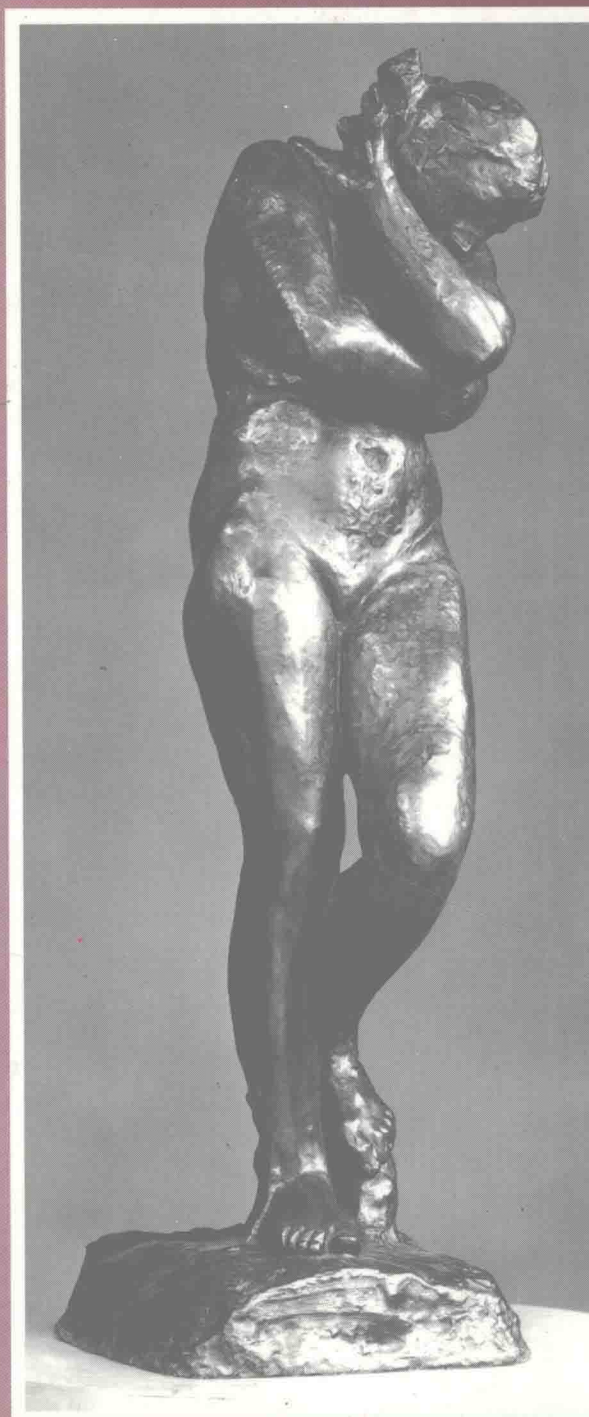


The Widening Scope of Shame

edited by

Melvin R. Lansky
Andrew P. Morrison



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THE WIDENING SCOPE OF SHAME

To Karen, Madeleine, and Joshua
M. R. L

To Rachel
A. P. M.



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Preface

Why another book on shame? A significant number of first-rate contributions to the study of shame have appeared since the rediscovery of and expanded attention to shame began in 1971. Prior to that time, psychoanalytic interest in shame was marginal and fragmentary compared with the central position it had occupied in the very earliest psychoanalytic writings.

The year 1971 saw the publication of two major works that ushered in an era of psychoanalytic attention to shame and an explosion of investigation and writing on the subject. In that year, Helen Block Lewis's *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis* and Heinz Kohut's *The Analysis of the Self* were published. Lewis's work, combining sophisticated research methodology and nuanced therapeutic investigation, convincingly demonstrated the relationship of anger and impasse in the therapeutic situation to antecedent shame experiences that had not been acknowledged by either therapist or patient. Kohut's studies of lack of self cohesion and selfobject transferences in the narcissistic personality disorders not only ushered in the self psychology movement but also enhanced psychoanalytic understanding of affect in relation to self and that other used for the purpose of solidifying the sense of self. Shame, a major accompaniment to disorders of personality cohesion, came into sharp focus and increased prominence and remained an affect of major importance not only to those committed to self-psychology but also to mainstream psychoanalysts who acquired new-found appreciation of the nuances of affect in relation to self and object.

Important contributions to the study of shame followed. Leon Wurmser's (1981) *The Mask of Shame* remains a seminal and groundbreaking addition to the study of shame. Important collections of essays under the editorship of Helen Block Lewis (1987) and of Donald Nathanson (1987) put shame "on the map" of therapeutic attention. Influential single-authored books include those by Schneider (1977), Morrison (1989), Scheff (1990), Retzinger (1991), Lansky (1992), Broucek (1992), Nathanson (1992), and M. Lewis (1993).

Where does this book stand in relation to its predecessors? It is put forward not merely to repeat or update what has already been well done; its aim, rather, is to provide a broader perspective than can be found in any single existing volume intended for, but not limited to, clinicians. The book traces the evolution and current status not only of psychoanalytic thinking on shame but also that of biologic, social theoretical, philosophical, and research psychological contributions. It considers, as well, approaches centered on marriage and the family along with those drawn from general psychotherapeutic, medical, and religious contexts. Broad-based as it is, this book may profitably be read cover to cover, not used simply as a handbook or a reference work.

This collection necessarily reflects the outlook of its editors on the issue of shame. Although both editors are psychoanalysts heavily steeped in psychoanalytic discipline who draw from the entire range of psychoanalytic contributions, the work reflects a synthesis of a relatively mainstream position (MRL) with one closer to that of self psychology (APM). Despite these differences, which we hope will enhance the scope of the book, we share the following convictions:

1. That psychoanalytic thinking is, at its best, broad-based and integrated—an orchestra, as it were, and not a single instrument or type of instrument. Too much emphasis on any one paradigm or school of thought limits the application of psychoanalytic thinking to a narrow set of phenomena, explanatory concepts, and psychotherapeutic approaches. Both editors see the recognition of (often hidden) shame and shame-related phenomena as the key to an integrated psychoanalytic understanding of a very wide range of clinical phenomenology, often represented in the literature and in clinical practice by separate schools of thought in ways that are unintegrated, incomplete, and fragmentary.

2. The hidden nature of shame and of shame-related phenomena has tended to obscure the relationship of aspects of the clinical phenomenology to the clinical whole. We share the belief that the rediscovery and expanded understanding of shame and shame-related

phenomena is crucial to the attainment of a balanced and full psychoanalytic understanding that avoids *pars pro toto* theorizing. Often the hidden dimension, shame has been called the “veiled accompaniment” of clinical phenomena as widespread and divergent as narcissism, social phobia, envy, domestic violence, addiction, identity diffusion, post traumatic stress disorder, dissociation, masochism, and depression. Shame also provides important clues to the understanding of the instigation of dreams, nightmares, and impulsive action of all sorts.

3. The emphasis on shame, therefore, is neither limited to the consciously experienced emotion itself nor intended as a rival or replacement for any other affective phenomena (for example anger, anxiety, and guilt). A nuanced appreciation of shame adds to, rather than replaces, previous explanations of psychic or clinical phenomena. Indeed, simplified formulations that overemphasize the centrality of shame in clinical practice risk ignoring simultaneous competition, aggression, envy, and the guilt and anxiety that invariably accompany them (Lansky, in press).

4. Shame may be seen, therefore, not simply as the label for a specific emotion concomitant to social exposure of one as inadequate or unlovable. Shame, as we use the word, subsumes this narrow sense but also encompasses, more expansively, the entire spectrum of shame-related phenomena, among them: signal shame (a type of superego anxiety); shame as defense (characteristically seen as a reaction formation); and a constellation of feelings (embarrassment, humility, modesty, and the like) all aimed at obviating exposure and the consequent emotion of shame.

5. When its manifest and hidden aspects are understood, shame points, then, to the deepest levels of comprehension of the bond between self and others and the regulation of that bond by manifest affects signaling success or failure within that bond—pride or shame. Less visible, repressed aspects of the social bond also reflect shame. The understanding of shame unfolds *pari passu* with a deep understanding of the self in relation to others (not merely “objects” or “selfobjects”). Such an understanding is intimately related, therefore, to an understanding of social systems of every sort—from the internal world of internalized “objects”; to the family system; to the broader social order, large or small, in which shame and shame-related phenomena are key to the regulation of selfhood and esteem.

Our view of shame, then, is decidedly integrative, both clinically and theoretically. The book reflects this attitude.

Part I, begins with a lengthy essay by the editors on Freud’s legacy on shame; traces Freud’s brilliant discoveries as well as his

conceptual inconsistencies and oversights in an historical context. Broucek's chapter on development and that by Morrison and Stolorow on narcissism are informed by self-psychological and intersubjective viewpoints. Commentaries by Bacal and Michels place these chapters in wider perspective. It is our aim in this section to present clinically pertinent perspectives on development and on narcissism. The chapters are not intended to serve as evenhanded reviews taking all contemporary positions into account.

Part II covers approaches to thinking about shame that are not psychoanalytic but are still useful to psychodynamically oriented therapists and psychoanalysts interested in a broader understanding of shame. The chapters include contributions on Helen Block Lewis, on Silvan Tompkins, two contributions on philosophy, and two on social theory. Karen Hanson's chapter traces the evolution of philosophical thinking on shame in two large sweeps. The first, from Aristotle to Kant, points to an expanding shame about shame. Hanson points to a quite different trend in the almost two centuries beginning with Hegel's (1807) *Phenomenology of Spirit*. This trend locates shame within "the human predicament." Wurmser's chapter on "Nietzsche's War on Shame" focuses on Nietzsche as the apotheosis of the more recent trend in philosophy. The two chapters on social theory by Scheff and by Katz highlight the evolution and current status of social, theoretical thinking about shame. Scheff's chapter draws attention to the 19th-century theoretical preeminence of shame, its disappearance early in this century with the ascendancy of role theory, and its subsequent reemergence in social theory in a time span very closely paralleling the early attention, disappearance, and reemergence of interest in shame in psychoanalytic thinking. A discussion of these six chapters by Benjamin Kilborne reminds us that, momentous as these theoretical and empirical trends in the study of shame are, they inevitably fail to capture the elusive human essence of shame. Kilborne emphasizes that great writers of fiction—Pirandello is a case in point—better capture the eternally elusive essence of the shame experience.

Part III turns to marriage and the family. The understanding of tension and distress in relationships among intimates is greatly enhanced by an understanding of shame. Two classic papers by Sidney Levin, an early psychoanalytic pioneer in the study of shame, point to shame's role in a particular type of marital incompatibility that will be recognized by all experienced clinicians. Carol Munschauer's contribution on infertility presents a self-psychological perspective on the psychological implications of this often overlooked challenge. Suzanne Retzinger's paper on shame and rage and

marital quarrels draws on her sophisticated research, which was heavily influenced by Helen Block Lewis, into the relation of anger to unacknowledged shame and the relationship of reciprocal shaming to conflict escalation.

The final section offers contributions on the phenomenology of various clinical predicaments and other situations in which shame plays a prominent part. A chapter by Lansky on envy as process explores the multiple relationships between shame and envy. Nathanson's chapter on the compass of shame reflects his interest in the work of Silvan Tompkins and provides an introduction to the application of his own viewpoint to Attention Deficit Disorder. Wurmser's chapter on masochism synthesizes a vast body of theory and a penetrating clinical perspicuity on this complex and difficult topic. Aaron Lazare's chapter discusses the often overlooked features of shame and humiliation in the medical setting. Finally, Michael Bader explores the dynamics of shame in resistance to religious experience.

Our collaboration in the study of shame has been greatly enriched by the discussions of a group on shame dynamics that have been a regular part of meetings of the American Psychoanalytic Association twice yearly since 1991. Benjamin Kilborne, the group's founder and chairman, has been an erudite collaborator in our efforts to study shame. Leon Wurmser, a great pioneer in both theoretical and clinical understanding of shame, has been a regular attendee. We are grateful to Drs. Kilborne and Wurmser and to others who have regularly or sporadically participated in the group and have enriched us with their participation, their perspective and their support.

Finally, we wish to thank the staff of The Analytic Press, Dr. Paul E. Stepansky and Eleanor Starke Kobrin especially, for their assistance, encouragement, and support for this project from inception to completion.

M. R. L.

A. P. M.

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