

A HOBBSIAN THEORY OF SHAME

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ABSTRACT: On most accounts present in the literature, the complex experience of shame has the injury to self-esteem as its main component. A major objection to this idea is that it fails to differentiate between shame and disappointment in oneself. I argue that previous attempts to respond to the objection are unsatisfactory. I argue further that the distinction should refer to the different ways the subject's self-esteem is formed. A necessary requirement for shame is that the standards and values by which the subject judges himself are borrowed from a canon of values the subject accepts as a given. The proper focus of shame is the fact of conformity to that canon. Those agents who have a different conception of self-esteem and who freely set and alter their own values are prone to self-disappointment, but not to shame.

1. INTRODUCTION

'Shame', according to one prominent treatment of it, 'is not amenable to a precise definition. It shades into embarrassment, humiliation, chagrin, guilt, dishonor, regret, remorse, prudishness, disgrace, etc.'¹ This seems plausible. Our intuitions about shame are not sufficiently stable for us to be able to tell when the person genuinely experiences shame, and when, on the other hand, he experiences disappointment or humiliation. Natural language offers no help at all, since 'shame', 'humiliation', 'embarrassment' in particular are used interchangeably. The sensations associated with these emotions are too similar to tell them apart. Though in a few cases we may do just that, in most cases no theoretical conclusion can be drawn from introspective evidence.

Nevertheless this attitude, if taken as a methodological principle, is mistaken. The reason is not that it gets metaphysics wrong, as though there are

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¹ See Kekes (1986:283).

distinct emotional experiences with sharp boundaries waiting to be classified by us. The reason is rather that we should think of emotions as responses to certain kinds of situations. Our theoretical assumptions should determine whether shame or another emotion is an *appropriate response*, by the given subject, to a particular situation.² We can allow that, in the actual circumstance, shame is not the only ingredient of an emotional response, and that it is mixed with other closely related emotions. But this should not preclude the possibility of its characterisation. Helium and hydrogen, albeit abundant in the universe, rarely occur in nature in their purity and, for all practical purposes, can only be obtained in artificial laboratory conditions. Similarly, shame and its kin should most satisfactorily be reproduced and examined in philosophically idealised situations and artificial thought experiments.

The limited goal of this paper is to defend a familiar ‘Hobbesian’ theory which links shame to the injury of self-esteem. It is a natural rival of an altogether different theory espoused by St Augustine which traces the phenomenon of shame to the defects in human agency.³ Elsewhere I argued that that view is unconvincing. Here I am interested in establishing the plausibility of the Hobbesian view irrespective of its possible advantages over the Augustinian one. The plan is as follows. After presenting a simple Hobbesian view and discussing several relatively minor variations of it in §§2–3, in §4 I consider and reject a major alternative that links shame to ‘self-respect’, rather than to self-esteem. In §§5–7 I give an outline of the theory of shame. I argue that the proper focus of shame experience is the lack of conformity to a canon of values. Those agents who set the parameters of their self-esteem in conformity to a pre-determined canon of values are prone to shame. Those agents who have a different conception of self-esteem and who are able to freely set and alter their own values are prone to self-disappointment, but not to shame. Finally, in §8 I compare shame and self-disappointment in terms of their sociality and moral and cognitive superiority.

2. THE SIMPLE VIEW

Assume that a person has a certain idea of his own self. He has formed certain beliefs about his physical capacities, his intellectual capacities, his standing in the society, his achievements, his relationships with his friends and family members. Then let us say that he is in possession of a self-assessment theory providing him with a scale for grading his various qualities, relations,

² That is, appropriate in terms of its shape. On the appropriateness of emotions see D’Arms and Jacobson (2000).

³ See Velleman (2006) and Berkovski (2014).

and activities. Each of these grades is accompanied by value ascriptions: the person should have formed beliefs about how much value each of the properties he attributes to himself is supposed to carry. There would be occasions when at least one of these values decreases. On such occasions the person would become aware that his capacities or achievements are not as significant as he thought they were. Given that those capacities and achievements carry at least some value in the agent's eyes, his overall self-esteem would decrease. The emotional reaction to this decrease in value is shame. The decrease itself can come from a number of sources. It can be a result of the agent's own action, of an action directed at him, or even of someone else's action directed at some third party.

Shame is a result of a procedure of self-evaluation in which the agent is engaged in appraising his own worth. Where, as a result of that appraisal, the agent's opinion of his worth—what we call his 'self-esteem'—decreases, shame must soon ensue. This idea is behind what I will call 'Hobbesian theories' of shame. The simplest version is just this:

T1. *Shame is the appropriate response to an injury of self-esteem.*⁴

This formula is an attempt to explicate the concept of shame, as well as to name its proximate causes. By naming these causes we are now able to explain why—or predict that—a person would feel ashamed in a particular situation. This is so whether we think, with Hobbes, of shame and of emotions generally as certain kinds of occurrent mental states, or whether we think of them as sets of behavioural manifestations, as e.g. Rawls did.

3. THE DISCRIMINATION CHALLENGE

One major difficulty for the formula T1 is its evident failure to distinguish between shame and disappointment in oneself.⁵ The latter (call it 'self-disappointment') can similarly be identified with injury to self-esteem. A person who becomes aware of his diminishing worth will be disappointed by himself and his performance. Sadness, depression, or the desire to improve his performance may all be manifestations of that disappointment. Similar dispositions would also characterise shame. Self-disappointment, no less than

⁴ See *Leviathan* VI. The label 'Hobbesian theories' is apt not only because of this definition, but also by virtue of the central place the concept of self-esteem has in Hobbes' moral psychology.

⁵ This objection is originally made in Deigh (1996:231–232) and repeated, e.g., in Teroni and Deonna (2008:728). See also Calhoun (2004:131).

shame, is a reaction to the failure of living up to one's ideals.⁶ If, however, shame is not to be identified with disappointment, the formula T1 fails to say why. I will refer to this difficulty of distinguishing shame from self-disappointment as 'the Discrimination Challenge'.

Simply saying that self-disappointment and shame are mentally distinct, that they have different psychological feelings, would be insufficient. For one thing, it would remain mysterious how two very different feelings arise under the same circumstances and are followed by the same attitudes and actions. It is also not clear that exactly the same feeling should be experienced whenever we report our disappointment or shame. Thirdly, no fine-grained distinction can result from the attempt to individuate emotions by their occurrent mental states. Such states are too fleeting and obscure for us to be able to decide whether they should characterise the emotion of shame or the emotion of disappointment that we experience on the given occasion.

Both the occasions of shame and the occasions of self-disappointment are the occasions when the subject's self-esteem is damaged. So perhaps we can draw the distinction on the basis of extent of such damage:

T2. *Shame is a response to a major injury to self-esteem. Self-disappointment is a response to a minor injury to self-esteem.*⁷

Disappointment, on this account, can occur when the subject falls somewhat below a standard, while shame occurs when the subject utterly fails to exemplify the values set by the standard (this need not imply that the psychological intensities of the two emotions are different in degree).

However, this distinction seems arbitrary. Shame can occur in not so drastic circumstances where the subject only partially fails the standard. A man forgets to pick up his son from school. It is easy to imagine him feeling ashamed, as his slip casts doubt on his value as a parent. But, one supposes, he need not believe that he is a total failure as a parent. On the other hand, in some circumstances it is natural to align self-disappointment with a major failure in our most important pursuits or an even more global failure as an individual. Psychology literature is rife with descriptions of such cases. A patient has been subjected to constant criticism from her stepfather.⁸ Increasingly, she experienced a growing sense of worthlessness and loss of purpose

⁶ With both, one might say, "conduct is evaluated through comparison and contrast with a certain model identity" Morris (1976:60).

⁷ The idea that shame is always a major damage to self-esteem is widespread. See, e.g., Wollheim (1999:187).

⁸ See Wenzel et al. (2009:154–164). On the origin of this case see pages 113–114 there.

in life. '[M]y life really has very little meaning', the patient reports. 'There is no joy in my life. Only pain and disappointment.' Eventually she sinks into serious depression and attempts suicide. In another clinical study, a middle-aged lawyer has withdrawn from his social circles and feels suicidal.⁹ The therapist is able to see the links between the patient's various emotions. He traces the lawyer's social isolation to his perception of his personal failure. His self-blame is traced to his loss of self-confidence (itself a result of self-disappointment). The lack of gratification is rooted in constant self-criticism that is, again, a result of perceived personal failure. Soon the lawyer becomes suicidal, as he sees no way for self-improvement.

A famous historical example, fitting rather neatly into the same pattern, is Leo Tolstoy. After a prolonged period of literary fame mixed with not quite successful attempts at improving the lives of Russian peasants, in 1879 he came to see the futility of his life. The ensuing deep depression was thus to a large extent a product of his disappointment in the value of his activities:

I naively imagined that I was a poet and an artist, that I could teach all men without myself knowing what I was teaching. And so I went on. As a result of my association with these people, I took up a new vice: I developed a pathological pride and the insane conviction that it was my mission to teach people without knowing what I was teaching them. As I now look back at that period and recall my state of mind and the state of mind of those people (a state that, by the way, persists among thousands), it all seems pitiful, horrible, and ridiculous to me; it excites the same feelings one might experience in a madhouse. Tolstoy (1983:20)

My life came to a stop. I could breathe, eat, drink, and sleep; indeed, I could not help but breathe, eat, drink, and sleep. But there was no life in me because I had no desires whose satisfaction I would have found reasonable. If I wanted something, I knew beforehand that it did not matter whether or not I got it.

Tolstoy (1983:27–8). I described my spiritual condition to myself in this way: my life is some kind of stupid and evil practical joke that someone is playing on me. Tolstoy (1983:29).

The depth of self-disappointment is reflected in its ability to provoke suicide attempts, as narrated by Tolstoy himself in *The Diary of a Madman*. No doubt many other emotional elements are intertwined in Tolstoy's case (possibly including shame and guilt). Some of them are products of self-disappointment, such as loss of gratification. It would be foolish to reduce the complexity of his prolonged crisis to just the experience of

⁹ See Beck et al. (1979:206–207).

self-disappointment. Still, so far as at the heart of the crisis was the fact that Tolstoy no longer saw the value of his activities, it should be legitimate, I think, to talk of self-disappointment on a massive scale.¹⁰

If any principled distinction is to be drawn between shame and self-disappointment, it has to stress the social role of the former at the expense of the latter:

Basic Rejoinder. *The negative judgement of others enters as an essential factor into the experience of shame, but may be absent in the experience of self-disappointment.*

This, at all events, is the strategic thought I want to develop here. We are of course in the dark about how precisely the judgement of others contributes to shame. A straightforward way to articulate the Basic Rejoinder is to say that shame, though not self-disappointment, follows censure by other people. Here we stay faithful to the methodological premiss mentioned in §1. We speculate that shame and self-disappointment represent two emotional responses. Their difference is accounted for by the difference in the kinds of states of affairs that elicit those responses. Shame is elicited by the censure of others, but self-disappointment is not. Focussing on shame, suppose we re-write the formula for shame thus:

T3. *Shame is a response to an injury of self-esteem caused by a real or imaginary censure by others.*¹¹

Yet, as Gabriele Taylor and Bernard Williams have forcefully argued, a formula such as T3 ignores the possibility of solitary shame. For example, a person engaged in perverse sexual activities, such as masturbation, or merely in watching pornographic materials may experience shame—though he neither expects any actual censure from others, nor imagines anyone in particular censuring him. Hence the next proposal: solitary shame occurs when the subject sees himself through the eyes of the others. He is not thereby judging himself with the values of those others. Central to the experience of shame is the bare ability of seeing yourself from the outside:¹²

T4. *Shame is a response to an injury of self-esteem when the subject observes himself, or specifically some of his actions, through the eyes of others.*

¹⁰ We need not deny, on the other hand, that shame as well can lead to depression and sense of hopelessness. See, e.g., Tangney and Dearing (2002:137).

¹¹ This appears to be the view, e.g., in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* 1128b10-36 and in Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* IIaIIae 144:1 responsio.

¹² See Taylor (1985:68) and Williams (1993:81–82). An earlier argument to the same effect is in Merrell Lynd (1971). I ignore here the intermediate view in Wollheim (1999:166–199) which requires an imaginary internalised observer with some very determinate properties.

No particular observer, actual or imagined, with specific properties, is assumed by T4 to feature in the shame experience. The necessary condition is the ability to examine your action from a detached perspective. Nothing more is involved in what is described by Taylor and Williams as observing yourself ‘through the eyes of another’.

It is not clear, however, whether this formula is able to meet the Discrimination Challenge. In self-disappointment the person is similarly called to place his life and accomplishments under scrutiny. He performs that scrutiny himself, but no such scrutiny can begin before he adopts a detached perspective. He has to step back from the present moment and at least pretend to be able to survey his life or a fragment thereof. Only then would he be able to compare the actual course of life to the ideal he wanted it to follow, or compare the actual person he has become to the ideal self he wanted to be.

And then again, the experience of self-disappointment is not unique in this regard. Think of the thoughtful responses to be given to the queries such as: ‘Have you changed in your personal character since the year 2000?’, ‘Have you been a good company director?’, ‘Are you ready for your military service?’ All of them would require judgements of a degree of generality necessitating a detached perspective. To answer such questions we need to stand back and look at ourselves from the outside. Only then should we be able to issue a judgement about our performance or our state. We need not here decide whether this sort of performance judgement is a factor of an emotional experience of self-disappointment, or whether the emotion must itself yield the judgement (or whether the emotion *is* the judgement). On either view the emotion must be accompanied by the same detached perspective. And now, if we do not think of shame as a fleeting sensation, it must similarly be accompanied, in whatever temporal order, by a general judgement of self-assessment. It may, therefore, be that the ‘detached perspective’ or ‘the internalised other’, far from being peculiar features of the shame experience, are in fact necessitated by the very ability to pass a judgement involved in this experience.

The formula T4 thus fails to identify a unique characteristic of the experience of shame. The same characteristic can be attributed to self-disappointment, in which self-esteem drops following an act of self-assessment conducted from a detached perspective. And if that much is granted, we have come back a full circle to T1. Its advantage over the rivals is in the simplicity of the psychological mechanism it ascribes to shame. The complexity added by T4 does not allow us to meet the Discrimination Challenge. Thus, if a more esoteric view like T4 suffers from the same difficulty as T1, there is an incentive to try to solve this difficulty for the simpler view.

4. SHAME AS INJURY TO SELF-RESPECT

Going back now to the simple formula T1, let us take a closer look at the concept of self-esteem. Perhaps it is a wrong reference point for shame to begin with. One might argue that for a person to have self-esteem he should hold himself in high esteem—that is, he should have a favourable attitude towards himself. If so, then according to T1, one can experience shame only if, prior to that experience, one has taken a favourable attitude towards himself. This seems plainly false. Think of a painter who, as a result of years of failure, has lost his self-esteem. We should not infer that the painter cannot now be shamed, in principle, on the account of that loss. (Whether all these failures, while diminishing his self-esteem, yielded shame or some other emotion, is an issue we are currently trying to resolve.) *Vice versa*, we often call someone ‘shameless’, but not at all because his self-esteem cannot be injured. Think of a grovelling flatterer at the court of an Oriental despot.¹³ He is someone who would tolerate insults in order to achieve, through flattery, his goals. Such a person is very likely to be described as shameless. Yet he may have ample self-esteem, based in part on his capacity to maintain his status at the court.

We are then prompted to give a new response to the Discrimination Challenge. When the flatterer’s court status is diminished, or when the painter becomes aware of his artistic failures, their reaction is one of self-disappointment, rather than of shame. What the flatterer lacks, and the painter possesses, on the other hand, is not self-esteem, but *self-respect*. The shamelessness we attribute to the flatterer is entailed by his loss of self-respect. The painter, by contrast, can certainly be shamed, but the occasions of his shame are not the occasions of his artistic failure. He would be ashamed of his poverty, or of his ragged appearance, the qualities that would undermine his status of a worthy member of a community (whether political or local).

The proposed distinction between self-esteem and self-respect is the distinction between ‘goal achievement’ and ‘status possession’.¹⁴ The level of self-esteem is correlated with one’s achievements (recall how Hobbes’ original definition, taken as our starting point, explicitly linked shame to a defect in ‘ability’). Frustration of one’s achievement is an occasion for a diminished self-esteem and consequent self-disappointment. Self-respect is determined by one’s belonging to a group (and so, indirectly, with the judgement of

¹³ I borrow this example from Margalit (1996) where it is put to a different use.

¹⁴ See Taylor (1985:55).

others). When the agent perceives that his status as a member of a group is compromised, self-respect is damaged and shame ensues. Therefore:

T5. *Shame is a response to an injury of self-respect. Self-disappointment is a response to an injury of self-esteem.*

As before, the difference between shame and self-disappointment is explained by the difference in the states of affairs that elicit them. In some ways T5 is an attractive option in dealing with the Discrimination Challenge. Nothing hinges on the relative globality of shame and self-disappointment. When the goal the agent fails to achieve is important to him, self-disappointment can be as global as any experience of shame. The others play a role in the agent's shame. Their role is not, implausibly, to observe the agent and thereby induce shame, but rather to set the criteria of his belonging to a group.

The problem, however, is that the distinction between self-esteem and self-respect is drawn too crudely. (1) Belonging to a group can often be a matter of achievement. Mme Verdurin in Proust's novel does not belong to aristocracy by birth and is very much aware of that. For her to become a salon hostess, and so to be associated with aristocrats, is itself an achievement. A failure to belong should in this instance be an occasion for self-disappointment, rather than shame. (2) What happens when the person is ashamed by the very fact of his belonging to a group (say, Southern plantation owners)?¹⁵ One would presumably like to say that membership in a group is antecedently assigned a certain value, and that the level of self-respect reflects that value. Self-evaluation procedure would take into account the subject's group belonging and goal achievements. The first would encompass his self-respect and the second his self-esteem. Shame would be a reaction to a falling self-respect—falling, that is, relative to its earlier state or to some ideal endorsed by the subject. The problem here is that self-respect so understood is assimilated to self-esteem. One characteristic supposedly separating the two notions was that, while one could have an excess of self-esteem, one could hardly be said to have an excess of self-respect.¹⁶ But now it seems one *could* have excessive self-respect if one attached too much value to membership in the groups one happens to belong to. It seems we have ended up with one single concept of self-esteem trivially covering two areas of value.

We can try to salvage the distinction between self-respect and self-esteem by appealing to the idea of expectations. To satisfy merely your *normal*

¹⁵ I return to this problem in §6.

¹⁶ See Sachs (1981:347–349).

expectations is not an achievement: it is just a routine confirmation of you belonging to a group you have already counted yourself to be a member of. The conception of self-respect dictates to the agent what sort of qualities and behaviour are normally expected from him in his capacity as a member of a particular group. His normal behaviour is shaped by those expectations. Correspondingly, when a person has an idea of his qualities, he also has an expectation of the kind of treatment normally to be accorded to him. The injured self-respect is a result of frustrated normal expectations.¹⁷ By contrast, an achievement failure occurs when *above ordinary* expectations have been frustrated: e.g., Mme Verdurin's association with aristocracy would exceed her normal expectations of herself. Frustrating these expectations, where the goal is significant enough, should call into question the agent's self-esteem, with self-disappointment to ensue.

This version of the theory of self-respect, however, is inadequate for explaining shame. Observe that shame is now made incompatible with achievement failure. Presumably to satisfy your normal expectations should not constitute an achievement: any achievement should satisfy your above ordinary expectations. The objection here is that shame can be generated even in the situation of achievement failure and the frustration of above ordinary expectations.¹⁸ And *vice versa*, self-disappointment can result in the situation of unfulfilled normal expectations. If so, the notion of self-respect is not helpful in meeting the Discrimination Challenge. Consider two examples.

1. Imagine a person who normally tells the truth. This behaviour is routine for him. Now, while such a person normally belongs to the community of truth-tellers, on some occasions it is hard for him to preserve his membership in that community. One day he may find himself in a circumstance where other commitments make it reasonably hard for him to tell the truth.¹⁹ So telling the truth, in this circumstance, would count as an achievement for him. Suppose he does not tell the truth. Then the failure is an achievement failure, and as such, on the present view, it should provide an occasion for a drop in self-esteem and for self-disappointment. Though this *might* happen, it is still, I believe, not what typically *would* happen. The agent is well placed to experience shame instead. The present view delivers a wrong verdict in such a

¹⁷ This is *another* view endorsed in Taylor (1985). See page 79 there. The connection between shame and normal expectations was articulated earlier in Merrell Lynd (1971:164–169).

¹⁸ Thus I endorse the intuition in Morris (1976:61).

¹⁹ Think, e.g., of Neoptolemus in Sophocles' *Philoctetes* 880–913, 1234–1262. An analogous case can be made for Ajax in the eponymous tragedy.

case. According to T5, any failure of above ordinary expectations should result in self-disappointment.

2. To reverse the situation, suppose a virtuoso pianist is rehearsing some of the easier Beethoven sonatinas.²⁰ As he is able to master much more complex pieces, he expects to learn the sonatinas quickly and effortlessly. Despite his expectations, he fails time and again to polish his performance. The failure triggers in him a reflection on his value as a pianist. It is entirely plausible to describe his eventual reaction as disappointment in himself. Here, then, we have an instance of frustrated normal expectations resulting in self-disappointment.

In the light of these difficulties I conclude that the manoeuvre employing the notion of self-respect leads nowhere. At least for the purposes of theorising about shame, we should abandon altogether the distinction between self-respect and self-esteem and use a single concept of self-esteem. But what of the earlier objection to T1 that only a person with high self-esteem should be able to experience shame? A simple response is as follows. How much self-esteem the person has should be established in the procedure of self-evaluation. It would then be wrong to complain that for a person to have any self-esteem he should hold himself in high esteem. One might as well argue that a person of low intelligence has no intelligence at all. Self-esteem is a scalar property coming in degrees, from low to high. At the extreme there should of course be one with no self-esteem whatsoever, but such a person would be a theoretical fiction. His would not be a case of what we commonly describe as 'low self-esteem'.

5. TWO FORMS OF SELF-ESTEEM

Earlier attempts to meet the Discrimination Challenge having been found wanting, let us now make a fresh start. So far in developing the Basic Rejoinder we tried to locate the difference between shame and self-disappointment in the kinds of situations to which these emotions were said to be reactions. The presence of observers, or the level of expectations, should have accounted for those situation-differences. But what if the difference between shame and self-disappointment could be explained by an 'agent-difference', a difference in the kinds of people experiencing the two emotions? What if shame and self-disappointment arise in structurally analogous situations, and their difference is due to the different properties of the respective agents? The relevant agent-difference I want to look at is in the ways of forming

²⁰ Thanks to Marina Gavrilova for this example.

one's self-esteem and its particular parameters. The initial thought is that the person's self-esteem can be interpreted through the perceptions, attitudes, and opinions of the other people. When it is so interpreted, an injury to self-esteem amounts to shame. It is, on the other hand, also possible for the subject's self-esteem not to be determined by the perceptions, attitudes, and opinions of others. The subject might be the only reliable source of his own self-evaluation. In such a case an injury to self-esteem amounts to self-disappointment.

We must exercise care in describing the relation between one's self-esteem and the judgement of others. Think of an individual whose ambition is to become a famous actor popular with the national audience. While he may value acting skills *per se*, his main goal is still to become popular. The judgement the others form of him is an integral part of his self-esteem. If the others—not the whole population of the world, but the members of his target audience—have a low opinion of his skills, his self-esteem necessarily drops. Think also of a painter who does not have a separate, let alone a dominant, goal of achieving fame. The measure of success, and consequently the criterion of self-esteem, that he adopts is the perfection of his abilities according to the aesthetic standard he sets himself. It is, however, impossible for him, as for any artist one can think of, not to yearn for the approval of at least the select few. Those would be some of the fellow artists, or discerning art critics, or refined connoisseurs. They might not even be his contemporaries. The painter should at least hope that the past or the future experts would accord his work the recognition it deserves.

Such in effect is the Rawlsian notion of self-esteem.²¹ It departs from the notion of self-esteem sketched in §2 by including two central constraints. One is that the person, in order to have any degree of self-esteem, should be engaged in the pursuit of activities developing his higher capacities (the 'Aristotelian Principle'). Neither a person building his life around the trivial aspects of his physical appearance, as the formula T1 allows, nor a person pursuing fame for its own sake, can have a high degree of self-esteem. The subject's physical appearance or his fame can at most be indicators of other achievements having independent sources of value. Secondly, the person's self-esteem is said to be correlated with the attitudes his associates form towards him. Those associates need not comprise the political society the person is a member of, or his social milieu. They may number just a few experts in the field of the agent's chosen activity. Their role is to confirm, in the eyes of the agent, his ability and the value of his achievement. A

²¹ See §§65, 67 in Rawls (1999).

withdrawal of their approval would undermine the agent's confidence and lead to a drop in his self-esteem.

There is a sense, therefore, in which the self-esteem of both the vain actor and of the conscientious painter depends upon the judgement of other people. This judgement becomes an integral part of their self-evaluation procedure. Yet both agents, despite profound differences in their ideals and conceptions of good life, have this feature in common: they set the parameters of their self-evaluation relatively independently, without any obvious recourse to the values of those very people whose approval they seek. The actor may be willing, in fact, to influence the values of his audience so as to make them more receptive to his style of acting. In general he is indifferent to the audience's values, as long as his performance elicits the desired reaction. The painter shares artistic values with his associates, and necessarily so. The associates are chosen, however, because of their values, not the other way around. While the painter may be confident in his chosen set of values, he still seeks validation of his achievement and of his work's conformity to those values.

The actor and the painter base their self-esteem on their own values. They exemplify the kind of agent whom we might call the 'Individualist'. There is an altogether different kind of agent who refuses, or is unable, to endorse a set of values independently. This is the 'Follower'. He forms the conception of his own worth with the input provided to him by external authority. Not only is this authority charged with ascertaining the level of his achievement, but it also imposes the parameters of self-evaluation. Of course we need not think that these values are inherently alien to the Follower who in secret pledges allegiance to the values truly his own. The whole idea is to reject the possibility of this division. The Follower's values are fully internalised.²² The terminology of 'imposition' is supposed to indicate the origin of these values and to contrast it with the origin of values involved in self-disappointment.

6. SHAME AS INJURY TO HONOUR

The self-esteem of the Follower thus conceived I will provisionally call 'honour'. The use of this term is apt, at least *prima facie* so, since normally we think that the man's 'honour' necessarily depends on the other people judging the subject honourable and according him the due treatment. Hence another proposal:

²² On the notion of internalisation see Kaufman (1985:37–39).

T6. *Shame is a response to an injury of honour—a form of self-esteem whose parameters are imposed by the surrounding social community. Self-disappointment is a response to an injury of self-esteem when the parameters of the subject's self-esteem are set by the subject himself.*

There are certain advantages in using the terminology of 'honour'. First of all, as we labour to articulate a Hobbesian theory of shame, this terminology is in tune with the original Hobbesian insight: in *Leviathan* VI Hobbes characterises shame as "apprehension of some thing dishonourable". In recent literature a similar distinction was made by John Kekes.²³ The main idea of Kekes' analysis is to contrast 'honour-shame' with 'worth-shame'. Honour-shame is based on values of a moral tradition governing extant social morality. Worth-shame is based on 'personal morality'. Presumably it is a product of the subject's own ethical analysis. So honour-shame looks like an analogue of shame *qua* injury to honour, and worth-shame is analogous to self-disappointment.²⁴

But perhaps most importantly, the view linking shame to honour has been a permanent fixture in anthropological and ethnographic research for many decades. A classic definition of honour in anthropological literature runs as follows:

Honour is the value of a person in his own eyes, but also in the eyes of his society. It is his estimation of his own worth, his *claim* to pride, but it is also the acknowledgement of that claim, his excellence recognised by society, his *right* to pride. [...] Honour, therefore, provides a nexus between the ideals of a society and their reproduction in the individual through his aspiration to personify them. Pitt-Rivers (1966:21–22)²⁵

The definition is at once brilliant and frustrating. While it elegantly captures many essential elements of honour, it also seems to say *too much*. 'Right to pride' and 'worth', for example, are evidently different concepts. How can they collaborate to produce one single concept of honour? The truth of the matter is that, like many other abstract terms—such as 'being', 'truth', 'justice', and indeed 'shame'—the term 'honour' is ambiguous. The ambiguity is not semantic, as with homonyms 'bank' (in 'river bank') and 'bank' (in 'investment bank'), but pragmatic. The manifold uses of the term 'honour'

²³ See Kekes (2006:173–202). Earlier versions with a slightly different emphasis are in Kekes (1986) and Kekes (1993). Kekes' account is influenced by Isenberg (1973).

²⁴ Well, in truth this superficial similarity is misleading, but the details have to be ignored here.

²⁵ An early interpretation of honour along these lines is in Westermarck (1917:137). Elsewhere Westermarck loosely associates shame with 'wounded pride' (page 139). Moreover, his discussion of lying in chapter 30 yields a notion of shame as injury to honour.

and its derivatives purport to convey related concepts. Let me mention several such ambiguities.

Cause and effect.—Often, while the speaker asserts that an action is honourable, he would imply that its causes or effects, or both, are also honourable. Causes and effects receive their putative honourableness courtesy of that action. Thus ‘honour’ can stand for a quality or for a material sign of quality.²⁶ We confer ‘honour’ or ‘honours’ on an individual in recognition of his quality, a quality which we deem ‘honourable’. So a medal is given to a soldier, land to a knight, or the Nobel Prize to a scientist in recognition of their (or their labour’s) respective qualities. In other contexts, ‘honour’ can mean ‘prestige’ or ‘reputation’. Since greater prestige normally leads to greater power, ‘honour’ in such contexts can refer simply to power.²⁷

Morality.—‘Honour’ and its derivatives can designate a quality morally charged, or a quality morally neutral.²⁸ An English edition of *De Officiis* in Cicero (1991) translates ‘*honestas*’ as ‘honourableness’ where the term is supposed to refer to a major moral virtue. The translation has a plausible rationale: in our modern use the utterance ‘You acted honourably’ will often describe an act of fulfilling your obligation and signal a moral approval by the speaker. Yet, on the other hand, when the duellists followed their codes of honour, they should not necessarily be taken to follow (their own) moral codes.²⁹

Right and quality.—Following Pitt-Rivers, a number of anthropologists have practically defined ‘honour’ as a right, rather than a quality. Honour, on this view, is the right to respect from partners in social interaction.³⁰ Admittedly this will do justice to the locutions of ‘having honour’ and ‘losing honour’ (though the same goes for quality). Still the definition is of dubious utility. Should not the right to respect be itself based on having honour and acting honourably? It is natural to say that to have honour is to claim the right to respect in social interaction. So, if honour is a certain quality or a kind of behaviour, then we are able to say that honour warrants the

²⁶ In *Leviathan* X Hobbes uses ‘dignity’ to refer to public worth of a person, while using the verbal form of ‘honour’ to refer to material acknowledgements of this worth. See also the discussion of inner/outer honour in Stewart (1994:12–21).

²⁷ See Black-Michaud (1975:180–181).

²⁸ Compare the precedence/virtue distinction in Pitt-Rivers (1966).

²⁹ See Peltonen (2003:35–44) and Nye (1993:15–16).

³⁰ See Stewart (1994:21, 151–153) and also Wikan (2008:57, 60). Compare the mention of right in Pitt-Rivers’ quotation above.

continuing enjoyment of the right to respect. Dishonourable behaviour warrants a loss of the right.³¹

Concept and content.—Some anthropologists claim that understanding of honour is shared by Mediterranean peoples, others deny this. Some argue that ‘honour’ is present in Asian and European cultures alike, others deny this. And some argue that honour has become obsolete in the modern Western culture, while others deny this.³² These disagreements, I think, are not strictly conceptual. If we interpret honour as values, qualities, and patterns of behaviour approved by the given community, then conceivably this *concept* is shared by any human since the dawn of history. What might not be shared is the content of honour—namely, which values, qualities, and patterns are in fact approved by the given community. An explanation of this latter claim is factual and anthropological. Observations over different uses of honour expressions would reveal what the given community actually approves of.

The lesson here is that T6 must be treated with care. Shame, if linked to honour, will inherit its ambiguities. For example, like honour, shame can be understood as a procedure—pillory, blackening, or simply describing one’s act as ‘shameful’—or it can be a result of such a procedure. Shame can have a moral component, indicating a transgression of a moral rule, such as telling lies. Or it can be morally neutral when it is a response to inadequacy of an intellectual skill.

All the same, these ambiguities, once properly parsed, should not automatically disqualify the theory T6. In saying that shame is injury to honour we claim that shame is experienced by a person who determines his worth in accordance with the community’s hierarchy of values. It is an emotional reaction of such a person to the perceived damage of his worth. Secondly, these ambiguities are widespread and can be located in other theories of shame as well. For example, some authors aligned shame with a loss of privacy.³³ But, a Hobbesian might argue, loss of privacy is merely a causal factor in the loss of self-esteem. It is indicative of an individual’s failure where his public image is damaged, or where, more specifically, a certain quality is

³¹ The full import of the honour-right linkage is unclear before we have clarified the meaning of ‘respect’ (Stewart himself remains non-committal). If ‘respect’ stands for some unspecified degree of esteem, the linkage is plausible if commonplace. If ‘respect’ stands for the Kantian notion of respect, then ‘honour’ would stand, much more controversially, for the Kantian notion of dignity. The latter idea has been explored lately in legal and political philosophy. See Krause (2002), Kaufman (2013). That the concepts of dignity and honour should be kept apart is urged in Berger (1970).

³² See Berger (1970) and also Gehlen (1989:73–91), especially page 86.

³³ For a powerful statement see Merrell Lynd (1971) and, more recently, Velleman (2006). I discuss the role of privacy in shame in Berkovski (2014).

revealed, a quality which the individual would wish to keep hidden from others. His shrinking public esteem would then lead to a corresponding damage of self-esteem.

The real problem with T6 is that its scope is too narrow. It envisages a homogeneous isolated society—a Greek mountainous village, a Bedouin tribe—which tends to offer relative stability in the set of values determining the individual's worth. The individual's task, if he is to preserve his honour, is to satisfy those values. But now imagine a far more dynamic and pluralistic society. In such a society there could be situations where the subject will be ashamed of a *positive* opinion others have of him (the situation already mentioned in §4). A bourgeois, accepted in his bourgeois social circle, may feel ashamed of belonging to that circle and have aspirations to be accepted by aristocracy. An immigrant may be ashamed of belonging to the immigrant community to which he in fact belongs. A Jew, ashamed of his Jewishness, may wish to hide it and pass as a German. And a philosopher, at least vaguely ashamed of being merely a philosopher, may wish to be recognised as a logician. All such cases, with the inevitable crude schematism of their descriptions, are cases of different communities and their conflicting values.

None of these individuals is 'dishonoured' in any conventional sense. How would T6 interpret their situations? Perhaps by saying that the individual decides which values are 'honourable'. With this decision, the individual is supposed to merely move in and out of the alternative communities. A Jew, for instance, should first count himself as part of the German community in order for him to be able to perceive as 'shameful' his prior membership in the Jewish community. This *ad hoc* response misrepresents the problem. The individual is ashamed of what he is now, not of what he was before. The predicament of that Jew is the alienation from his *own* Jewish community. His shame is due to his continuing Jewishness and the apparently futile ambition to possess the characteristics of a German.

In the second place, the decision will be done on the basis of certain values which would transcend the native values of the individual's community. It need not come as a result of critical deliberation. It can be whimsical and arbitrary. But the very fact of the conscious adoption of alternative values shows that the individual no longer places himself under the authority of his native community. There is no longer any sense in which the parameters of self-evaluation should be said to be 'imposed' on the individual. The Jew may be born and raised in rural Silesia. His contempt for the shtetl signals the loosening grip of the local community: he no longer follows its values. But his release from its authority does not, so one would think, rule out the possibility of shame. As Robinson Crusoe was eventually not a member of any community, no values could possibly be imposed on him. Yet it is a long shot to say that, just for these reasons, he was no longer susceptible to shame.

7. CONFORMITY

The view that shame requires a community imposing its value judgements upon the individual is surely inaccurate. Still, the evidence assembled in support of T6 is to be reckoned with. Injuries to honour, with 'honour' understood along the lines of Pitt-Rivers' definition, are paradigmatic instances of shame. A theory of shame unable to respect this fact would be empirically inadequate. Given this conflict, it is worth reexamining T6. Our purpose is to identify the feature that makes honour so attractive a category in the explanation of shame.

Observe that to have honour, of the sort encountered among French musketeers, Greek villagers, or Sinai Bedouins, one has to comply with a given class of rules governing individual conduct. Sometimes, as in the honour of duelling, the rules are duly codified and recorded. Far more often they are imprecise and kept at an informal level, on occasions allowing unusual flexibility in application. In either case, whether rigid or not, written or informal, they come in the form of a *canon*. They represent a standard to which the individual, if he is to preserve his honour, ought to *conform*. Furthermore, in the cases explored by ethnographers and anthropologists, the source of their authority is external to the individual in the very simple sense that it is not the individual himself. The source may reside in the national tradition, the lineage, or the local customs. In still other cases, as, e.g., in ancient Greece, the source will be traced to gods or the state.³⁴ At a more abstract level, however, the rules and the behavioural patterns and qualities they certify can be seen as manifestations of values and ideals prevalent in the given community. The governance of honour will be attributed to these values that the rules are designed to implement. So it should be possible to speak of canonical values, once again not necessarily put down on paper or carved in stone. Their central feature relevant to the generation of shame is that they are interpreted by the subject as being *received* from an authority external to each particular individual. The demand of conformity, inherited by the rules implementing those values, necessarily follows.

A shameable individual accepts the canon and sets upon the task to conform to it. But no such process is at work, e.g. in the case of a painter. While the painter endorses the ideals of artistic performance, they do not come to him prearranged by an external source. The ideals must be adapted by him to his own condition, and hardly anything in their set is non-negotiable. The painter sees himself, not as a passive recipient of ideals, but as their author or co-author, the other possible co-authors being the members of his circle of

³⁴ See Cohen (1991).

associates. The Individualist, such as the painter, is free in creating his own values. He is free to institute his own rules to implement these values, and his conduct, in following them, is not dictated by the attitude of conformity.

It follows that the Individualist counts himself as a judge of his own worth. But so might do the Follower. The identity of the judges of honour may be determined by their belonging to a social group, of which the subject himself may also be a member. Yet, in contrast to the Individualist, his authority in evaluating his own worth will be limited. First, the authority of the judges would generally be derived from the canon, and not the other way around. Second, his task would be mechanical: he will have to verify whether his behaviour and attitudes match the behaviour and attitudes prescribed by the canon. His authority is restricted to verifying the correct application of canonical rules.

This contrast should explain the shameability of the Jew. He is someone trying to conform to the values, perhaps half-imaginary, of the German society. His perceived failure, as he interprets it, is due to his Jewishness, the ongoing belonging to the Jewish community. The German values grounding his self-esteem are of course *given* in advance, though not imposed. He strives to fit the already fixed values and makes no attempt to effect any change in them. This description of the attempt to 'belong' matches, I think, other characters mentioned above. The immigrant, the philosopher, the bourgeois, desperately wish to exist in accordance with a set of values, rules, and behavioural patterns laid out in advance. This combination of passivity and intense desire sets up the conditions of shame.

But what of Robinson Crusoe? Shouldn't he, after a sufficient number of years in isolation, be someone who is totally free to mould his identity with whatever values he pleases to choose? What community would he be trying to join and to whose values would he wish to conform? The answer, I hope, is clear by now. Total physical isolation is no obstacle to the fixation of values in the way peculiar to the Follower. Crusoe can create through his memory, and sometimes in his imagination, a certain norm and equip it with the concrete rules which he resolves to follow. He may believe that this is how one ought to be, simply by nature of what he is. He may come to believe that he should be a God-fearing man simply because men were created by God and that is how God wants them to be. He will not perceive these values and rules as something he himself created and something that he can revise. And so he will turn himself into a passive follower without any material input from the actual authority.

The essential characteristic of the Follower is, therefore, his attitude of conforming to the given norm. Such a norm, I have now argued, may be provided to him by an external agent (typically a community), but it can also be

created in his imagination. In either case, he denies himself the capacity and authority to revise it. His default outlook is to live in accordance with it. This, then, is the feature which made honour a plausible locus of shame. The experience of self-disappointment characteristic of the Individualist is grounded in his perception that the norms he *de facto* follows are his own creation. As such, they can at any moment be subjected to revision and dismissal. Certainly, once the Individualist decides that he should live and act according to a certain ideal, he tries to follow the rules promoting such an ideal. His life need not have any less stability than the life of the Follower. But he never loses sight of the reasons for following particular rules and behaves in particular ways. Sometimes, as already noted, the reasons can be thorough and critically examined, while on other occasions they are fairly arbitrary, not going much beyond 'I will to be such and such person, and I will to act in *this way*.'

Lest the two types of agents will be seen as irrelevant abstractions, note that there need be no solid separation line between them. First of all, it should be rare, if at all possible, to find individuals who accept the conception of their worth as entirely determined by others, or alternatively those who have an entirely self-determined conception of their worth. A more nuanced approach calls for distinguishing among different parts of self-esteem. Our concern with some of these parts is the concern for conformity to standards, while with other parts, that concern is much less prominent. Thus a painter can autonomously set the value of professional activity. He can cite detailed reasons why the activity has for him the value it actually has, and how it should be estimated. He is an Individualist with respect to painting. But, on the other hand, he might derive the value of family life from the judgement of others. He may blindly accept the norms of the canon dominant in his surroundings and wish to conform to them without ever asking why he should do so. For such a person shame emerges in the context of family life. The failure to conform to the behavioural standards of its practice need not be his own failure. He will feel shame if, for instance, his son becomes an alcoholic, or his teenage daughter has a child out of wedlock. His self-esteem drops, because being a father to such a son or such a daughter simply does not match the standard qualities of a family man.

Secondly, mixed reasons can lead to the endorsement of a certain value. A person may wish to be a painter both because of the intrinsic value he places in painting and because the community around him approves of such a life. The two reasons will be jointly sufficient in his choice of pursuing the painting career.³⁵ Would such a person, *qua* a painter, be ashamed or disappointed in himself when convinced of the insufficient quality of his artistic

³⁵ For a discussion of jointly sufficient reasons see Herman (1993:6–22).

output? One answer is that this is exactly the case when the two emotions will morph into each other without the possibility of telling them apart. And if one reason is more dominant (with ‘dominance’ to be explained separately), then the subject’s response will be more adequately described in terms of the corresponding emotion. Another answer, I think, is that in the actual circumstance of the experience the subject will concentrate his attention on one of the sources of value. A painter is publicly derided for the quality of his painting. This humiliating act some time later results in a dropping self-esteem. For a painter, steadfast in his individualist criteria of excellence, self-disappointment will ensue. But for a painter adopting the aesthetic criteria of his critics the experience will be best characterised as shame.³⁶

8. SOCIALITY AND SUPERIORITY

The proposal emerging from the discussion in §7 is, I am afraid, less neat than the earlier ones. In its abbreviated form it is as follows:

T7. Shame is a response to an injury of self-esteem where the parameters of self-esteem depend on the conformity to antecedently given norms. Self-disappointment is a response to an injury of self-esteem where the parameters of self-esteem are freely selected and developed by the subject himself.

The Basic Rejoinder given back in §3 is *largely* intact. Self-disappointment remains a non-social emotion, since on the view defended here, it requires the subject to shape some parameters of his self-esteem according to his own design. This in turn requires a hierarchy of values often clashing with the values of the subject’s community. Shame is a socially determined emotion, so far as it presupposes the shaping of self-esteem, or parts of it, on the basis of a pre-formatted canon of values derived from an external source. But this is so only for the most part. If Crusoe’s example offers any guidance, the source may be in the agent himself. Perhaps, however, we should say that the fact of Crusoe creating and maintaining his values and norms and striving to conform to them signals the emergence of a society—a very small society indeed, a society of one. This would be an elegant solution, but obviously more discussion is needed to establish it. Bear in mind, on the other hand, that shame is not a social emotion in the sense of requiring a social setting, a person being observed by others. To the extent that it can be experienced in solitude—when the subject runs no risk of being found out to possess a shameful quality—shame is rather asocial. Nor is shame social in the sense that the

³⁶ The viability of this strategy, at least in the reasoning about the present example, depends on a principled distinction between shame and humiliation. I defend this distinction elsewhere.

values enabling it should be considered alien to the subject. For them to be so considered, either (1) there must be independently formed values, the subject's truly own values, possibly repressed by the society, or (2) the subject should be prevented, again by social forces, from developing a basic capacity for value formation. Neither of these conditions should obtain for the subject to be able to experience shame. For the subject to have honour and to attribute significance to following norms, he need not be denied intellectual and moral development that would allow him to provide justification for his hierarchy of values. And since the subject conceives of himself as part of the community (save for marginal cases as in Robinson Crusoe's where the conflict does not arise anyway), he would see no point in developing his own values running contrary to the prevailing values of the community.³⁷

The preceding account might create an impression that shame is inferior to self-disappointment. Its inferiority can be taken in two related senses: cognitive and moral. Self-disappointment seems to envisage a mature agent given to self-reflection. Naturally, he is taken to be someone with advanced moral consciousness. On the other hand, shame characterises the agent exclusively concerned with conformity. As such, he is indifferent to the reasons behind the rules and norms he upholds. His moral consciousness is underdeveloped.³⁸ This impression is mistaken. Even though its locus is in conformity, shame is not concerned with conformity to *mere* appearances. Both shame and self-disappointment are emotions of self-evaluation. In shame the individual is prompted to re-examine his self, the course of his life—in the light of the given norms and values. The last qualification is indeed dropped for the case of self-disappointment. However, the reasons for endorsement of certain values can be fairly primitive. Sometimes the Individualist would select his values pretty much arbitrarily. So in this regard there should be no *a priori* superiority of one emotion over the other, or of one type of agent (the Individualist) over the other (the Follower).

There is a sense in which any experience of shame is 'moral'. Shame, along with guilt and pride, is a moral emotion so far as it turns the critical gaze of the individual toward himself.³⁹ Any self-examination is claimed to bear the marks of a moral enquiry. But there is still room for a meaningful question as to how morally justified or morally relevant one's shame is. Such a question is presumably asked from the standpoint of codified morality charged with specifying one's obligations. It can be paraphrased into a

³⁷ For a similar view of shame's sociality (entailed by a different theory of shame) see Deonna et al. (2012:127–154).

³⁸ This is the line of argument taken in Kekes (2006).

³⁹ See Wollheim (1999:149).

question about self-esteem. We will ask whether the self-esteem of the particular individual is based, at least in part, on morally significant values, the values that relate to moral obligations and well-being of others. Injury to the aspects of honour based on those values will result in what is sometimes called ‘moral shame’.⁴⁰ It is contrasted with a reaction to an injury of self-esteem in those aspects of it that are not morally significant. A person may be ashamed of his cultural or economic background, or of physical deformities of his body. His shame is then said to be merely ‘natural’.

The problem here is that it is difficult to see exactly which qualities and actions are, or are not, morally significant. The distinction gets blurred, for example, when we consider someone like Sophocles’ Ajax.⁴¹ His shame arguably did not have to do much with moral obligations to others (or indeed to himself). Did his slaughtering of the oxen violate any of his moral duties narrowly construed? Should he even have been responsible for his act of madness? Athene was the immediate cause. Still, Ajax evidently takes the slaughtering to be his act, a manifestation of his failure. He is ashamed of what he did and of what he is, or has become. This increasingly looks like a genuine moral concern.

Perhaps a better ground for the moral/natural shame distinction is given by the already mentioned contrast between appearance and reality. This brings us back to the first, weaker sense of morality. A morally shamed agent will be someone concerned about what he really is. A naturally shamed individual will be concerned solely with how he appears to others. Moral shame (*shame simpliciter*) is a result of criticism and self-examination. Natural shame is a result of failing to conform, merely outwardly, to the standards of actual observers (compare T3). In Fontane’s happy aphorism, the individual prone to moral shame ‘lives for himself’, while the one prone to natural shame ‘lives for others’. The type of self-esteem grounding natural shame would function analogously to the code of etiquette, a set of rules designed to prepare the individual to appear in a good light in the society and maintain his standing there. A physically deformed man, a destitute man, will forever be condemned to fail its standards.

This is a fruitful distinction. But I think that natural shame so classified is nothing other than ‘embarrassment’. Far from being a mild version of shame, embarrassment is now revealed, contrary to a common perception, as an emotion with an entirely different mechanism. It deserves a separate treatment.⁴² Other questions should inevitably follow, such as the question whether etiquette can be totally devoid of moral significance, and whether

⁴⁰ See Rawls (1999:390).

⁴¹ See Williams (1993:75–87).

⁴² I discuss it in Berkovski (2014).

there can be a clean separation between ‘culture’ and ‘civility’.⁴³ As this large subject falls outside the scope of our discussion, let me repeat that Hobbesian shame, in any of its variants, would necessarily qualify as ‘moral shame’. This is so as long as ‘morality’ is not restricted to the system of obligations, but is taken to refer to values and conduct. Another issue left here unresolved is the moral utility of shame. This problem arises in the context of defending shame against the critics, such as Isenberg and Kekes, who deem it incompatible with good life.⁴⁴ Our discussion, limited as it is by the task of characterising the notion of shame and meeting the Discrimination Challenge, does not touch on this further issue either.

9. REVIEW

Let me recapitulate the argument of this paper. In response to the Discrimination Challenge, the initial suggestion is to link shame, but not self-disappointment, to the judgement of others. The previous attempts to flesh out this response have failed. As they all traced the difference between shame and self-disappointment to the kind of situations generating the two emotions (‘situation-difference’), a simple tweak is available: we can try to explain the difference by the kinds of agents susceptible to these emotions (‘agent-difference’). The two kinds of agents will be distinguished by the structure of their self-esteem. The Follower is someone whose self-esteem depends on the judgement of others, and the Individualist sets the parameters of his self-esteem independently of their judgement. So, rather naturally, we should see shame as a response to an injury of honour. However, apart from the complexities in the notion of honour, this view falls through due to the notion of value imposition it contains. But it has also another idea, that of conformity to the given norm. This idea finally delivers the answer to the Discrimination Challenge. Shame characterises a subject concerned with the conformity to a norm. Self-disappointment is experienced by a subject whose concern includes the validity of the norm (or of the value, or of the rule) itself, rather than the conformity to it.

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⁴³ See Elias (1982).

⁴⁴ See, e.g., Manion (2002).

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