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Chapter Four

Fields of Shame: Anthropologists Abroad[1]

Benjamin Kilborne

Surprisingly, Freud devoted little attention to shame per se, even though feelings of shame and the defenses against them are among the most powerful emotional constellations. Instead, he focused on what has been translated as *guilt*. Why Freud slighted shame is a matter of debate, but that he did so is today generally accepted, especially as the significance of shame dynamics becomes more and more firmly established (see, for example, Jacobson 1964; Lewis 1971; Wurmser 1981; Nathanson 1987; Morrison 1989; and Lansky 1984). This recent psychoanalytic work provides what I think is a most promising approach to psychoanalytic anthropology which, because it lends itself at once to psychological and sociological analyses, offers an opportunity to approach the interpersonal world of anthropologist and informant both phenomenologically and psychodynamically.

In the following pages, I will try to tell the story of Freud's relative neglect of shame and of its growing importance in contemporary clinical work. In doing so, I shall consider briefly some definitions of shame and the evolution of psychoanalytic thinking about shame from Freud to the

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present, together with the implications of this for our understanding of what constitutes ethnographic evidence. After a brief clinical vignette, I conclude by delineating some of the dimensions of shame dynamics in the anthropological field situation.

Definitions

Let us begin with a working definition of shame phenomena and dynamics. Shame, the felt discrepancy between the way one fears one will be seen and the way one wants to appear, is often associated with an experience of exposure, of vulnerability, of what we fear others see that we do not want them to. As a result of the experience of uncovering, of failure to live up to an ideal, the individual anticipates rejection. What is hidden are particularly sensitive and easily injured facets of the self, of which one feels ashamed (Nathanson 1987:4). Accordingly, shame evokes feelings of having been ostracized, betrayed, abandoned. Shame calls into question some basic quality of the self (Alexander 1938; Lewis 1971; Wurmser 1981), entailing a sort of embarrassment about existing at all. Helen Block Lewis, in *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis* (1971), calls us "shameniks," departing from assumptions characteristic of Freud and others who suggest that we are primarily guilt-driven and that civilization is built on the guilt generated by the renunciation of instinct.

The word *shame* is derived from the Indo-European root *skam* or *skem*, meaning "to hide." From this same root come our two words *skin* and *hide*. The word shame seems to cover three distinct but related concepts: (1) disgrace itself, the fear of disgrace, and the anxiety that others will see how we have dishonored ourself; (2) the feeling that others are looking on with contempt and scorn at everything we do or don't, that there is no place to hide and that all we can do is disappear; and (3) shame as a preventative attitude (I must hide or disappear in order not to be disgraced). In the second case, one hides out of a fear of exposure; in the third, one hides to prevent or ward off exposure.[2]

[2]As distinct from narcissism, which Wurmser sees as a point of view rather than a specific dynamic content, shame is, as he so deftly explains (1981:76):

(continued...)

Shame entails a feeling of failure, weakness or what Balint (1968) called "the basic fault" in the self; guilt entails fear of—and a fantasized retaliation for—a fantasized attack on the other. And one can hide shame in guilt and guilt in shame, as Freud, Piers and Singer (1953), and others have noted. Oversimplifying, shame is an affect associated with the self and disgrace; guilt is an affect associated with transgression. Whereas one is ashamed of one's self (of one's state and being), one feels guilty about what one has done (about one's actions) and how this will be seen by an Other. Seen in terms of a shame-guilt dialectic between, on the one hand, the shame-ridden position of weakness and helplessness and, on the other, the guilt-ridden position of power and destructiveness, our Western emphasis on guilt as a cultural category could arguably be seen to rationalize our colonial past and to be reinforced by our dominant military, political and economic position.

Shame, infants and developmental research

Guilt has, in the psychoanalytic literature, been more directly associated with internal psychic processes, as distinct from social interactions. Yet shame and guilt seem to share a dependency upon an ego-ideal in

[2](...continued)

caused by a discrepancy between expectancy and realization; an inner or an outer discrepancy, an inner or an outer conflict. It is the polarity, the tension between how I want to be seen and how I am. In its internalized version shame is thus the outcome of a very specific tension between the superego and the ego function of self-perception. The higher the self-expectation and the greater the demand for perfection, the likelier and the greater the discrepancy, and the harsher the need for self-chastisement by self-ridicule, self-scorn and by symbolic or real disappearance and self-effacement. Insofar as "narcissism" refers to the concept of "self-esteem" and "pathological narcissism" to that of "overvaluation" of oneself or of others (something "immoderate," "limitless," "exaggerated," "absolute"), any great discrepancy between self-expectancy ("ideal-self") and self-perception ("real-self") is by definition a "narcissistic conflict," and it is *so ipso* one that is *felt* as shame ("the complex affect of shame").

terms of which the fantasized effects of one's wishes can be felt to be dangerous to the other person as well as to oneself. To understand that the other person (the object) is also a self, and that this person is capable of experiencing pain (see Nathanson 1987:46) is an experience arrived at, I would argue, through shame interactions. The difference between the two concepts tends to focus on shame as an experienced deficiency of some self state, with guilt as more specific and more specifically attached to actions for which one can be held accountable. Whereas shame entails an experience of basic defect, guilt entails remorse for hostile wishes directed at some other person.[3] Jacobson (1964:144) suggests that shame "refers to visual exposure, guilt predominantly to verbal demands, prohibitions and criticisms."

In recent years, the analytic community has witnessed not only the emergence of Kohut and self psychology, which emphasizes the capacity of the mother to mirror the infant's affective states, but also a renewed interest in mother-infant research. The infant research work of the past ten or fifteen years has stressed how much interaction takes place between mother and infant from birth, challenging the inexplicably resilient notion that the infant is simply a blank slate. Today, most researchers (e.g., Bowlby 1969; Tronick, Als, Adamson, Wise and Brazelton 1978; Lichtenberg 1982; Stern 1985) agree that the infant is, from birth, equipped with considerable powers to engage the attention of adults. Many and various have been the descriptions of phenomena dealing with shame, but not always as such. For example, Nathanson maintains that the description of stranger anxiety in infants provided by Spitz (1965) applies equally well to shame, making shame an emotion that apparently exists (or at least is visible) in infants soon after birth.

> When approached by a stranger, the infant of 6 to 8 months will: show varying intensities of apprehension or anxiety and reject the stranger. . . . He may lower his eyes "shyly," he may cover them with his hands, lift his dress to cover his face, throw himself prone on his cot and hide his face in the blankets, he may weep or scream [Spitz, quoted in Nathanson 1987:7].

[3]Melvin Lansky points out to me that conscious shame is experienced as remorse, but unconscious guilt is often seen as loyalty and self sabotage, and is not *felt* at all. This seems to me an extremely important point.

Although these reactions may be fear and anxiety responses, the averted gaze and the covering of the face are clearly reactions which we associate with shame.

In phase one of the "still face" experiment, filmed by and reported in Tronick et al. (1978), mother and two to three month old infant interact normally, in face-to-face situations. In phase two, the mother is instructed to sit opposite the child, making eye contact but no facial expressions whatsoever. For a short while, the child will try to make faces at the mother. Then, when there is no response, the infant will either burst out in tears of distress, or slump down, averting his eyes from the mother's face. It is hypothesized that, since the infant is too dependent on the mother to entertain the idea that she might abandon or disappoint him, the infant tries to evacuate such feelings, and then feels ashamed of what he needs to hide or get rid of, anticipating rejection should his mother know these feelings. And so shame masks shame, which masks still more shame; one becomes ashamed of being ashamed, and defenses against being found out build one on top of another. The very early expression of anxiety in infants would seem to make them "shameniks," too. No less than adults, infants attempt to get away from what is painful in relationships. So they hide, imagine, deceive and pretend.

Freud and his successors on shame and narcissism

It is useful at this point to summarize the ideas of Freud and his successors concerning narcissism because current debates on shame depend so substantially on these ideas. Whereas shame designates a nest of affects (fear of being seen, humiliation, pain over not being noticed, etc.) and has a dynamic context, narcissism designates a fundamentally metapsychological description of the investment of psychic energy in the psychic economy.[4] For our purposes here, let us define narcissism as

[4]Even when "narcissism" designates affective stages (e.g., narcissistic vulnerability), the shade of economic and metapsychological theory continues to dominate the concept. Kohut, for example, seldom uses the concept of "narcissism" without designating investments of psychic energy, even though he maintains that he does not use a conflict or drive model of the affects.

an "overinvestment" in the self, rather than (and in opposition to) the investments made in one's relationships with others.[5] Persons exhibiting narcissistic pathologies are characterized by a relatively greater sensitivity to slights. They are particularly shame-prone because of their embarrassment over feeling so easily wounded and because, also, of their experienced inability either to communicate or successfully to hide or obliterate their pain. Consequently, they often describe feelings of imposture, insubstantiality and smallness. An economic description of such wounding leads to the use of the term "narcissism"; an affective description leads to the use of the term "shame."[6]

The term "narcissism" was first used by Freud in 1910 to refer to the object choice of homosexuals who take themselves as sexual objects, although in his later thinking on the subject Freud drops the distinction between auto-erotism and structural/economic theories of narcissism. But, in 1911, Freud began to conceive of narcissism as a stage in psychological/sexual evolution, between auto-erotism and object love. Then, in 1914, in "On Narcissism," Freud attempts to incorporate narcissism within the framework of his theory of drives (the libido). The individual invests energy in himself by withdrawing investment from the object. Relying on a sort of theory of the conservation of energy, Freud hypothesized that, since energy was limited, it had to come from somewhere. Consequently, narcissistic investment was, for Freud, like borrowing from Peter to pay Paul. In "Mourning and Melancholia" (1915), Freud views narcissism essentially as an identification with the object.[7] In the process of mourning, the bereaved has no choice but to

[5]This does not mean that for narcissistic personalities, relationships with others are less important. Rather, because these relationships are so problematic, they are often felt to be excruciatingly painful and thereby important because of the affects associated with them.

[6]One of the confusing features of self psychology is the confounding of these two levels of description. Freud himself has things to say about shame when he speaks of narcissism. Generally speaking, the *affects* of shame only very rarely are rigorously distinguished from the metapsychological *theories* of narcissism.

[7]What Freud appears to be referring to in "Mourning and Melancholia" is (continued...)

change objects. Etymologically, the bereaved has been robbed (bereaved comes from the stem *reafian*, to rob). Jacques Lacan (1949), following Sartre, maintains that the narcissistic or mirror stage of development is a necessary part of ego development, an idea which Kohut and the self psychologists would take up years later.[8]

Primary narcissism[9] is generally seen to be both healthy and inevitable. It designates a process in which the infant or young child invests his libido in himself. *Secondary narcissism*, by contrast, tends to be viewed as pathological, since it tends to entail the withdrawal of the libido from objects in order to reinvest it in the ego or self,[10] thereby constituting a defensive regression.[11] In his paper on narcissism, Freud (1914) holds that in the beginning the infant is his own ego-ideal, the ego-ideal being at first an expression and then a kind of substitute for, and repre-

[7](...continued)
projective identification in which the object is experienced to regulate self-esteem.

[8]Compare the mirror transference of Kohut, together with the mirroring self-object (e.g., Kohut, 1971, 1984).

[9]For Melanie Klein (1957) and psychoanalytic writers in her school, the very concept of primary narcissism is misleading as they and those belonging to the Object Relations school in general maintain that object relations are established from the beginning. For these writers, the only narcissism is secondary narcissism, and such narcissism designates flawed object relations expressed in an inability to rely on others (e.g., see Fairbairn 1954 and Guntrip 1968).

[10]For this introductory discussion of narcissism, I have relied upon Laplanche and Pontalis's *The Language of Psycho-analysis* (1973).

[11]Federn comments that Hans Sachs "dealt with that type of narcissism which refers to objects of the external world, and the repression and projection of which lead to the animistic conception of the world as found in primitive man" (Federn 1952:293). This comment of Federn's underscores the extent to which thinking about animism serves as a backdrop to psychoanalytic theories about thinking in general. It also highlights the relations to be developed (see Kilborne n.d.b. and n.d.c.) between magical thinking, ideas about individual development, and ideas about cultural categories.

sentation of, infantile narcissism. For Freud, at least in this text, the awareness of guilt, together with the concomitant moral consciousness, is what brings individuals into the social world, weaning them from their infantile narcissism.[12] But in this text, as in others, the line between shame and guilt seems very thin and, sometimes, what we read today as shame Freud calls "guilt."

Although Freud's very earliest theories of psychodynamics gave a key position to shame, based on his work with patients as reported in *Studies in Hysteria* (Breuer and Freud 1892), and although it is striking that all dreams in *The Interpretation of Dreams* reverse narcissistic injuries and are thus all reversals of shaming situations,[13] Freud seldom if ever mentions shame. This may be because he was having difficulty elaborating his ideas about shame in metapsychological terms or, perhaps, conflicts and rivalry within the ranks may have prompted him to focus more exclusively on the details of oedipal dynamics than he might have done had he been left to his own curiosity and devices. In any case, Freud never discusses shame in his great dream book, despite the prevalence of shaming themes in his own dreams.

Instead, Freud skirts the subject and, ignoring themes of humiliation, vulnerability, shame, and impotence, he develops a conflict theory of affect rooted in unconscious, guilt-inducing desires. His emphasis shifted to unconscious fantasy and transgression, and he gave more importance to oedipal dynamics, paying more and more attention to the oedipal fear of punishment or fear of the superego that he called "guilt." This transition can be seen, for example, in *Three Essays on a Theory of Sexuality* (1905), in which he shifts from speaking about shame and embarrassment as affective responses to being seen, to shame as a

[12]In my patient (see below), the negative injunctions (you must be like them) work to maintain the split Susan feels between being Chinese and being American; they also contribute to her fears about not being the person others think she is.

[13]As Melvin Lansky has pointed out to me, not only are all dreams in *The Interpretation of Dreams* based on reversals of situations of shame, but also none are primarily expressions of the wish for sexual consummation.

defense against drives (exhibitionism, voyeurism, etc.).[14]

In his writings, with increasing clarity from 1913 on, Freud tended to link scopophilia, exhibitionism and shame.[15] Morrison (1989) suggests that, in the *Three Essays* (and still more markedly with later writings), Freud's views of shame shift significantly. Up until this work, Morrison notes, Freud views shame as (1) a social affect associated with being discovered or found out by another person, (2) a defense against remembering something painful, and (3) a response to actually having been caught engaging in some sexual activity (e.g., masturbation) in one's early childhood. With the *Three Essays*, Freud's "emphasis regarding shame shifted significantly from affective experience to defense" since, in that paper, Freud viewed "the claims of aesthetic and moral ideals" as defenses against disgust and shame (Morrison 1989:23).

As Wurmser (1981), Morrison (1989), and others note, Freud broadened his definition of shame to include not only embarrassment over sexual drives but also the reaction formation against the desire to look. Phenomenologically, neither self psychologists nor other psychoanalytic writers have availed themselves of the possibilities for founding a theory of shame dynamics on the behaviors of looking and being looked at, even though Freud and others have firmly linked shame to exhibitionism and scopophilia. Significantly, even *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973) does not contain a single entry on shame, exhibitionism, voyeurism, scopophilia, or scopophobia.

A master of descriptions of the conflicts of shame, Sartre, in *Being*

[14]Following Freud, many other psychanalytic writers have subsumed shame under various metapsychological schema. Nunberg (1955:157), for example, observed that "shame is a reaction formation of the ego to the wish to exhibit"—a remark that makes it difficult if not impossible to attend to the phenomenology of shame. Erikson too focused on shame as it related to his theory of developmental modes, which similarly crimped his ability to explore the phenomenology of shame as an affective state.

[15]Freud and Abraham recognized the narcissistic features of obsessional neuroses, linking looking, scopophilia, and exhibitionism to the anal period. Following along these lines, Erikson (1963) conceptualized shame and doubt as the affective consequences of problems in phases of development (e.g., the anal phase, holding on as opposed to letting go).

and Nothingness (1956), provides one of the finest and most subtle descriptions of the relations between shame and looking. Sartre argues[16] that since we fear being seen by the Other as the person we wish we were not, we know others through our own anxieties, through our own uneasiness. Yet our looking and our shame at being looked at constitute an indispensable part of our sense of orientation in time and space. By his look, the Other, Sartre explains, confers upon us our sense of both time and space. "The Other's look insofar as I apprehend it comes to give my time a new dimension" (1956:243). Shame over looking and being looked at creates conflicts and disturbances which we react to in different ways. These may take the form of dreams, symptoms, acting out, or reaction formations, or may be sublimated in, for example, artistic expression. Shame, however, can also serve defensive functions.

Today, as more and more analysts are treating what they see to be narcissistic or narcissistic-borderline disorders, the dynamics of shame are of growing importance.[17] Moreover, the very popularity of self psychology, which has contributed to a renewed interest in shame dynamics in the United States, can be related to our present American values, cultural contexts and concerns, as are the theories of individual development and ideas about the self. Thus, the very prevalence of an awareness of shame dynamics can be studied anthropologically, in terms of cultural values.

Given the clinical prevalence of narcissistic disorders and the consequent effects of the self psychologists in stressing the intersubjectivity and the interpersonal field, it follows that psychoanalysts are likely to be

[16]Sartre's arguments are heavily influenced by Hegel's *The Phenomenology of the Spirit* (1807), required reading for those seriously interested in shame.

[17]Increasingly, the translations of Freud's ideas of the psyche as "mental apparatus" appear to be inadequate and, indeed, misleading in the ways they mechanize the metaphors we use to imagine the thinking processes. There is still no adequate study of the phenomenological assumptions underlying Freud's metapsychology or, more accurately, metapsychologies. In psychoanalytic circles there does appear to be a felt need to emphasize the interpersonal field and to make clear the fact that what one is studying (and what one is using to examine it with) is an interactive, interpersonal relationship.

preoccupied with shame for the foreseeable future, bringing them implicitly closer to the concerns of anthropologists. Thus, the works of Kohut and the self psychologists, by emphasizing narcissism and narcissistic vulnerability, have added a new focus to not only psychoanalytic but also anthropological inquiry.[18]

Shame and the ego-ideal

Any discrepancy between the ideal self and the real self is, ipso facto, a narcissistic conflict, felt as shame. In other words, "the more ambitious and peremptory (narcissistic) the ego ideal is, the more painful is the wound about failing and the more pervasive is the narcissistic anxiety" (Wurmser 1981:76). Or, the more demanding one's ideal of oneself, the more subject to shame one is, and the more vulnerable to narcissistic injury, which leads to heightened shame reactions. Also, the more intense the feelings of shame, the more demanding the ideal of total self-sufficiency, and the more inevitable the failure which, in turn, fuels the shame cycle.

In "On Narcissism," Freud develops a theory of the ideal ego and, at least between the lines, of shame as a feeling of failure and disgrace. In that paper, notes Morrison (1989), Freud developed his notion of ego libido and object libido, primary narcissism and reinvestment of libidinal cathexis in the idealized object. The "ideal-ego" emerges as a result of

[18]I wish, here, to emphasize the extent to which psychoanalytic ideas about the self, about social relationships, and about psychological development are necessarily rooted in various specific cultural and historical contexts. We cannot assume, for example, that a shift from Freud's drive-defense model of pre-World War I Vienna to the self psychological model in the United States in the 1980s and 1990s represents an objective "advance" in psychoanalytic theory. The values of nineteenth century Vienna are not those of late twentieth century America. The substantive differences in psychoanalysis in Argentina, France, England, and the United States provide concrete indications that psychoanalytic theory and treatment draw upon cultural values. (On this point, see also the chapters by Ingham, Kirschner, Ramanujam, and Spain in this volume; on the relevance of Kohut's views for anthropology, see the chapter by LeVine in this volume.)

attempts to regain the narcissism associated with the sense of "original perfection." Such a sense of original perfection can, however, be shaken by the buffetings of human events. As Freud notes: "When, as he grows up, [the child] is disturbed by the admonition of others and by the awakening of his own critical judgment, so that he can no longer retain that perfection, he seeks to recover it in the new form of an ego-ideal" (Freud 1914:94). And, continues Freud (1914:95): "It would not surprise us if we were to find a special psychical agency which performs the task of seeing that narcissistic satisfaction from the ego ideal is ensured and which, with this end in view, constantly watches the actual ego and measures it by that ideal."

Generally speaking, those who emphasize shame tend to distinguish theoretically an important role for the ego-ideal and for idealization, which they see as quite distinct from the broader notion of the superego. For example, Hartmann and Loewenstein (1964) subsume shame under the concept of guilt, dismissing differences between the two concepts. Kernberg (1975) essentially follows suit, and the term shame is not even indexed in the standard work on object relations by Greenberg and Mitchell (1983). But Jacobson (1964:154-155) speaks of shame as a manifestation of feelings of inferiority and failure to live up to one's ideals. Conflicts between ego and superego "develop from discordance between wishful self images which embody the narcissistic goals of the ego and a self that appears to be failing, defective, inferior, weak, contemptible in comparison." Such an emphasis on the feeling of failure to live up to the ego-ideal characterizes those writers who have recently focused on shame dynamics.

Pride and shame are silent regulators of our emotions to which far too little attention has been paid. In his splendid book *The Mask of Shame* (1981), Wurmser perceptively wrote a decade ago that an understanding of shame is important in every analytic hour. Every therapeutic session contains expressions of shame, humiliation and embarrassment, together with attempts to hide these feelings—all of which are picked up in countertransference reactions. And attempts to hide become shameful in themselves, since patients often feel that these hiding manoeuvres indicate a split or flaw in the sense of self, a failure to live up to the ego-ideal. "I am ashamed of feeling like an imposter, and I am afraid people will see that is what I really am, that they will find out that I am not the person they think," said a patient of mine. As Wurmser notes:

"Shame is the degradation that has already occurred and the enduring sense of self-contempt and unreality that ensues from such humiliation and mortification" (1981:67). To such expressions of shame may be added reactions to feelings of shame and failure. These may take various forms, for example that of contempt.[19] And contempt is often an attempt to rid oneself of shame, sometimes by denial and projection (I am not ashamed, you are or ought to be).

Shame and self psychology

Although one might expect Kohut to have focused explicitly on shame, he did not. Drawing on the Freudian distinction between primary and secondary narcissism, Kohut's views of shame depend on his presuppositions of a bipolar self which, in turn, define as poles the mother and father. Kohut sees the mother's function as that of providing empathic mirroring for the child's grandiose self (the mirroring selfobject function), and the father's function as coming later in the child's life. The father's role, according to Kohut, is empathically to accept the child's ambitions and ideals (the idealizing selfobject function). If the self gets, as it were, a bad rap with the mother, it can make up for this deficiency to some extent in the relationship with the father.[20] Whereas Chasseguet-Smirgel (1985), for example, stresses the importance of shame as a feeling that one has failed one's ideal of what one needed to be, Kohut sees it to be an overpowering of the ego by primitive exhibitionistic wishes. For Kohut, shame is directly linked to grandiosity and exhibitionism. In *The Restoration of the Self* (1971), Kohut explicitly linked shame to grandiosity denied rather than to a sense of failure to live up to one's ideals, or exposure as unlovable. Essentially, Kohut

[19]Contempt is often regarded as the expression of an overactive superego or ego-ideal, which vengefully turns on others so as to defend against feelings of worthlessness, vulnerability, and humiliation. Lansky suggests (personal communication) that contempt can more usefully be seen as passing shame to the other through projective identification.

[20]Stolorow et al. (1987) have clarified the selfobject by suggesting that it exists in a kind of figure/ground relationship with respect to libidinal objects.

views shame as narcissism in the infant which is not responded to. The absence of the expected response in the mother or parent triggers in the infant a wish to hide his needs, to be ashamed of wanting them gratified. For Kohut, shame is herniated exhibitionism.

Nevertheless, Kohut (1979:241) perceptively discusses those who, in late middle age, realize that they have fallen seriously short of their ideals, describing the

> utter hopelessness for some, of utter lethargy, of that depression without guilt and self-directed aggression, which overtakes those who feel that they have failed and cannot remedy the failure in the time and with the energies still at their disposal. The suicides of this period are not the expression of a punitive superego, but a remedial act—the wish to wipe out the unbearable sense of mortification and the nameless shame imposed by the ultimate recognition of a failure of all-encompassing magnitude.

In thinking about Kohut's emphasis on grandiosity and shame, some (e.g., Morrison 1989) have wondered about the extent to which the parent's failure to respond to the need of the child for an idealized selfobject creates a sense of deficiency in the child, making him shame-prone. Shame can, thus, be a kind of secondary reaction to the failure of parents to respond to the child's mirroring and/or idealization needs.[21] The child becomes ashamed of the inadequacy of his parents as well as of his own needs, leading to depression. Bibring (1963) long ago noted that depression sets in when "the fear of being inferior or defective seems to come true, whenever and in whatever way the person comes to feel that all effort was in vain, that he is definitely doomed to be a 'failure'" (p.25). Complicating the picture still further, I might add that shame can be related to *any* discrepancies felt to symbolize fantasized flaws. Shame can be a reaction both to the failure to attain a fantasized merger with the object and the failure to attain autonomy; or, alternatively, a defense against the wish to merge and to be entirely autonomous. As distinct from narcissism, shame is defined by that experienced

[21]This becomes more intelligible in light of Kohut's ideas about the ideal self as indispensable to the sense of a coherent self, the result of transmuting internalizations.

discrepancy between the way I fear I will be seen and the way I want to appear. Therefore, any feeling of discrepancy between my ideal of myself and the way I really am will be felt as shame.

A clinical illustration: shame dynamics in an analysis

Let me briefly illustrate here the kind of clinical questions and issues raised by shame dynamics[22] both in the transference[23] and counter-transference. For months, during my analysis of "Susan," she avoided looking at me. When I asked her why, she replied that if she did not look at me she "could invent me better." Consider this remark in the light of the following comment by Fenichel who, in 1945, was speaking directly about the relation between looking and shame:

> "I feel ashamed" means "I do not want to be seen." Therefore, persons who feel ashamed of themselves hide themselves or at least avert their faces. However, they also close their eyes and refuse to look. This is a kind of magical gesture, arising from the magical belief that anyone who does not look cannot be looked at [p.139].

Susan was ashamed not only of being in analysis but also of what she perceived as a cause of her difficulties: her inability to express feelings.

[22]Although Freud and Abraham recognized the narcissistic features of obsessional neuroses, and both linked these to the anal period, Erikson (1963) departed from their emphasis. He conceptualized shame and doubt as the affective consequences of problems in phases of development (anal development). In my use of shame, I wish explicitly to focus on the interpersonal dimensions of shaming dynamics. This does not, of course, mean that there are not anal meanings present, but I will not be concentrating on them.

[23]Of the various dimensions of transference, I shall here be concentrating primarily—and often exclusively—on those that are relevant to the issues of shame dynamics. In no way do I mean to imply that there are not other issues—e.g, of a drive/defense, conflictual, oedipal nature—with which the analysis has had to contend. Indeed, I believe those can be seen more clearly once the shame dynamics are adequately understood and analyzed.

Along with the dynamics of shame, go scorn and contempt. As Susan put it:

> When people, men or women, need me more than I need them I feel they are pathetic . . . because they need me and their needs make them vulnerable and pathetic. It is what happens whenever people want me and I am not sure I want to get close to them. Sometimes I feel as though I want to go away and hide under a stone.

If Susan showed me her feelings, she believed, I would be as contemptuous of her as she was of "pathetic," needy people who wanted her. So she hid them from me.

One of the signs of analytic progress was Susan's increasingly active interest and participation in Asian-American activities. As her sense of personal identity strengthened, so did her sense of ethnic identity and her ability to tolerate and to express the conflicts experienced in both. For example, when she decided to study Chinese, something she had wanted to do for years, Susan feared that if she did not do well enough with the Chinese language, she would fail in being Chinese, and she did not wish to be reminded of this fear by difficulties in speaking a Chinese language. Susan also began to allude to things "Chinese people" do which I, not being Chinese, would not understand.

Shame dynamics are prominent in Chinese families, particularly between mothers and daughters, as Amy Tan's recent novel *The Joy Luck Club* (1989) shows so well. Once the daughter loses face before the disapproving gaze of her mother, it becomes extremely difficult to recover. As an aunt says to one of the daughters in Tan's novel: "When you lose your face, it is like dropping your necklace down a well. The only way you can get it back is to fall in after it" (p.44).

Susan's fears of not being the person she thought she was or ought to be surfaced in the context of trying out for a play. When she experiences a distance between the person she is and the person she feels she needs to be in order to be acceptable, such discrepancies become in themselves shameful. One day, a director from the theater school came to her Chinese class, requesting people to audition for a play about Chinese people. Susan tried out. At first, she was extremely excited. After being called back twice, however, she obsessed about what would happen if she did not do a good enough job. "I was not acting when I did the reading," she explained. "If I play a part which draws on parts of me you have not seen (and which other people have not seen either), then if I play the part badly, that means that maybe I am not what I think I am."

"As a kid," she said, "the Chinese people treated me as though I was not one of them. But the white people in my Catholic neighborhood also treated me as though I was not one of them. This is like . . . I'm stuck; nobody wants me. I'm caught between worlds, and I don't really want to find out that nobody wants me." Does she know herself as others know her? If she does not, if there is a discrepancy and she thinks much of herself, then the discrepancy means (as she fears) that she is defective, that she is stupid, that others are seeing what she is blind to.

In *The Joy Luck Club*, Amy Tan describes the anxieties of the Chinese mother. "I smile. I use my American face. That's the face Americans think is Chinese, the one they cannot understand. But inside I am becoming ashamed. I am ashamed she [my daughter] is ashamed. Because she is my daughter and I am proud of her, and I am her mother but she is not proud of me" (1989:255). Susan knows that what is presented to her as Chinese is something which, as an American, she does not understand, and she is ashamed of this. Certainly Susan has told me that, as an American, I must continually be reminded by her that I do not understand what I think I do about her being Chinese.

Susan feared that I and that other people would see how not-Chinese or not-American she really was. Shame, reinforced by Chinese values, kept Susan's feelings severely repressed. In other words, Susan's negative self-image was defensively maintained through a dynamic of shame, reinforced by uncertainties about ethnic identity. To Americans, she was ashamed of being Chinese; to Chinese, she was ashamed of being American.

It will be helpful to recall, here, observations about the development of feelings of shame in infancy. Learning to be the person one is constitutes a good part of infancy and early childhood. But, just as one might think that is all there is, each of us is saddled also with the task of learning not to be the person he is not. This is more difficult still and requires better developed object relations and more social supports, experience and knowledge. At this extremely shame-prone stage, individuals such as Susan find themselves snared. As Wurmser notes (1981: 87), "to be torn between two ideal images of oneself, and inevitably to fail one or the other . . . [is] an unending source of shame." Whereas Susan knows she is torn between feeling Chinese and feeling American,

it is likely that beneath this ethnic definition of the conflict lurks another conflict between, as Wurmser says, two ideal images of herself, such that she inevitably fails one or the other. The real person gets lost in the shuffle, and Susan is as she fears herself to be: unseen, unrecognized.[24]

Anthropological considerations: fieldwork and shame

In the light of the prevalence of shame in all human interactions, and considering how inevitable shame is on the part of both the anthropologist and those he or she is studying, let us briefly consider these "fields of shame." If one were to arrange ethnographic writings from most to least shame laden, the expressions of shame would be confined almost exclusively to unpublished materials such as diaries considered to be primarily personal. Published ethnographies, even those focusing on intersubjectivity (e.g., Crapanzano 1980) make virtually no mention of shame. And none that I know use shame dynamics as a way of understanding field situations, in a manner analogous to the uses of shame in the psychoanalytic clinical situation.

One of the most important anthropological documents that does express feelings of shame and confusion is Malinowski's deeply personal *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term* (Malinowski 1967), published years after his death. Significantly, it gave rise to tirades from anthropologists, such as Clifford Geertz, who were troubled by its revelations.[25] Written in Polish between 1914 and 1918, and never intended

[24]What Susan shows others is a "false self." Winnicott's concept is directly pertinent to shame-prone individuals, as they feel what they most essentially are they cannot reveal and what they reveal is not really them.

[25]Malinowski's diaries depict, Geertz writes:

> a sort of mental tableau whose stereotyped figures—his mother, a boyhood friend with whom he has quarrelled, a woman he has loved and wishes to discard, another he is now in love with and wishes to marry—are all thousands of miles away, frozen in timeless attitudes which, in anxious self-contempt, he obsessively contemplates. . . . Not

(continued...)

for publication,[26] it constitutes a document at once moving, poetic and honest, and it offers a view into the heart of an ethnographer in the field. In his diary, Malinowski expresses his confused feelings about fieldwork, his reactions to people, situations and places, his not-always-successful attempts to comprehend the hodgepodge of the day's events, and his ambivalence about being in the field at all.

Describing his arrival in New Guinea on September 9th, 1914 (the day before the diary begins), Malinowski writes: "The land was flat at the foot of the mountains; at the end of the bay, thick green mangrove forests, mountains in fog; sheets of rain kept moving down the slopes into the valley and out to sea. Ashore, it was damp with sultry tropical heat, the town small, uninteresting, its people marked with tropical self-conceit . . . " (1967:6). Throughout the diary, he freely expresses his doubts:

> Went into bush. For a moment I was frightened. Had to compose myself. Had to look into my own heart. "What is my inner life?" No reason to be satisfied with myself. The work I am doing is a kind of opiate rather than a creative expression. I am not trying to link it to deeper

[25](...continued)

> universal compassion but an almost Calvinist cleansing power of work brought Malinowski out of his own dark world of oedipal obsessions and practiced self-pity into Trobriand daily life [Geertz 1967, cited in Firth 1989:xxv].

Geertz, it appears, has in Calvinistic fashion assumed Malinowski to be guilty of what to him would be indecent exposure, expressing once again the power of shame. In this case, Geertz's misreading of the diaries seems itself to speak volumes. The very contempt (as shame projected onto another) Geertz displays for the expression of emotions and for Malinowski's "practiced self-pity" would seem to place Geertz's comments squarely within the field of shame.

[26]What Malinowski's intentions really were we will never know. A reliable source has indicated to me that the diaries were prepared for publication by his second wife and then subjected to scrutiny by Audrey Richards and several other persons who persuaded Malinowski's wife to delete a number of passages. Such control over materials omitted constitutes one of the elements of which those assessing anthropological evidence need to be more aware. In this case, it might be that shame dynamics can be related to what is left out.

> sources. To organize it. Reading novels is simply disastrous. Went to bed and thought about other things in an impure way [p.31].

Many readers have been shocked at Malinowski's irascibility. "The old man began to lie about burials. I became enraged and got up and went for a walk" (1967:35). "At moments I was furious with them [the natives], particularly because after I gave them their portions of tobacco they all went away. On the whole my feelings towards the natives are decidedly tending to '*Exterminate the brutes*'" (1967:69). Or again: "As for ethnology: I see the life of the natives as utterly devoid of interest or importance, something as remote from me as the life of a dog." Yet it is precisely this unfamiliarity which attracts Malinowski: "This disgusting trait of mine—that whatever I possess with certainty loses all attraction for me—is one of my basic misfortunes" (1967:204). Yet, struggling all the while, he pursues his understanding of these natives, in the process of expressing his "desire to shake Anglo-Saxon dust from my sandals" (1967:207).

He also talks much about his mother, another subject deleted from published ethnographies. "Main interests in life: Kipling, occasionally strong yearnings for Mother—really, if I could keep in communication with Mother I would not mind anything and my low spirits would have no deep foundation" (1967:41). "I thought of Mother—Mother is the only person I care for really and am truly worried about the future" (1967:52). Or again: "My God, my God, how terrible it is to live in continuous ethical conflict. My failure to think seriously about Mother, Stas, Poland's ordeal—is disgusting" (1967:165).

What fieldwork is and means are questions that only recently have begun to attract the attention they deserve. We need to know far more than we do about experiences in the field, what portions of them are packaged in the form of ethnographies and what portions escape description, remaining secret because of a desire to hide them out of shame. The question of what kind of credence to lend to fieldnotes raises once again the question of anthropological evidence. What counts as "evidence" in anthropology? And how is such "evidence" evaluated and interpreted?

In both anthropological fieldnotes and psychoanalytic process notes, the written materials clearly arouse anxiety and shame, calling attention

to their problematic status as "knowledge." This is in part because these ill-defined texts are neither fully comprehensible, complete nor capable of easy interpretation; they are contradictory, messy, often inchoate; they overflow with contradictions and information which does not necessarily have any place at all in one's final ethnography; they contain the experiences of the very person who will be interpreting them; and they leave out a lot of what goes on. If we examine what is left out, I would speculate that a great deal depends on shame dynamics.

Conclusions

Because we know others through shame interactions, shame is the medium, the element, required for the understanding of human interactions and of the doings and undoings of the human soul. How we exist in the element of shame is thus as difficult for us to perceive as it is for fish to know the water they live in or birds the air they breathe.

In my clinical work with patients, I have been able to acquire some understanding of the intersubjective, interpersonal meanings of shame in the analytic situation. In the analysis of one patient described elsewhere (Kilborne n.d.c.), whereas I was frightened of her leaving treatment, she was ashamed because she feared that if she hung around she would discover that I did not want her, that nobody ever has. The first implication for anthropological fieldwork, then, consists in noting how prominent and complex are shame interactions, and how difficult and time-consuming it is to trace their effects on relationships. Because shame is often unconscious, veiled by more conscious layers of shame and guilt, neither informants nor anthropologists may be aware of how much is being dissimulated, withheld, distorted or kept secret. Both as analysts and as anthropologists, we need to be capable of assessing deceit together with its motivations, in order to make basic judgments about what constitutes evidence. As Marc Bloch observed in his *The Historian's Craft* (1954), we need to be aware not only of the existence of deceit but also to understand where it comes from, what motivates each manifestation, however diverse. "It is not enough to establish the fact . . . . It is further necessary to discover its motivation, to [seek] out the imposter behind the imposture" (p.93).

Second, the contrast between shame as a term describing affective states such as feelings of painful exposure, humiliation and failure, on the one hand, and the theoretical construct of narcissism, on the other, represents a split in levels of discourse. This split can be seen as symptomatic of the difficulties encountered in both anthropology and psychoanalysis in describing phenomenologically grounded feeling states. Whether in the anthropology of the emotions, or in the works of writers such as Doi (1973), Epstein (1984), and others, the old Cartesian mind/body problem comes back to haunt us in the form of a disjunction between rationalistic theory and an understanding of the emotions. The search for underlying (linguistic?) structures that are "thought by" individuals only displaces the real difficulties with Cartesianism. One obstacle in the way of reaching beyond our Cartesian limitations may lie in the protective functions the Cartesian framework serves—and in the ways in which our drawing of disciplinary boundaries (of psychology and sociology, for example) contributes to the maintenance of our ethnocentric rationalism, which by definition excludes our individual/subjective feelings and anxieties, precisely what we need to evaluate our ideas. Along these lines, then, there can be no real progress in using shame dynamics as an investigative tool in fieldwork unless or until fieldworkers can find ways of utilizing their own anxieties about shame and looking.

Third, cultural defenses related to looking often serve to protect against feelings of shame. For example, let us consider beliefs in the evil eye, prevalent in cultures around the Mediterranean where, as Peristiany (1966) and others have shown, shame and honor dynamics play one against the other. When one is fortunate, incurs success, power, wealth or esteem, one must not show signs of one's fortune, lest it arouse the jealousy of enemies. Others are assumed to be envious and hostile, especially when they are looking. Sartre's descriptions of looking and the shame of being looked at clearly bear upon these beliefs in the evil eye. Furthermore, when dream interpreters interpret dreams, misfortune and anxiety is often attributed to some family member's evil gaze. These cultural beliefs in the evil eye serve to mask individual uses of shame reactions and defenses, which can easily disappear behind them. For informants believe that they are not fearful of the evil eye because they are ashamed; they are fearful because it is something everyone is frightened of. In sum, the various rituals undertaken to protect against the evil eye can also be seen to afford protection against the assumed hostile and envious gaze of the Other, underscoring the prevalence and depth of shame.

Fourth, questions raised by shame dynamics can help elucidate the entire range of ethnographic sources, by focusing attention on what is left out of accounts of fieldwork, and what kinds of evidence fieldnotes, diaries, letters and ethnographies constitute.

Finally, anthropologists go to the field in order to look at the people they will be writing about in their dissertations or books. This definition of anthropologists as those who look, together with the definition of "their people" as those who are looked at, raises the question: what kinds of shame reactions are produced by the very structure of the field situation? As intruders in societies whose principles (and principals) are to be "uncovered," can anthropologists avoid feeling ashamed? And what is the price to be paid for not realizing (i.e., for denying) that the people they study are looking at them all the time, that theirs is not the only eye? Yet, under the guise of scientific objectivity, many fieldworkers minimize or deny altogether the effects of shame on their work. But how can we grasp the many defenses and meanings of shame which are so essential in all human interactions? Shame reactions (our own, those of our informants, and those with whom we interact in the field), I would argue, can be one of the most important resources we have for understanding others.

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Chapter Five

Implications of Some Psychoanalytic Concepts in the Indian Context

B.K. Ramanujam

Introduction

Indian psychiatrists are very ambivalent about accepting psychoanalytic theory and therapy in their classical form. Unfortunately, those who hold strong negative feelings base their opinions on their familiarity with the literature—not on having gone through a personal analysis. Consequently, their opinions are of doubtful validity. In this paper I present theoretical propositions of only those who have psychoanalytic training or background. The evolution of psychoanalytic thinking indicates that the Freudian drive-theory is inadequate to explain human behavior in the Indian context. Indeed, the subtle nuances of object-relations, and their impact on our understanding of the development of the sense of self, end up having a more important place in the theoretical framework. After sketching the development of psychoanalysis in India, a case report is presented to illustrate the profound effect of such issues on personality development.

Historical background

Historically speaking, it is interesting to note that psychoanalysis made its entry into India in the 1920s. A psychiatrist named Girindrasekhar Bose started corresponding with Freud in December 1920