

Shame

AND THE

Self



Francis J. Broucek

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*For Peggy, Alison, Karen,
Margaret, and Eric*

Foreword

When I was exploring the literature on shame for my first paper on the subject, I came upon a newly published article by Frank Broucek in the *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, "Shame and Its Relationship to Early Narcissistic Developments." In Broucek's work, I recognized that I had encountered an intellectual soulmate, a fellow traveler/shamenik who shared with me a perspective on the significance of shame to the self. After the shock wave eased, referring to the experience that follows the first reading of a work that seems to articulate most of the thoughts one is struggling to understand and put together about a given subject, I contacted Dr. Broucek to discuss his ideas, and to request a response to my paper on shame. Thus began an exchange over the years, which culminates now in my excitement at reading the current volume, and my pleasure and pride—a particular antonym of shame, as noted by Broucek—at being invited to write the Foreword.

Shame indeed remains central to narcissistic developments. And Broucek, to his credit, has included in this book the pivotal thoughts from his 1982 article about the *egotistical* (or grandiose, "idealized," haughty, and "unconflicted") and *dissociated* (or devalued, vulnerable) types of narcissist. Shame seems absent in the first, and "engulfing" in the second. To these types, he adds a new third, the *turbulent* type, who expresses "violent lability" between the manifest and dissociated types of narcissism. (I have referred to this lability as the "Dialectic of Narcissism" [Morrison, 1989].) Broucek further notes that shame may *instigate* the creation of egotistical narcissism as a defense against a sense of

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vulnerability, as well as the "splitting off" from awareness of grandiosity itself (analogous to Kohut's "vertical split").

This present volume takes Broucek's earlier thoughts about shame and narcissism and carries them into new realms (see Chapter 4, specifically) based as they are on intriguing conceptualizations about objective self-awareness. Here, he refers to the infant's evolving awareness, at about 18 months, of his condition as object in the eyes of others, leading to public awareness of the self, and self-awareness based on observation by the exterior 'other.' And with objective self-awareness comes the subjective experience of shame, a reflection of the "objectification" of the self (which Broucek refers to as a subject-OBJECT, or object alone). The constructs of objective self-awareness and objectification play major roles in Broucek's subsequent elaborations on shame.

Similarly, the distinction between the affect or feeling of shame, and the *sense of shame*, is an important addition to Broucek's former thinking. A *sense of shame* refers to "anticipatory shame," or "the discretionary function which makes us pause before saying or doing something which would arouse the painful feeling of shame in ourselves or another." Thus, the sense of shame serves as a "permanent safeguard of our psychic life." With attention to the sense of shame, then, Broucek anticipates his own, more gentle, lability between the pathological and the socially beneficial elements of shame that informs the rest of the book.

Building on these theoretical constructs, he turns to the clinical manifestations and applications of shame phenomena. Here, his unique and provocative qualities as a psychoanalytically-informed psychotherapist come to the fore. Often using his interest in shame as a background, he takes us into some controversial and unusual arenas and personal predilections, speaking to issues that he has clearly been mulling over for many years. I was fascinated to watch the author reveal himself as radically independent of and challenging to the psychoanalytic establishment, and at the same time, as a champion of some 'old-fashioned,' earthy values guided by the 'sense of shame' that he had elaborated upon in the theoretical section.

As a practicing psychoanalyst informed by the contributions of self-psychology, I was pleased to share Broucek's appreciation of the Kohutian perspective as a framework for understanding shame. In fact, his formulation of SUBJECT-object seems to have many elements in common with Kohut's 'self-object.' Broucek's independence of classical psychoanalysis is indicated by his suggestion that analysis itself often functions as a narcissistic enterprise (for both patient and analyst), and his related conceptualization of the role of transference in inducing shame, particularly for the patient, but potentially for the analyst as well. According to Broucek, the concept of transference implies an asymmetric relationship in which the patient becomes objectified, his feelings toward the analyst serving as the object of study rather than a source generating equivalent affective response from the analyst. Broucek believes that this mutually accepted 'arrangement' of patient objectification frequently induces shame.

These perspectives on the shame-inducing structure of psychotherapy itself, the transference in particular, and the narcissistic foundation of psychoanalysis are interesting observations, and clearly warn us of the dangers inherent in systematic 'perpetration' of rigid, experience-distant psychoanalytic interpretation and technique. His observations on the shame-inducing asymmetry of the analytic relationship, and on the analyst's lack of responsiveness to patients' expressions of desire in the transference, create helpful guidelines for attention to shame in treatment.

However, it seems to me that Broucek occasionally offers a reductionistic exposition of psychoanalysis, unmodified by more recent contributions to technique. For instance, emphasis on psychoanalysis as a two-person psychology (Modell, 1984) addresses the interactive quality of treatment that implies sensitivity to shame-induction. Similarly, Gill's (1984) attention to the here-and-now importance of the analyst in transference interaction, as well as Schwaber's (1983) focus on the analyst's contributions to transference feelings and 'psychic reality,' implicitly address the analytic potential for generation of shame. These recent additions to the theory of psychoanalytic technique should be considered as the reader follows Broucek's stimulating

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analysis of shame-induction and objectification in his clinical examples and discussion.

In the last section of his book, Broucek offers some surprises. In the chapter "Shame and Sexuality," he takes us back in time to a period when an interpersonal, intimate, and tender view of sex predominated, in which love and attachment to the object were viewed as an integral part of sexuality. Essentially, he suggests that the separation of sex as drive from sex as sensual attachment to the beloved object began with Freud, and has been elaborated into narcissistic, objectified states of pornography and sex-as-commerce, which are so prominent today. From Broucek's perspective, anticipated shame (at the separation of sexuality from the loved object) protects against the isolation of autoerotic sex that seems to prevail in contemporary society. Fundamentally, he presents a case for a sense of shame that will safeguard the self and support true intimacy and love—sexual and otherwise. This viewpoint relates again to Kohut's thinking—in this case, the Kohutian notion of autoerotic sex as a disintegration product of a self striving to preserve some quality of cohesion. On the other hand, Broucek's implicit emphasis on object love differs from Kohut's view on a separate developmental line for narcissism.

Finally, Broucek takes us on a fascinating journey through the ramifications of objectification, initiated by a bone-chilling, detailed interview with the 'exotic dancer' Olympia, who asserts right off "I am totally without shame." According to Broucek, the major instrument of contemporary objectification is the camera. He goes on to illustrate the intrusive, shame-inducing elements of the 'image' as perpetrated by that instrument. This attention to imaging also includes current medical emphasis on various 'scans' and 'resonances,' which play a part in the psychiatric importance placed on the (objectified) brain and its various 'visualizations.'

Reading *Shame and the Self* acquainted me with the latest thinking of an esteemed colleague and fellow toiler in the field of shame. As always, Frank Broucek brings a probing illumination to his investigation, as he sheds light on this most visual of the affects. It's fun to follow the turns of his mind, to accompany him on the journey that shame promotes. As always, Broucek is

a skilled, compassionate clinician; but more, someone who can lead the subject of shame to a 'Jungian' turn, then a dip into the philosophical roots of psychology, then again a move into the mystical or the religious underpinnings of Christianity. No matter what the approach to shame, though, he is guided by a dedicated humanism that somehow manages to lift the study of shame from its potential burdensome heaviness into an uplifting optimism.

Move on, then, from this Foreword into what will be for you, the reader, an interesting, provocative, and (paradoxically) enjoyable study of shame.

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Preface

The psychoanalyst D. W. Winnicott said something to the effect that much clinical writing was autobiographical and represented an attempt to complete (or at least extend) the writer's analysis. I would certainly include the present work in that category, although I hope it is more than simply an extension of self-analysis. "Art begins in a wound . . ." says John Gardner (1978), and he goes on to say

What we mean by "wound" in this case of course is some wound to personality and self-confidence, something that attacks or threatens the dignity and self-respect of the artist and must be overcome if his personality is to be healthy. The wound may take any number of forms: doubt about one's parentage, fear that one is a fool or freak, the crippling effect of psychological trauma or the potentially crippling effect of alienation from the society in which one feels at home, whether or not any such society really exists outside the fantasy of the artist. (p. 181)

It seems to me that Gardner's "wound" is anything that produces a heavy burden of shame for the artist and, as Gardner suggests, the artist's creativity stems from an attempt to heal that wound. I would extend Gardner's observations to include not only artists but many people who are engaged in creative work. The present work grew out of my own woundedness and gained added impetus through my gradually increasing awareness of a widespread human woundedness, shame based, which

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was most clearly evident in the hospitals, clinics, and consulting rooms where I spend my working life.

In developing my ideas about shame I have benefited enormously from the opportunity to share observations and exchange ideas with several respected colleagues who have made important contributions to the recent literature on shame. Donald Nathanson and I agreed and disagreed about various issues, but our lengthy telephone conversations (he lives in Philadelphia, I live in Kansas City) were always stimulating and helpful to me in clarifying certain aspects of the complicated nature of shame phenomena. I am also grateful to Andrew Morrison, who cheerfully agreed to write the foreword for this work. Morrison's work on shame and narcissism and my own fit rather closely together in most respects. Because of that our exchanges over the years have been very friendly and mutually supportive. My debt to Silvan Tomkins is also considerable. He generously spent a great many hours educating me on the subtleties of his affect theory, and our talks often included many in-depth discussions about shame.

Seymour Weingarten and his editorial staff at The Guilford Press deserve considerable credit for their efforts to give greater coherence and better form to my manuscript. Also my thanks to the anonymous reviewer who made many valuable suggestions for improving the overall organization of the book.

Special thanks and appreciation are owed to my wife, Peggy, who has endured the strains and sacrifices that accompany an undertaking such as this one, which consumed countless evenings and weekends. In addition to her patience and support she offered many valuable suggestions on stylistic matters and enriched the content of the work by bringing to my attention various materials from diverse sources relevant to my subject. Thanks also to my daughter Margaret who read earlier drafts of various chapters and with her writer's eye for syntactical and grammatical atrocities helped me produce a more lucid manuscript.

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Introduction

