reach has to do with the fact that in shame one feels wholly individuated from others. In León's view, too, Deonna, Rodogno, and Teroni's main objection to the notion of global shame—that it precludes us from evaluating only one aspect of the self as shameful and not others—rests upon an overemphasis on the cognitive dimension of shame. As such, it neglects the ways in which shame is also a felt, bodily experience. Central to the embodied aspect of shame is, León contends, the experience of individuation: that of being set apart from others, of realising that one constitutes a distinct being in the world, with a distinct body. In shame, he writes, the self "reaches an acute sense of its own individuation as an irreducible self vis-à-vis others, that is, as a self whose particular situation in the world is not ascribable to another self" (2012: 196). In other words, shame is individuating because it reveals to us, through exposure, where the Other ends and where we begin.

That shame is fundamentally self-differentiating fits with my account of the emotion as having to do with emotional disconnection. While there is a sense in which we always constitute a distinct individual, in moments of love and intimacy we are likely to feel *connected* with others, rather than separate from them. The individuating capacity of shame is, in my view, a product of the fact that in shame we feel rejected or abandoned and, in this sense, alone.[8] Often, we register this singling out not (only) on an intellectual level, but on an epidermic one—skin being the boundary that separates us from the rest of the world. As Biddle (1997) writes:

> That it is the skin which registers shame [by blushing] is not arbitrary. The skin, the epidermis, is understood in more traditional figurings of the body as the outer covering of the material body; the limit, as it were, to the bounded individual self. According to Merleau-Ponty, it is the skin, flesh that unites and dis-unites us with others ultimately… In shame, the self expresses itself where it finds itself virtually, negatively differentiated, *severed as it is, from the other*; naked, exposed, and replete in its vulnerability; worn, like the very fig leaves that Adam and Eve first adorned to cover their shame, on the skin. (1997: 228; emphasis added)[9]

This experience of self-differentiation accords with the idea that shame is a global emotion since it concerns the self in its totality.

[8] Those who think that infants lack the capacity to distinguish themselves from others will probably take issue with the idea that shame involves an experience of individuation. However, as Johanna Meehan convincingly argues, the classic "object-relations image of newborns as sunk in hazy symbiotic unions unable to distinguish themselves from others… conflicts with what is now known about babies and their responses to people. This image is empirically and experientially inaccurate and fails to recognise an infant's capacity to make distinctions between self and others from birth onwards." (2011: 93f.).

[9] Biddle is hesitant to overemphasise the importance of the blush to all experiences of shame, given that discussions of blushing have a rather problematic history. As she notes, the fact that the blush is more difficult to observe in people with dark skin was used in evolutionary theory in the nineteenth century to discredit their capacity for moral sophistication, since it was thought to place them closer to animals, "the beasts who feel no shame" (1997: 229).

If shame is individuating because it makes palpable how we are separate from others, then it makes sense that shame's relation to the self is not a partial one, but is all-encompassing. After all, it is not only a single aspect of ourselves or part of our body which constitutes our distinctness as a self, but precisely all of us: everything contained within the limits of our skin. Sartre's (2003) discussion on the phenomenology of shame seems to convey an understanding of this; as Nathan Rotenstreich observes, "Sartre considers shame as related to the body, body being understood as a total, or whole mode of being, and not as a partial mode of being producing an attitude toward itself" (1965: 76). In the sense that the experience of shame thus inheres in our embodiment, its affective reach is not limited to a single, detachable property of the self, even if it was one such property that precipitated its onset. Rather, shame is about who we are—how loveable we are.

This sense in which shame is global does not amount to substantialism, because it does not require that the ashamed person consider themselves as a substance integrally evaluated. If a person's shame is triggered by a specific property they possess, but the affective experience of shame is that it casts doubt upon their general lovability as a person, this does not mean that the shamefulness of that one property has to be seen as leaking over into and rendering shameful, every other property the person possesses. Global shame is compatible with the idea that the self is divisible into different parts, which can be separately evaluated and which therefore could vary in their degree of shamefulness. As I have attempted to show, this is because the actual psychological mechanics of shame go much deeper than a cognitive assessment that one has disappointed a particular standard or ideal that one cares about fulfilling. In its most fundamental form, shame is the whole-body feeling that one is fundamentally unworthy of love from others, first experienced in unrepaired moments of rejection, disapproval, and disconnection. We did not conceptualise these ruptures in terms of our own failed standards, norms, or ideals but, more simply, as instances in which we felt utterly, wholly separate from others—and unworthy of rejoining them

Conclusion

This discussion took as its starting point that which is often held to be the primary structural difference between shame and guilt. Simply put, this is the idea that shame condemns the self, while guilt targets individual acts. While the distinction between shame as a person-centred emotion, and guilt as an act-centred one, remains virtually undisputed in philosophy, what has come under some contention is the notion that shame's characterological focus is necessarily an all-encompassing one. It has been pointed out that just because shame takes the person as its object, rather than their behaviour, does not mean that shame must be about the *whole* person. Furthermore, it is argued, many of our everyday experiences of shame do not involve a global assessment of ourselves but, instead, are quite clearly limited to a single attribute (often, that which sparked our shame). That we would, in feeling ashamed, take the existence of one shameful property to render our whole self shameful seems to presuppose a particular, substantialist view of the self.

Against these objections, I have offered a defence of the idea that shame is a global attitude. The idea of global shame may seem unintuitive on standard accounts of the emotion since they conceive of shame in terms of one's failure to adhere to a specific standard or ideal. However, I argued that an alternative understanding of shame, as a perceived failure of one's lovability in general, can make sense of the widespread intuition that shame is about the whole self. Our very first encounters with the emotion, which feature little—if any—cognitive content, are global in the sense that they cast doubt upon our general capacity to be loved and accepted by others. This manifests as a felt sense of overall defectiveness, which in later experiences of shame we will come to conceptualise in more cognitively complex terms, such as our failure to fulfil specific standards or ideals. While this might lead us in adulthood to intellectually understand our encounters with shame as having a local basis, the global phenomenology of shame will thus remain.

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