Pride, Shame, and Guilt

Emotions of self-assessment

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III

SHAME

IT seems prima facie plausible that shame (and not as Hume claims, 'humility') is the polar opposite of emotional pride, and so it would seem that this emotion raises no structural difficulties other than those already encountered. At least, 'feeling ashamed of something' corresponds in grammatical form to 'feeling proud of something', and the explanatory beliefs accounting for my feeling ashamed will be analogous to those which explained my feeling proud: what I am ashamed of I regard as in some respect undesirable and as connected to me in one of the possible ways discussed. But if it is the phenomenon of shame that is to be isolated then a comparison between feeling ashamed and feeling proud is not altogether to the point. To speak of someone as feeling ashamed is not to be very specific about his state. In particular, feeling ashamed may or may not be feeling shame. It is quite possible for a person to claim sincerely that he is feeling ashamed of having said or done something where this means no more than that he regrets having done that thing. 'I am ashamed of it' may function as an expression of regret or remorse which does not involve any beliefs on the agent's part concerning his own standing. Feeling shame, on the other hand, does seem to involve such a belief and so to be in this respect analogous to pride. But although there is thus some justification in linking pride and shame, the latter nevertheless has features which give rise to new problems. It introduces first of all the notion of an audience, for feeling shame is connected with the thought that eyes are upon one. And further, there is a suggestion made by a number of philosophers that there are different kinds of shame, that we should distinguish between forward-looking and backward-looking shame, or between spiritual and physical shame, or

again between moral and natural shame.[1] What these philosophers primarily have in mind is that in one case, but not in the other, there is an appeal to some moral standard in the light of which the agent is judged or judges himself adversely. Sometimes, according to them, we feel shame on the grounds that we have done or thought something we regard as bad. But at other times we feel shame not for this reason at all, but feel it rather because we think of ourselves as being seen on an occasion when being seen is an intrusion of one's privacy and so objectionable. But here there is not, or need not be, any question of moral censure. Such a distinction between kinds of shame would suggest that shame, or at least one kind, is related to moral standards in a way in which pride is not, so that it but not pride may properly be labelled a 'moral emotion'.

I do not, of course, wish to deny that there are very different cases of shame. But I think it mistaken to speak here of different kinds, if this implies that these differ from each other in crucial features. The difference between these cases is in fact quite superficial; basically they all share the same structure.

1

As in the case of pride and humility it is again useful to introduce a framework within which the characterization of shame can be pinned down crudely but with relatively clarity. In this case such a framework is provided by what anthropologists call a 'shame-culture'. The distinguishing mark of such a culture, and that which makes it different from a so-called 'guilt-culture', is that here public esteem is the greatest good, and to be ill spoken of the greatest evil. Public esteem for the individual, or the lack of it, depends on that individual's success or failure judged on the basis of some code which embodies that society's values. Whoever fails to meet the categoric demands engendered by that code ruins his reputation and loses the esteem of the other members of that group. He loses his honour. The notion of honour here is clearly that of public reputation. We think it

[1] These suggestions come respectively from: Otto Friedrich Bollnow, *Die Ehrfurcht* (Klostermann, Frankfurt, 1958), Chs. III and IV; Max Scheler, *Schriften aus dem Nachlass; Zur Ethik und Bekenntnislehre* (Francke Verlag, Bern, 1957), Band I, 'Über Scham und Schamgefühle'; and John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Part 3, Ch. VII.

quite possible to ask whether a man whose reputation is immense does in fact possess those qualities because of which we should regard him as a man of honour; we may suspect that he is corrupt. We distinguish between the 'externals' of honour, the reputation and distinction accorded to him on the basis of virtues he is assumed to have, and the actual possession of such virtuous qualities. A man may have either one without the other. But such distinctions do not make sense in a shame-culture. One is tempted to say that what is of overriding importance here for every member of the group is how he appears in public, never mind the inner man; but this formulation implies precisely that distinction between appearance and reality, between public and private, which is unacceptable within the framework of the shame-culture. If public esteem is the sole value, to which whatever else may be valued is related as means to end, then it follows that where there is no public esteem there is no value. Hence if a man has lost his reputation then he has lost his value in the eyes of all the members of the group, and this includes himself. So there is nothing left, no inner quality or whatever, which could be judged to be of value in spite of the loss of public respect. Self-respect and public respect stand and fall together. There can be no distinction between private and public; for on the present hypothesis a person can assess himself only in terms of what the public thinks of him. The 'public' in this case constitutes an honour-group. Membership of the group is determined by the relation in which individuals stand to each other. If this relationship is governed by the relevant honour-code then we have members of the same group; if not, then not. An example often quoted are the heroes in Homer's *Iliad*.[2] They form an honour-group: they expect certain types of behaviour of themselves and others, and judge themselves and others accordingly. Traders and slaves do not of course belong to that honour-group. Nor for that matter do the gods. Although they, like the heroes, set great store by public esteem, they are not crushed when this is not forthcoming but are rather resentful and angry. They do not see themselves as having been condemned, but merely as having been slighted. Membership of the group, then, is judged

[2] See E. R. Dodds, *The Greek and the Irrational* (University of California Press, 1951), Ch. II.

on the basis of a value-system to which any individual owes its status as a member. But membership allows him no status at all as an individual which is in any way independent of his member-status. Hence, if he loses his status as a member he also loses his status as an individual. Loss of honour is total extinction of the individual that existed as a member of the group, it is total loss of identity. Not surprisingly, loss of honour in a shame-culture is the worst that can happen to any woman or man.

So to be dishonoured it is necessary to belong to an honour-group in the first place: it may happen to the hero, but cannot happen to the slave. He will be dishonoured if he is judged to have failed to meet whatever is demanded by the code. What the failure consists in depends on what the values of the society are. Dishonour may attach to poverty or to the feebleness of old age, i.e., to something which may befall anyone through no fault of his own. Or it may attach to what is brought about by the person's own behaviour, such as cowardice in men and lack of chastity in women. But whatever it may be, the code will be sufficiently well articulated for members to recognize failure to comply. Where there is no such code, terms like 'honour' and 'shame' will lack a clear application.

An individual is dishonoured when he is judged by the group of which he is a member to have failed to comply with some categoric demand. He himself shares the point of view of the group, and so he has failed in his own eyes. This is so necessarily: being a member of the group entails being held in esteem by the group, and being held in esteem entails both that certain demands are made on him and that he has certain claims. These demands and claims, i.e., these mutual expectations, are generated by the value-system by reference to which the group is identified as one group. So these expectations, and they alone, are what confers value on the individual. As a member of the group every individual must see himself and others in this light, otherwise he would not be a member of this group. It follows that for any individual a breakdown of his various expectations must involve his total loss of value in his own eyes.

The shame-culture with its honour-code and consequent demands on the individual provides a clear case of what it is for one of its members to be shamed: he is seen to have failed to meet the demands. The feeling of shame is the response on the part of the agent to the situation seen in this way. He accepts the resultant judgement; he is dishonoured in his own eyes. Of course, feelings of shame nowadays and in our culture are unlikely to occur under such specific circumstances. Nevertheless, the essential features are preserved in the structure of shame. That it is the view of the public and public esteem which is all-important is reflected in the thought that shame requires an audience. The agent is seen as deviating from some norm, and in feeling shame he will identify with the audience's view and the consequent verdict that he has lost status.

2

The person who feels proud needs to be self-conscious in the sense that he must have some awareness of his position in the world, and have some conception of his worth, however inarticulate that might be. The self-consciousness required for shame, however, seems to be of a higher order than this. The person feeling shame feels exposed: he thinks of himself as being seen through the eyes of another. The case of shame introduces an observer or audience, as the case of pride did not. Sartre, in *Being and Nothingness*, gives us an example of shame which underlines this point: a man makes a vulgar gesture.[3] He then realizes that he is being observed. This realization makes him look at what he is doing through the observer's eyes. Seeing it from that point of view he realizes that what he is doing is vulgar, and he feels shame. Here we have an observer who, the agent realizes, watches him and judges his action adversely. The agent accepts the judgement and thereby accepts the standard or values involved. So he realizes that he is capable of a vulgar action, and this degrades him in his own eyes. The structure of this case can be compared to that of a member of an honour-group in a shame-culture losing his status, or losing honour. In both cases we have the identification of agent with audience: they both see the situation alike and judge it to be a deviation from the accepted norm. Con-

[3] Part 3, Ch. I (translation H. E. Barnes, Methuen, 1969).

sequently, in the eyes of both the agent is degraded. In Sartre's case the agent and his observer form, for the moment at least, a mini honour-group. The crucial point is that only by seeing what he is doing through the other's eyes does he recognize the nature of his action, and so it is crucial, it seems, that there be some other through whose eyes he can look at his action.

Sartre introduces an actual observer watching the behaviour of the agent. But it is plainly untrue that all cases of feeling shame are cases of public exposure, untrue, that is, that an actual observer is required for shame to be felt. Nor is it true even that the agent must believe, rightly or wrongly, that he is being observed by some other person. One may feel shame when quite alone and knowing this to be so. It has recently been argued that the weaker claim, that shame involves imagining an audience, is not correct, either: 'it is quite possible to think of people, such as writers and craftsmen, with high standards of their own, feeling shame just because they have let themselves down (not produced a masterpiece), without thinking of them imagining other craftsmen inspecting and condemning their work.'[4]

It is certainly true that to feel shame about his inferior work a craftsman need not think, i.e., either believe or imagine, *that there is* another craftsman looking at his work. He need not imagine an actual observer, and that there is such an observer need not be part of the content of his thought. All that seems necessary is that he shift his viewpoint from that of the creator of the work to that of the critical assessor, and he himself can fulfil both these functions.

Yet the point that there is a shifting point of view involved in the occurrence of shame is not enough to account for the thought that shame requires an audience, that shame is somehow connected with exposure. The shift is not only in the view the craftsman takes of his work, it is also in the view he takes of himself. This is so at least if he really feels shame. It may be that this craftsman merely feels ashamed of his work. In that case the notion of an audience need not be appealed to at all, for feeling ashamed of his work requires merely that he recognize that not all is well with it and that he ought to do better.

[4] Anthony O'Hear, 'Guilt and Shame as Moral Concepts', *Proceedings Aristotelean Society* 1976–7, p. 77.

His thoughts will be primarily on his work. But a person feeling shame becomes conscious not merely of what he is doing, but becomes conscious also of his self. This means partly that he cannot be unselfconscious in the manner of a young child or of somebody wholly absorbed in what he is doing. But it is also the self-consciousness of Adam and Eve after the fall: 'the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked.' (Genesis 3: 7). If neither the believed nor the imagined presence of another is required then it appears that it may be the agent's own eyes to which he feels himself exposed. It may indeed be that it *must* be the agent's own eyes which constitute the audience, for he is supposed to identify with the audience. The Sartre example makes this point: the man's identification with the observer is taken to mean that he now also sees his action as making a vulgar gesture, and condemns it under this description and himself as capable of such an action. The agent looks at his own action through the observer's eyes and so it is suddenly revealed to him what it amounts to. The observer is merely the means towards this end, and as such he is dispensable. It is a mistake to think of the actual observer as being the audience.

It seems that we now have a dilemma: 'shame requires an audience' is given either too much or too little content; it is given too much if we insist on at least the imagined presence of another. But if all it requires is that one should occupy an observer's position *vis-à-vis* oneself then the metaphors of eyes being upon one or being revealed to an audience seem to be rather heavy machinery for making just this point. The problem therefore is to give adequate content to the notion of the audience without introducing what is conceptually irrelevant to feeling shame.

Sartre's example suggests that we need two *dramatis personae*: the actor and the audience or observer who both sees and criticizes. The actor then identifies with the audience in that he also sees and criticizes. This is an over-simplification of the state of affairs. It is this view which leads either to an account of shame which is misleading because at best it covers only a limited range of cases, or it tempts philosophers to distinguish between different kinds of shame, where only one kind requires a critical audience. The mistake here is to over-simplify

the notion of the audience. If we take Sartre's example as a paradigm case of shame then the over-simplification is twofold: firstly, the example implies that the observer is critical of the agent. But this is only one possibility; the audience required for shame need not be thought of as critical at all. And secondly, the agent accepts what he takes to be the observer's description of what he is doing. But this, too, is only one possibility; a person may feel shame and yet reject the audience's description of his position, and thereby also reject the adverse judgement of what he is doing if the audience is a critical one. An account of shame which remedies these faults and appeals to a more complex notion of the audience will be both uniform in that it will cover all cases of shame, and will also explain how much content is to be given to the thought that shame requires an audience.

The point about the audience is that it occupies an observer and not a participant position. Unlike the agent, the audience is detached. It is reference to just this basic notion of the audience which is primarily needed for an explanation of shame: in feeling shame the actor thinks of himself as having become an object of detached observation, and at the core to feel shame is to feel distress at being seen at all. *How* he is seen, whether he thinks of the audience as critical, approving, indifferent, cynical or naïve is a distinguishable step and accounts for the different cases of shame.

That the thought of being seen at all may be enough for feeling shame is too familiar a suggestion to need much support. In some circumstances it seems wrong to the agent to be an object of observation at all to any or to some particular sort of audience. The convent girl thinks she ought not to be seen by the young man, but the grounds for this thought are not, or need not be, that she believes he would be critical of her. What does need support is that in a case like that of the convent girl there is what might be labelled a judging audience as well as a seeing one, and that in cases of condemnation as in the Sartre example different kinds of audiences should be distinguished.

As on my account both these cases have precisely the same structure a defence of either position will turn out to be a defence of the other as well. For illustration I shall adapt an example suggested by Scheler (*Shriften ans dem Nachlass*, p. 79).

A model who has been posing for an artist for some time comes to feel shame when she realizes that he no longer regards her as a model, but regards her as a woman. We have here to begin with a position in which she is at ease: she thinks, or unthinkingly assumes, that their relation is a wholly impersonal one. She then becomes aware of a changed point of view on the part of the artist, which is a view that clashes with the one held by her, or unthinkingly assumed by her. Awareness of this view forces her to abandon her own view of the situation, viz., forces her to see their relation as no longer impersonal. She does not, however, need to see herself as the artist sees her, she need not see herself as a woman in the sense of 'object of sexual interest'. She merely becomes aware that she is so seen. So in this respect she does not identify with the audience, she sees rather how she appears to the artist. Nor need she think of that audience's viewpoint as being at all critical of her; it is more likely in the circumstances that his attitude is one of approval. However, she must identify with some critical view of herself if we are to have a case of shame. For this feeling remains unexplained by merely the reference to the fact that she now thinks of herself as being seen differently. To this, if she reacts emotionally at all, she may react with all sorts of other emotions. She may feel anger or resentment, or she may feel pleased or proud.

The model need not see herself as the artist sees her. But as the result of realizing her relation to him she sees herself in a new light. The point can be expressed by introducing a second, higher order point of view from which she is seen not as an object of sexual interest, but is seen as *being seen* as such an object. With this point of view she does identify, and this point of view is a critical one. The adverse judgement, however, comes not from the artist, but comes from herself. It is critical in that it pronounces it wrong for her to be so seen, at least at this time and by this audience. Being seen as she is seen is to be in a position in which no decent woman should find herself. As the case is given this is no fault of hers, but the question of responsibility is irrelevant to feelings of shame. However it may have come about, she is now in a false position and for this she is condemned.

A closely analogous account can be applied to cases where shame may be thought to prevent a person from acting in a

certain way. So for instance it will offer an at least plausible account of Cordelia's behaviour in the Abdication scene: Cordelia is required to tell her father how much she loves him. For reasons of his own Lear wants her publicly to demonstrate her love for him. She refuses to do so. Her task is, in her view, an impossible one: the fine speeches just made by her sisters seem to be the thing required, but they most certainly are not demonstrations of love. The love Cordelia feels for her father can perhaps not be put into words at all, and in any case cannot be demonstrated by such speeches. We have here an actual audience: Lear and his court and family. Very likely Cordelia thinks of this audience as being cynical rather than naïve; she takes it that they know perfectly well what such fine speeches are worth: they will secure each daughter a part of the kingdom. An audience of this kind will cynically expect Cordelia to act as her sisters did. So, Cordelia realizes, were she to respond in the apparently required way she would be thought by this audience to be no better than her sisters. But she knows herself to be better than her sisters are, so she would not accept this description as true of herself, she would not identify with this audience. Yet from a higher order point of view she sees that by making a fine speech in public her relation to that audience would change. If she acts as she is cynically expected to do she would make common cause with that audience and no longer be able to dissociate herself from it. But the audience is a worthless lot, taking it for granted that self-interest and gain are the only reasons for action. So from this point of view Cordelia sees herself as being seen as one of that worthless lot, and with that point of view she does identify. In aligning herself with them she would lower herself to their level. She would then find herself in a shameful position, and shame prevents her from acting as she is cynically expected to do. Her silence protects herself and her position *vis-à-vis* the audience.[5]

I have made the actual audience here a cynical one, but the case is only slightly altered if Cordelia thinks of it as naïve or quite indifferent. To try and articulate her love for her father in

[5] Cordelia may be feeling shame at the thought that she might be making common cause with her sisters, or she may think she would feel shame if she did. Either alternative seems possible. Perhaps they cannot be clearly distinguished.

front of an indifferent audience may seem to her enough to spoil it and to leave her in the position of the spoiler of her love. The attitude ascribed to an actual or imagined audience will alter a case of shame only superficially and not structurally. The important point is that she realizes that were she to act as required she would be seen by the audience under a certain description; what this description is will depend on what attitude she believes the audience to have. This is exactly analogous to the case of the model; Cordelia merely introduces the extra complication that she does not find herself in but merely envisages herself in the shameful situation.[6]

The cases of Cordelia and the model are more complex than is that of the man in Sartre's example. He identifies with the audience in the sense of accepting the observer's description as true of what he is doing. But even so it is not necessary to think of the audience as critical: the observer may not in the least condemn the agent's vulgarity, he may on the contrary now find himself much more at ease in the man's company. And it may be precisely the awareness of this change of attitude on the part of the observer which makes the agent realize how degraded his position now is. Earlier I spoke of actor and audience as forming a mini honour-group. This now turns out to have more than one interpretation: it may be that the agent believes the audience to judge him by some standard which they share, and so he accepts the critical judgement. Or it may be that

[6] At least *this* shameful situation she only envisages. She may well also find herself in a shameful situation of a different kind: Lear seems to be inviting deception and so to be debasing what is valuable, and does not even seem to be aware that this is what he is doing. This is a doubly shameful position for Lear to be in, and as his daughter Cordelia must be implicated. And this is how she sees the situation: to be the daughter of a shameless father is to find oneself in a shameful position. As a daughter she should honour and respect him, but he takes the ground from under her feet. So he ruins the proper father-daughter relationship. But a 'proper' father and a 'proper' daughter are defined in terms of such a relationship. Thus Cordelia can hardly be a proper daughter to such a father, and so her own status has been undermined. Here the behaviour of another is the catalyst for her shame. As in the case of pride, this is possible only because Cordelia sees herself as 'connected' to Lear, viz., by family ties. Being so connected is sufficient for her own degradation, although of course she has done nothing to deserve this. There are many possible variations of the Cordelia case in a setting where family honour plays an important role. So one might explain Desdemona's passivity in the face of Othello's accusation by her conception of what constitutes a 'proper' wife. The belief on Othello's part, that she has committed adultery, is enough to undermine this position and enough, therefore, for loss of honour. That the belief is in fact unfounded is not of crucial relevance.

being seen in a certain way forces him to join the audience's 'honour-group', and it is this which he judges degrading. It may also be the case that the agent sees himself judged by standards he thinks he ought to share, and he feels shame because he is not, for example, a good enough person to share them.

If we take the description of the features of shame as we find them in Sartre's example as the description of the paradigm case, then it turns out that we cannot accommodate more complex but still quite ordinary cases of shame without adding all sorts of qualifications. This is not therefore a particularly attractive approach; it is not only untidy but also misleading about what is involved in feeling shame. The alternative is to start the other way round and treat Sartre's example as a specific case of shame falling under a more complex general description.

There are basically two elements in each case of shame. There is firstly the self-directed adverse judgement of the person feeling shame: she feels herself degraded, not the sort of person she believed, assumed, or hoped she was or anyway should be. This judgement is constitutive of the emotion, it is the person's identificatory belief. Secondly, there is the notion of the audience. This notion has a role to play in the explanation of the self-directed judgement. The notion of the audience is, as we have seen, itself complex. It consists of two distinguishable points of view. The first point of view audience sees the agent under some description, which may or may not entail some assessment of the agent. The seeing may be indifferent or friendly or hostile in some way. The attitude of the audience is therefore not to be identified with the agent's own attitude to herself, which in a case of shame can only be unfavourable. Even where the seeing is hostile the two should not be confused. For being seen with hostility may be perfectly acceptable to the agent if the relevant audience is one whose views she rather despises. But of course the different modes of seeing will account in different ways for the person's feeling shame. So if she feels shame although she thinks she is seen with approval then this can only be because she believes that being so seen puts her on a level with the audience, and it is this which is degrading. If on the other hand she thinks of the audience as indifferent then she will believe either that this audience does not think her worthy of attention, and this is demeaning,

or she believes that on this occasion she ought not to be seen at all, or at any rate be seen only by the sympathetic. And if she thinks of the audience's seeing as hostile then this will imply that she takes very seriously (at least at the time) the standards in the light of which she is so seen. There is therefore a connection between the manner in which the agent is seen and the nature of her self-critical judgement.

These examples already indicate the function of the second point of view audience. This concerns itself with the relation between the agent and the first audience. It views the different forms of seeing, and always views them critically: to be so seen is to be exposed, for the agent should not be seen in this way. This point of view is always needed as a step towards the self-realization which is expressed in the person's self-directed judgement. This is plainly so in the cases of the model and of Cordelia. But it is needed also for the man making the vulgar gesture, and for the craftsman, if that craftsman is to experience shame. Sartre's man is initially in a state where he is unselfconscious. He then realizes that what he is doing can be seen under some description. Even if this description constitutes a hostile assessment of what he is doing, as we here assume it to do, this need not bring about shame rather than any other emotional reaction. For he may think that only the unperceptive or the despicable would see it in this way, and he is not affected by their views. He does not accept the description as being at all true of what he is really doing. The thought of it being so described may leave him indifferent or cause him to feel resentful rather than feel shame. But it is given that he does feel shame, and so he sees his being so seen as constituting adverse criticism of himself, which he has to accept. He has to accept it in this case because he thinks he is as he is seen, i.e., his judgement coincides with the judgement embodied in the observer-description. This is one possibility. The other is that although the judgements do not coincide there is nevertheless something wrong in his being so seen.

The question arose earlier what content to give to the thought that shame requires an audience. This created problems as any possible content seemed either too substantial to be required for shame, or so slight that talk of the audience seemed superfluous. The conclusion now reached is that it is of course not

necessary for feeling shame that the agent believe or imagine there to be some observer who views him under some description. The actual or imagined observer may merely be the means of making the agent look at himself, he is in no way essential. What is essential is the shift in the agent's viewpoint *vis-à-vis* himself. But this by itself is not enough, for it does not account sufficiently for the complex notion of the audience.

To speak of an audience is of course to speak metaphorically. What has been described as seen from different audience points of view is the content of some of the agent's explanatory beliefs. So on the occasion of an occurrence of shame the person believes that she is defective and degraded. This is her identificatory belief. She sees herself in these terms because she is presented with a contrast, where the contrast is between her unselfconscious state, what she thought or hoped or unthinkingly assumed she was, or was doing, and what she has now under the observer-description turned out to be. This comes as a revelation to her. But it need be a revelation only given her initial unselfconsciousness. She may not be making a new discovery about herself, it may just be a reminder. She reaches this judgement by means of her beliefs that what she is doing may be seen under some description (where the description may just be 'object of observation') and that she ought not to be so seen, it is a false position in which she finds herself. What precisely makes it a false position will of course vary according to the circumstances.

There is, then, this point to the metaphors of an audience and of being seen: they reflect the structural features of the agent's becoming aware of the discrepancy between her own assumption about her state or action and a possible detached observer-description of this state or action, and of her further being aware that she ought not to be in a position where she could be so seen, where such a description at least appears to fit. For particular cases of shame an actual or imagined observer may or may not be required. He may be required if the person feels shame because seen at all, and in other cases an actual or imagined observer may be the means of bringing about the agent's realizations. But whether or not there is, or is imagined to be, such an observer is a contingent matter. Beliefs concerning possible detached descriptions of one's action or state were

not a feature of emotional pride; they introduce a dimension which that emotion lacked. But beliefs which are analogous to those enumerated in the case of pride must be present also in the case of shame if we are to understand why awareness of an observer-description has the effect it does on the agent. What the description picks out will strike her as in some respect undesirable and will refer to what is in one or another of the ways discussed closely connected with her.

Shame requires a sophisticated type of self-consciousness. A person feeling shame will exercise her capacity for self-awareness, and she will do so dramatically: from being just an actor absorbed in what she is doing she will suddenly become self-aware and self-critical. It is plainly a state of self-consciousness which centrally relies on the concept of another, for the thought of being seen as one might be seen by another is the catalyst for the emotion. The element of drama in the shifting viewpoints and the sudden realization of one's changed position is quite missing in the case of pride. The point of view, the seeing eye, is not built into the structure of pride as it is built into the structure of shame. In this, as in its general structure, humiliation is like shame and unlike pride. When feeling humiliated the agent again assesses herself in relation to how she appears to some audience or observer's point of view. The difference between the two emotions is one of emphasis: we again have the observer's point of view from which the agent is seen under a certain description. Being seen by that audience in that way implies, in the agent's view, that she is not being given the position which is due to her, or she had assumed was due to her. She therefore sees herself involved in a fall from a higher to a lower position. It is the fall itself which is here the prime concern, rather than her new degraded status. It does not matter whether the fall is a revelation of faults or weaknesses to the public eye only, or whether it is a revelation also to the agent herself. Nor does it matter whether she accepts the fall as deserved or not, whether or not she accepts that she is, for example, as corrupt or weak as she is now thought to be. She will in any case think of herself as being thought presumptuous in having allotted to herself such a high position, whether or not she shares this view. And she will think of herself as appearing contemptible or ludicrous just because she is not, in the

audience's view, the sort of person she gave herself out to be. The judgement involved here is comparative, as it was in shame: it embraces both the earlier high and the new low position. But what precisely is judged adversely is different. It is that she aspired to the high position when she had no business to do so, or appeared to others to do so, and it is this thought, that she is regarded as presumptuous, which is essential to humiliation as it is not to shame.

3

A person feeling shame judges herself adversely. This judgement is brought about by the realization of how her position is or may be seen from an observer's point of view. But there is no reference to such a point of view in her final self-directed judgement. It is because the agent thinks of herself in a certain relation to the audience that she now thinks herself degraded, but she does not think of this degradation as depending on an audience. Her final judgement concerns herself only: she is degraded not relatively to this audience, she is degraded absolutely. Thinking of herself as being seen in a certain way has revealed her to herself as inferior to what she believed, assumed, or hoped to be. As what is ultimately revealed is her lower standing she naturally feels helpless and hopeless. If in her own view she is what she has just been revealed to be then there seems to be nothing she can do about it. This at least is her feeling at the moment; it does not of course necessarily persist. She may realize that she does not after all accept the standards by reference to which she has judged herself, so that she was misguided to let them be imposed on her at the time. Or she may come to change her standards, either because she comes to see that after all they are not the right ones by which to judge a person, or because she comes to think that it is absurd to judge oneself by standards which are too high to live up to. Either way of ridding oneself of shame evidently takes time, and while it may reduce the number of occasions for feeling shame in the future, it cannot alleviate the feeling of helplessness at the moment of feeling shame.

The nature of the agent's self-directed judgement, the nature of the identificatory belief, can be elucidated by contrasting it

with that in the similar emotion of embarrassment. Shame and embarrassment are not usually distinguished from one another in the relevant literature.[7] This is not surprising as their structures seem very similar. Embarrassment, too, is an emotion of self-assessment and requires the necessary degree of self-consciousness. As in shame, someone absorbed in what he is doing cannot feel embarrassed. Here, too, the agent seems to be exposed to an audience, and he judges himself adversely. Yet shame strikes one as the weightier and more shattering emotion. It is connected with the agent's personal morality in a way in which embarrassment is not. Embarrassment, but not shame, implies some kind of a social context, which perhaps accounts for the fact that it may be 'catching' as shame is not. On the other hand, the element of revelation is not crucial to embarrassment and consequently visual metaphors are not so appropriate.

If so, then the role of the audience, i.e., what the explanatory beliefs are about, will be rather different in the case of embarrassment. It is true that the consciousness of being seen may be enough to cause either emotion; but the being seen is differently conceived: while in shame the agent thinks of it as a revealing of himself, in embarrassment he regards it as a demand for some response. The tension and confusion so typical of embarrassment are due to his seeing the situation as creating a demand to which he is unable to respond. Of course, there are situations of this kind where I nevertheless cannot be embarrassed. A pipe may burst and demand immediate action. Faced with this emergency I may dither as to what to do first and so fail to do what is required, and of course be fully aware of my failure. But whatever my emotional reactions under the circumstances, embarrassment can be one of them only if I believe myself to be watched, if I think or perhaps imagine that I am

[7] They are not distinguished by, e.g., Scheler, *Schriften aus dem Nachlass*; nor by E. Goffman, 'Embarrassment and Social Organisation' in *Interaction and Ritual* (Penguin University Books, 1972). Some of the examples and comments in Christopher Ricks' *Keats and Embarrassment* (OUP, 1976) are also more naturally interpreted as referring to shame rather than embarrassment. In *Die Ehrfurcht*, Bollnow disentangles a number of shame-related phenomena, but does not quite catch the area of embarrassment. The German word *verlegen*, which is the normal translation of 'embarrassed' at least over a range of cases, does not mean quite the same. Maybe, as Professor Ricks suggests, embarrassment is a typically English emotion, or at least one which the English particularly saw reason to single out and name.

seen making a mess of things. This seems to suggest that, unlike shame, embarrassment requires an embodied audience, or at least requires that the agent should imagine that such an audience is present. The demand relevant to embarrassment seems to be created not so much by the burst pipe as by the eyes which are upon me.

In the very basic and simple case where being seen is sufficient for feeling embarrassed it is indeed the being seen as such which creates the demand for a response. The person concerned, the adolescent for instance, can no longer behave 'naturally' as he did until aware of being seen. Just to be the object of observation and attention puts a stop to it and creates a new situation in which something different is required. If not just being seen, then being seen under certain circumstances or being seen from a certain point of view may create the demand for an appropriate response. To be seen by someone efficient who can deal with bursting pipes may strike me as making a demand on me, whereas being seen by someone equally helpless in such a situation may not. From that point of view possible variations in the manner of being seen are parallel to those in the audience in shame.

It seems, then, that it is the role of this audience in embarrassment to impose a demand on the agent. Often, normally perhaps, this role is played by an actual audience. But that this be so seems not necessary for embarrassment. The following case illustrates this point. Some people are gathered together for a light-hearted social evening. Suddenly one of them begins to pray; the other guests are embarrassed.[8] To be in that state, if my account so far is right, the guest must see this new situation as demanding some response of him. The claim is supported by the consideration that a guest would not on such an occasion feel embarrassed if he thought of himself as just an uninvolved spectator. He may remain quite detached, or he may feel amused, or angry that a pleasant evening has been spoilt. He may hold the praying guest or his host responsible

[8] This example is derived from one Kant is said to have used in one of his lectures, though his point was an entirely different one. In the course of explaining why a righteous man is liable to feel shame when surprised at his devotions, he remarks: 'let us assume that some one present were suddenly to uplift his hands and pray . . . we should be taken aback . . .'. 'Devoutness and the Feeling of Shame' in *Lectures on Ethics*, trans. L. Infield (Methuen, 1930).

for this state of affairs, but anyway it is not, in his view, his business to put matters right. Nor would that guest feel embarrassed who knew exactly what to do: he joins in the prayer or organizes charades. He is sure of himself and copes; he meets the demands of the situation as he sees them. The guest who is embarrassed neither remains uninvolved nor knows what to do. He thinks he ought to do something, but cannot think what, or dithers between possible alternatives. Or he may know what he ought to do (join in the prayer, for instance) but does not act accordingly, prevented perhaps by the thought that in doing so he would attract attention and thus create another embarrassing situation for himself.

For the guest to think of himself as relevantly involved does not, however, mean that he must think of himself as being seen by those present. In the case described there is of course an actual audience, and it may be that the person concerned thinks of himself as being seen by it. This would quite straightforwardly be the case if it is the host who feels embarrassed because he is aware that his guests expect him to do something to relieve the situation and he cannot think what. He fails to meet the demand imposed by the actual audience. But this is not the only possible case. The embarrassed person may be a guest who knows quite well that the others present have no particular expectations of him, that they are not paying attention to him at all. So the demand for some response does not seem to be created by those actually around him. Nevertheless, he thinks something is expected of him.

There are a number of reasons why this particular guest may feel embarrassed: he may, possibly, think himself into the position of the praying guest. He could not bear to be in his position, the object of attention and amazement. He would not be able to concentrate on his prayer, he would be distracted by his desire to be invisible to that audience. When praying he does not want to be seen at all, or at least not in the given circumstances, and were he so seen he would be in a state of confusion, not knowing whether to carry on with his prayer or somehow get himself out of that situation. Again, he may feel identified with the praying guest because he is 'connected' with him by being, for example, his son or friend. Such a connection is, as in pride and shame, enough to involve him in the exposure. Or

it may be that he feels embarrassed just because he is a member of the same group, viz., guests at a social gathering, and as such has his share of responsibility to make the evening a success. A guest will remain unembarrassed if he dissociates himself from the group, or if he is a successful member. But the embarrassed guest sees himself as failing to meet the demand imposed on him as a guest.

In the case just described we seem to have an example of someone who does not think of himself as being actually seen or noticed at all and who is embarrassed all the same. It looks as if in his case a reference to an audience is rather pointless as it does not seem to contribute to an explanation of his case. It seems to be rather the demand for a response which is crucial, and not the consciousness of being seen. But this would be a mistaken conclusion to draw: there is after all a link between the demand for a response and being seen. Often at least the demand is created by being seen by eyes other than one's own (under certain circumstances, from a certain point of view). If being seen by other eyes creates the demand then this can come about only if one believes or at least imagines oneself to be actually seen. So here a reference to a seeing audience is in place, and it will be a reference to an audience which is more substantial than that appropriate to shame, for it has to be believed or imagined to be an actual audience. The difficulty about the embarrassed guest was that he did not seem to fit this picture, for his embarrassment was caused not by being seen but by some form of identification.

The identification is, however, with someone who is thought of as being seen. Cases of this type are common enough: a countryman of mine behaves badly (in my view) in front of a foreign audience. I feel embarrassed. Why? He is being seen as a poor specimen, or so I imagine. Because of our shared nationality this verdict affects me as well. But I object to being so seen, so in some way I have to dissociate myself from my countryman, or correct the impression. Here the tension arises not because I actually identify with him, but because I believe that such identification is forced upon me by the audience on the basis of our connection, and so it is up to me to show that such an identification is mistaken. The situation demands that I put matters right ('Englishmen are splendid, really'), but if

I am embarrassed then I cannot see how, or perhaps can see that there is no way of doing so. There is evidently nothing I can do when, for example, I watch my countryman (colleague, member of my family) making a fool of himself in a television interview. In cases such as these being seen still plays an important role and is that which can be said to create the demand for me to respond. But the seeing is an indirect seeing of him who feels the demand. For he is seen only in the sense that the person with whom he is—in his view—seen as identified is being seen, or by him thought to be seen.

The case where a guest is embarrassed because he identifies as a member of a group is parallel to the last one. Because he sees himself as a member of a group of which the praying guest is also a member he is now 'connected' with him. Just as in family relationship, this connection means that he now sees the praying guest's position as affecting his own. The praying guest behaves in a way which is not appropriate guest-behaviour, and is seen to do so. Being seen is here, as in the previous case, the indirect source of the embarrassment. The praying guest is or (the embarrassed guest fears) will shortly become the object of attention and criticism. It is not the fact that he is praying that is embarrassing, just as it was not the fact that I was being useless in an emergency situation which was as such embarrassing to me. If he were discreet about his prayer and prayed quietly to himself while apparently listening to the conversation there would be nothing embarrassing in the situation. The other guest feels embarrassed because his status as a guest has been affected by the behaviour of his fellow guest; he must do something to save his own position, either dissociate himself in some way or raise again the guest status. It is this demand he fails to meet.

There is, then, in embarrassment, an important role for the seeing audience in that directly or indirectly it creates the demand for a response. The status of the audience, viz., its conception as eyes other than my own, is different from its status in shame, and its role is therefore different, too. For if (directly or indirectly) being seen by others is so important here then what is at stake is the agent's appearance to others, or the impression he makes on others, in the given situation. This would, of course, explain why embarrassment, but not shame,

is to be regarded as a social emotion, if by this is meant that it is felt in a social context. It presupposes some concern on the part of the agent with the impression he makes on others; somebody who does not care at all how he might be seen by others will not be subject to embarrassment.

The overall demand of the situation is always that he make a certain impression or correct a certain impression which he thinks the audience is left with either because of his own behaviour or because of the behaviour of a member of his group with whom he thinks he will be identified. What is felt in embarrassment is therefore also very different from what is felt in shame. There is here no shock at what is being revealed about oneself, for such revelation is not what is here at issue. What is at issue is the person's inability to respond to what the situation demands. The demand may present itself to him with greater or lesser urgency (one may be mildly or extremely embarrassed) and consequently the tension between the felt demand and the inability to respond may be greater or less. The demand pulls him one way, but there is some obstacle which prevents him from meeting it. The obstacle may be, as in the television case, that there is just nothing that can be done. Or he may be prevented from doing anything by conflicting courses of action presenting themselves to him between which he is unable to decide, or indeed by the demands themselves being seen by him as conflicting.[9] Again, no appropriate response

[9] A very nice example of a person being confronted by conflicting demands is provided by Dickens:

> I saw Mr. Guppy, with his hair flattened down upon his head, and woe depicted in his face, looking up at me. . . .
>
> It quite spoilt my pleasure for that night, because it was so very embarrassing and so very ridiculous. But from that time forth, we never went to the play without my seeing Mr. Guppy in the pit . . .
>
> I really cannot express how uneasy this made me. If he would only have brushed up his hair, or turned up his collar, it would have been bad enough; but to know that that absurd figure was always gazing at me . . . put such a constraint upon me that I did not like to laugh at the play, or to cry at it, or to move or to speak. I seemed able to do nothing naturally.' (*Bleak House*, Norton Critical Edition, ed. Ford and Monod, p. 155.)

One natural response for Esther in this situation would be to behave as the admired. But she regards her admirer as absurd, and responding as the admired would make her equally absurd. So this is not a course she can adopt. On the other hand, being gazed at by the absurd Mr. Guppy threatens her position, anyway, so there is a need for her to dissociate herself from him. But Esther can see no way of doing this, and so she remains paralysed in the face of this demand.

may occur to him at all, or, while clear about what ideally he should do he is prevented from embarking on this course of action by, for example, fear of drawing attention to himself or making himself ridiculous. The getting out of one embarrassing situation may only land him in another and possibly worse one.

In embarrassment concern is always with one's own position *vis-à-vis* others. I can feel embarrassed about the impression I think another leaves on the audience only if I think that this will affect the appearance I present. This is one way in which embarrassment may spread to other members of a group.[10] In so far as its concern is always with the agent himself embarrassment is of course like shame, but it is a different kind of concern for it is only with his impression on the given audience. The agent sees himself as failing to respond to whatever it may be the situation requires. But his failure is only relative to the given situation. His embarrassment will be removed by the removal of the demand, and that in turn may be removed either because the situation changes without his doing anything, or by his becoming certain how to respond and acting accordingly. There is no parallel dissolution of the emotion in the case of shame. The reason is of course that when feeling shame his failure is in his own eyes not just relative to the given situation, it is not just a failure to present himself in an appropriate manner to a given audience. In shame the failure is seen as absolute and not as so localized. The self-critical verdict is therefore different in the two cases; in embarrassment it is not an adverse judgement on the person as a whole, but an adverse judgement only on the person in a given situation. It is for this reason that embarrassment is the less undermining of the two emotions.

Shame and embarrassment, then, have each their own sphere of operation. This is not to say, of course, that either may not be the response to the same sort of situation. The man making

[10] Goffman seems to think that embarrassment is 'catching' in that the embarrassment of one person in a group may bring about the embarrassment of others because they now feel with or for him (*Interaction and Ritual*, p. 99). This seems to me a mistake, if we are to understand by this claim that these others are now concerned about the position of the initially embarrassed person. Such an explanation seems in any case unnecessary. It is easy enough to see how embarrassment may 'catch on': if in a convention-governed situation the embarrassed person does not play the game other players are now presented with a situation in which the next move is not prescribed so that they, too, may become uncertain about what to do.

the vulgar gesture may have felt embarrassment rather than shame when he noticed an audience, though in that case he would have seen the role of the audience as different, viz., not as just the means towards a new self-recognition, but as that whose view of him needs improving. That either reaction is possible in the same sort of situation is one reason why shame and embarrassment tend not to be disentangled. Another reason is that quite naturally both emotions may be felt at the same time, or the one may be the catalyst for the other. My embarrassment may strike me as showing me up as a lesser person than I hoped I was if the situation is one where I think I should be able to respond naturally and not be paralysed by embarrassment (e.g., the sight of overwhelming grief). Being embarrassed on such an occasion shows up a failing in myself as a human being. Equally, feeling shame may give rise to embarrassment, for finding myself in this paralysing state is bound to affect my response to others. That shame and embarrassment should thus occur together or produce one another is not surprising: how one appears to others and what one is, after all, are not two quite separate elements, and concern with one is likely to be mixed up with or to produce concern with the other. But this consideration does not undermine the validity of their theoretical distinction. In particular it leaves unimpaired the difference in the nature of the respective self-critical judgement, which confirms that in shame more is at stake than how a person presents himself in a social context.

4

At the beginning of this chapter I pointed out that some philosophers speak of different kinds of shame, and pick out only one of these kinds as a moral emotion, in the sense that in this case, but in this case only, feeling shame involves an appeal to some moral standard in the light of which the person is judged, or judges himself. My own claim was that this division into kinds is mistaken, for all cases of shame share the same structure, and what they refer to as 'kinds' are merely specific sets of cases covered by the present analysis. In rejecting the division into kinds I also reject the labelling of just one kind as 'moral'. There is no reason to deny that shame in all its occurrences is a

moral emotion, provided that morality is not thought of just in terms of adhering to or breaking certain moral rules, but is taken to include personal morality, a person's own view of how he ought to live and what he ought to be. The final self-directed adverse judgement in shame is always the same: that he is a lesser person than he should be, for an in some way better person would not find himself in a position where he can be seen as he is or may be seen. What is different in the different cases of shame is just that which in the agent's view has made his position so vulnerable. The possible variety here is immense, and, just as in the case of pride, it is impossible to set objective limits to possible objects of shame. Only sometimes is the reason why his position is so vulnerable that he has done something morally disgraceful. To speak of certain cases only as being cases of moral shame is to emphasize the means by which the agent has arrived at the position in which he now finds himself. This is what for instance Rawls has in mind when he says:

> Consider first natural shame . . . natural shame is aroused by blemishes in our person, or by acts and attributes indicative thereof . . . Turning now to moral shame . . . someone is liable to moral shame when he prizes as excellences of his person those virtues that his plan of life requires . . . (*A Theory of Justice*, p. 444.)

According to him shame is a moral emotion on those and only those occasions when the agent's explanatory beliefs refer to some failure to act virtuously on his part. But shame may also be thought of as a moral emotion because of the nature of his final self-directed judgement. Rawls himself points to this possibility when he suggests that shame is the feeling someone has when he experiences an injury to his self-respect or suffers a blow to his self-esteem (442). He does not distinguish between self-respect and self-esteem and seems to think that they amount to the same thing (440). But this is not so. They are distinguishable from one another and there is a case for regarding shame as primarily linked with self-respect rather than with self-esteem. They are, however, so interrelated with each other that a neat pigeon-holing of the different phenomena is hardly possible.

The person who has self-esteem takes a favourable view of himself, while he who lacks it will think of himself in unfavour-

able terms: he is not worth much. If possession and lack of self-esteem consist in these contrasting attitudes a person has towards himself then there is also a third possibility, namely that a person neither possesses nor lacks self-esteem. He has no particular attitude towards himself; he does not give much thought to the matter and takes himself as he comes. There is a connection between self-esteem and emotional pride: the person who is proud of this or that enjoys, at the time of feeling proud, an increase in his self-esteem; he can now take a more favourable view of himself (in some respect). Conversely, a person experiencing shame is forced to think that he is less admirable than he had supposed and this is indeed a blow to his self-esteem. So, as Rawls suggests, shame may well be felt by someone who suffers a blow to his self-esteem. It seems to me, nevertheless, that self-esteem is linked primarily with humiliation rather than with shame, for these two reasons: to suffer a blow to one's self-esteem is to modify one's favourable attitude towards oneself. Hence to suffer such a blow one has to have a favourable attitude towards oneself in the first place. But a person may not have such an attitude. In that case he could not modify it, and so could not experience a blow to his self-esteem, but he could still feel shame under certain circumstances. And secondly, a blow to one's self-esteem may be experienced if the person concerned believes that he does not get the recognition he ought to have, he deserves better than he gets. This is an occasion primarily for humiliation rather than for shame, for he may not therefore also think that he is worth less than he thought.

For a person to have self-respect does not mean that he has a favourable attitude towards himself, or that he has any particular attitude towards himself at all. Nor is self-respect connected with emotional pride. Its connection with pride is different in that the person who respects himself will 'have his pride', he will be too proud to do this or suffer that. Certain kinds of behaviour and certain kinds of treatment will seem intolerable to the person of self-respect, and to pursue or suffer them would mean loss of self-respect to a certain extent. It is true that his expectations concerning his behaviour and treatment may be fulfilled and yet he may not have much self-respect: to respect oneself is to have a sense of one's own value, and this

requires also a degree of self-confidence, a belief that he has got his expectations right. But a person who has such confidence in himself and whose relevant expectations are fulfilled need not therefore have a favourable attitude towards himself, for if he thinks of the matter at all he may just think that to behave in such ways or to be so treated is the least a person can expect, and so is not something to be proud of. But while the one does not necessarily lead to the other, it may well be that keeping one's self-respect is often seen as grounds for feeling proud. It has recently been suggested[11] that there is a conceptual connection between self-respect and self-esteem which consists in this: retaining one's self-respect always supplies a ground of reason for self-esteem, and lack or loss of self-respect always supplies a ground for disesteem. This is true, and it is also true that, conversely, retaining one's self-esteem may be a reason for retaining one's self-respect, and loss of self-esteem may involve loss of self-respect. The reason for this is the already familiar point that norms of expectations are pitched at different levels. The implication of this point in the present context is that what people regard as an injury to their self-respect will differ according to what form of behaviour and treatment they expect of and for themselves. Maintaining one's self-respect is then a reason for self-esteem if one thinks that one's norm is a cut above that of others, or that one is better at living up to it than others are. In that case, although in the person's view living up to that norm is only to be expected from a person such as he, it is, against the foil of others, also a reason for self-esteem, or (which comes to the same thing) a reason for being proud of himself. It follows that in such a case not living up to one's norm would at one and the same time be a blow to one's self-esteem and an injury to one's self-respect.

Given these interrelations between self-respect and self-esteem it seems churlish to quarrel with Rawls's view as to what shame is about. But the point is that the occasions for loss of self-respect and the occasions for feeling shame coincide as neither does with the occasion for experiencing a blow to one's self-esteem. The self-respecting person has certain views of what is due to him and from him, though of course these views

[11] By David Sachs in *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. x (1981), pp. 346–60.

may not be very articulate or may formulate themselves only when he is confronted by certain types of action or certain forms of treatment. He will lack self-respect if he has no such views, and he will lose his self-respect if the relevant expectations are not fulfilled. But the frustration of his expectations in this area is precisely the occasion for feeling shame: he will feel shame if he becomes aware that his expectations are being frustrated. This is so because of the nature of these expectations: they relate to the status of the person concerned, and their frustration will, for the agent, amount to a lowering of his status. This is not to say that whenever injury to self-respect then also the experience of shame. For it is conceivable that such injury or loss may not be noticed by the agent. It is the converse which is always true: whenever a person experiences shame then he experiences an injury to his self-respect.

The only possible general point that can be made about the nature of the relevant expectations is that they must be based on something which the agent thinks of great importance, of great value to himself and to the life he envisages himself as leading. What is thought to be of such value will obviously be different for differing agents, and consequently what they see as occasions for shame will differ, too. Some of these values the agent may think of such importance to just his individual life, others he may think are crucial for the life of any human being. But in whatever terms, a person must be able to evaluate himself, his treatment and his actions, if he is to have any self-respect at all.

In the light of this conceptual link between shame and self-respect it does not come as a surprise that we can characterize self-respect by reference to shame: if someone has self-respect then under certain specifiable conditions he will be feeling shame. A person has no self-respect if he regards no circumstances as shame-producing. Loss of self-respect and loss of the capacity for feeling shame go hand in hand. The close connection between these two makes it clear why shame is often thought to be so valuable. It is, firstly, that a sense of value is necessary for self-respect and so for shame, so that whatever else may be wrong about the person feeling shame he will at least have retained a sense of value. And secondly, it is a sense

of value which protects the self from what in the agent's own eyes is corruption and ultimately extinction.

The individual member of an honour-group in the setting of a shame-culture can be used to illustrate this point: the relevant values are provided by the honour-code, and his survival as the person he is—which is determined by his membership of the group—depends on his accepting and living by these values. His doing so is therefore protective of the person he is. If on the occasion of his acting against the code he feels shame, then he will at least have retained a sense of what protects that endangered self. He still has some hold on the person he was, so that it is (in theory) still possible for him to regain his old position. But if he feels no shame then he will have abandoned totally the values he lived by, and will have discarded with it the person he once was.[12]

To respect the self, then, is not to think either favourably or unfavourably of the self, but is rather to do that which protects the self from injury or destruction, just as to respect others is not to think well or badly of them, but is at least to abstain from injuring or destroying them, whether physically or morally. And shame is the emotion of self-protection: it may prevent the person concerned from putting himself into a certain position, or make him aware that he ought not to be in the position in which he finds himself. Of course, he may or may not be right in his view of what needs protecting, he may be muddled and misguided in this matter, and so concentrate his energies on protecting a part of himself which is not worth protecting. It is for this reason that in the literature we meet two conflicting views: on the one hand we are told that shame is a good thing,

[12] For an example of the importance of shame for members of an honour-group see e.g. Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* (Translation H. M. Mustard and C. E. Passage). Gurnemanz is advising the young and inexperienced Parzival on the proper conduct of life for one of high birth and breeding:

> 'Follow *my* advice: it will keep you from wrongdoing. I will begin thus:
> See that you never lose your sense of shame. A man without a sense of shame, what good is he? He lives in a molting state, shedding his honor, and with steps directed towards hell. . . .' (p. 93)

And later, after Parzival has failed in one of his tests, the narrator reassures the reader: 'Still another virtue was his, a sense of shame. Real falsity he had shunned . . .' (p. 172).

and even that it is the supreme virtue;[13] on the other, shame is regarded as an emotion which it is bad to feel, at least on most occasions when it tends to be felt.

The reasons for these opposing views differ, but on the present account the value of shame must lie in its role as self-protective emotion and its disvalue in the possibility of the protection being wholly misplaced. Of course, feelings of shame may be short-lived and non-recurrent if the agent himself recognizes that that which in his view placed him in the vulnerable position should not in fact be seen as bringing about a lowered status.[14] So when in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* Faithful is told by Shame that few of the powerful and rich would agree with Faithful's view that a tender conscience is a thing of value but would regard it as unmanly, he only briefly accepts the adverse view on a tender conscience and can quickly be made to see that Shame was 'a bold Villain', i.e., be made to recognize that he suffered from false shame. But such recognition may be long delayed or may not happen at all. It is from this point of view that Stanley Cavell discusses the case of Gloucester:

> For Gloucester has a fault . . . He has revealed his fault in the opening speeches of the play, in which he tells Kent of his shame. . . . He says that now he is 'braz'd to it', that is, used to admitting that he has fathered a bastard. . . .' He recognizes the moral claim upon himself, as he says twice, to 'acknowledge' his bastard . . . but all this means to him is that he acknowledges that he has a bastard for a son. He does not acknowledge *him*, as a son or a person, with *his* feelings of illegitimacy and being cast out. *That* is something Gloucester ought to be ashamed of; his shame is itself more shameful than his one piece of licentiousness. This is one of the inconveniences of shame, that it is generally inaccurate, attaches to the wrong thing.[15]

As the father of a bastard, Gloucester, in his own view, is in a vulnerable position, for this is an aspect of himself which does

[13] Plato in the *Laws* (Bk. 2, 671c) praises shame as that which will prevent a man from doing what is dishonourable. Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* suggests that while feeling shame is all right for children it is not a suitable emotion for an adult (Bk. 4 Ch. IX), but he also acknowledges its value in *Rhetoric* 1367a10. Both Bollnow (*Die Ehrfurcht*) and Scheler (*Schriften aus dem Nachlass*) emphasize the value of shame.

[14] This is not the only case, of course, where shame may not have much effect. The agent may not think his position so very vulnerable and he may be able to forget with relative ease the occasion for shame.

[15] From 'The Avoidance of Love: A Reading of *King Lear*' in *Must We Mean What We Say?* (CUP, 1976), p. 276.

not fit the sort of person he thinks he ought to be, or wants to be. Revelation of this position (which may be just the recollection that he is in this position) will cause him to experience shame unless he can take certain measures to prevent this occurrence. He takes in fact two steps in this direction. The first (as Cavell later points out) is a very common one under the circumstances: he avoids that which will serve as a reminder to himself and others of what he regards as a flaw in himself, which in this case is achieved by keeping Edmund abroad for long periods of time. The other more daring and interesting move is that he 'brazens it out', that is, he draws attention to the fact that Edmund is illegitimate and so makes it appear that having a bastard son is a less weighty matter than might be supposed. In other words, he tries to turn himself into someone who is shameless: he pretends not to recognize the importance of the value involved and makes light of such a value. Now one may well, like Cavell, believe that Gloucester has got his values all wrong, and that what he should really feel shame about is his treatment of his son, rather than the son's existence. But this of course does not mean that it can be right for Gloucester to make light of his values and thus avoid shame. For in doing so he denies what is in fact of great importance to him. If it were not so important he would not have to take such elaborate steps to avoid exposure. There are therefore two ways of looking at the value of the occurrence of shame in cases like that of Gloucester. The first is Cavell's way in the passage quoted: Gloucester's shame attaches to the wrong object because he has not got his values right. In this sense his shame is misplaced and so unjustified, it is an emotion he ought not to be experiencing. But (and this is the other way of looking at the matter) for the agent it is the experiencing of the emotion which is in this sense justified, and the avoidance of it which is not. Avoidance of shame is one way of losing self-respect, for it is one way of blurring the values the person is committed to. From this point of view genuine shame is always justified, where 'genuine' is to be opposed to the 'false' shame felt by Faithful when for a brief period he let an alien standard be imposed on him. Gloucester, on the contrary, lets an alien standard be imposed on him when he tries to avoid shame, and the one is as much a form of corruption as the other.

Shame can be seen as a moral emotion, then, not because sometimes or even often it is felt when the person believes himself to have done something morally wrong, but rather because the capacity for feeling shame is so closely related to the possession of self-respect and thereby to the agent's values. The implications of this relationship are deeper than has so far been indicated, and can be done justice to only when the notion of integrity has been discussed. First, however, I shall contrast shame with another emotion, namely guilt, which shares with shame the features of being an emotion of self-assessment and of being regarded as a moral emotion, but which in spite of these similarities is quite different in both its structure and its nature.

IV

GUILT AND REMORSE

1

GUILT, unlike shame, is a legal concept. A person is guilty if he breaks a law, which may be of human or divine origin. As a consequence of this action he has put himself into a position where he is liable to punishment, or where, given repentance, he may be forgiven. He will be guilty under these circumstances whether the law is good or bad, pronounced by God or the dictator, backed by good reasons or otherwise. Given only that he is under the legislation of the authority in question, violation of the law is sufficient for guilt.

He may of course *be* guilty and not *feel* guilty, for he may think the law in question bad and oppressive, or he may be quite indifferent towards the authority of the law. To feel guilty he must accept not only that he has done something which is forbidden, he must accept also that it is forbidden, and thereby accept the authority of whoever or whatever forbids it. The person who accepts the authority does not merely recognize its power and so thinks it simply prudent to obey its commands; he also accepts its verdicts as correct and binding. What the authority pronounces to be wrong must not be done. So the authority becomes the voice of conscience. An authority whose commands have to be obeyed has the status of a god, and the notion of the authority of conscience is therefore clearest if it is thought that the voice of conscience reflects the edicts of some god. Otherwise the notion of the authority of conscience remains obscure, though there are of course explanations of how the thought of an authority issuing commands has come to play such an important part in people's lives.[1] The often inarticulate

[1] e.g. Freud: 'At the beginning, therefore, what is bad is whatever causes one to be threatened with loss of love. For fear of that loss, one must avoid it . . . A great change takes place only when the authority is internalized through the establishment of a super-ego. The phenomena of conscience then reach a higher stage. Actually, it is not

and obscure notion of an authority plays a role in guilt which is analogous to that played by the notion of an audience in shame: in accepting what he has done as something forbidden the person feeling guilty thinks of himself as being under some authoritative command. He may of course come to question and reject the authority; he may for instance come to discard the religion with which he has grown up. As emotional responses notoriously do not keep step with rationally arrived at decisions he may still feel guilty when, for example, he does not go to church on Sundays. His feelings of guilt would then, in his own view, be irrational. Just as a person is guilty if he breaks the law whether or not that law is just or justified, so he feels guilty if what he does presents itself as a wrong, whether or not what he is doing can in fact be regarded as a wrong, and whether or not he himself thinks it wrong when he views the matter from a more rational point of view. It is for this reason that it is illuminating to describe the person who feels guilty as thinking of himself as having violated some taboo, for this carries the requisite implication of having done something forbidden, without any further indication that what is forbidden is so for good reason because harmful in some respect. Taboos exercise great authority which is often strong enough to survive to some extent and for some time any rational rejection. The categorical imperative is on some level still accepted. Taboos will naturally carry varying degrees of weight, and the struggle to free oneself from them may correspondingly be more or less prolonged. The agent's thought that he has ignored or acted contrary to some categorical imperative, or that he has violated some taboo, must be distinguished from the thought that in doing so he has caused harm to this or that other person. Whether or not he has done so will depend on the content of the command, which may or may not concern the person's behaviour towards others. Guilt, being regarded as a moral emotion, is sometimes thought to be felt essentially about harm done to others. Rawls, for example, thinks that when feeling guilty we think of ourselves as having transgressed what he calls 'a principle of right',[2] so that the

until now that we should speak of conscience or a sense of guilt.' *Civilization and its Discontents* (The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1975), pp. 61–2.

[2] *A Theory of Justice*, Part 3, Ch. VII, 67, and Ch. VIII, 72. The 'principle of right' refers to his principles of justice: 'When we go against our sense of justice we explain

wrong I think I have done must be thought of as some harm to another. Here, he thinks, is the difference between feeling guilt and feeling shame, for thinking one has harmed another is not necessary for feeling shame. The distinction sounds plausible enough and fits the cases that easily come to mind: suppose you have not spoken up when you think you should. You will feel shame if your thought is that this just shows what a moral coward you are. But you will feel guilt if you think that because of your keeping quiet justice has not been done. Rawls' own example (445) is of a man who cheats and feels both shame and guilt: he will feel guilt because by wrongly advancing his own interests he has transgressed the rights of others; and he will feel shame because he has shown himself to be unworthy of the trust of his associates. In both these cases feelings of guilt concern themselves with what one has done to others, while feelings of shame concern themselves with one's own standing. And it seems true that guilt does not concern itself with the person's own standing in the way shame does. Nevertheless, the distinction as drawn by Rawls is not quite right. That in feeling guilt I should think of myself as having harmed another applies, perhaps, to the most typical cases, though even here it is not clear that what in my view has been infringed is a principle of right. I may feel guilty because I did not have the patience to listen to somebody's tale of misery, and it seems at least far-fetched to regard this case as falling under some principle of right. On the other hand, it is true that the person who feels guilty thinks in terms of duties not performed and obligations not fulfilled. This is a difference between him and the person feeling shame, who need not think in such terms at all, and is a difference which reference to the transgression of a principle of right no doubt includes. What makes this phrase not wholly suitable as a description of what the guilty think of themselves as having done, is the implied emphasis on persons other than the agent himself. It implies, firstly, that the agent's thoughts are primarily on the rights of others rather than on his own

our feelings of guilt by reference to the principles of justice. . . . The complete moral development has now taken place and for the first time we experience feelings of guilt in the strict sense.' (474.) Rawls is primarily concerned with the mature person's guilt, or guilt in the 'strict' sense; i.e., he has no particular interest in the occurrence of irrational guilt.

duties. Even if every right implies a duty, and the other way about, it may still be the case that the agent thinks of the situation primarily in terms of the one rather than the other. He may look at it from the point of view of how it most importantly concerns himself, or of how it most importantly concerns the other. 'Transgression of a principle of right' fits the latter case rather than the former, but it is the former which applies to the guilty. Nor is it true (as the description is also taken to imply) that he who feels guilty must always think of himself as having harmed another. Principles of right are perhaps too closely linked with the notion of laws governing social behaviour to be invoked entirely appropriately for the case of feeling guilt. If feeling guilty is thought of as the response to having broken such a law then it is naturally thought of as being the response to harm done to others, for to avoid such harm is what these laws are all about. But feelings of guilt need not be so restricted in their scope. I may feel guilty, for example, after a suicide attempt, not because I think that I have caused a lot of trouble to others, but because I think it is just wrong to take life, including my own. Or one may take a Kantian view and think of the deed as an offence against oneself as an autonomous, rational being. Freud cites the case of a man who states that 'the thought plagues me constantly that the guilt is mine for my failure to become what I could have been with my abilities.'[3] Feelings of guilt are often evoked by the thought that one is wasting one's time or abilities. I may feel guilty because I watch that silly television serial rather than improve my mind by reading great literature, but it is hard to see whom under these circumstances I think I harm other than myself. Even if I think devoting myself to serious reading will turn me into a better and wiser person to live with, it may not be for this reason that I feel guilty when I indulge in more frivolous activity. It is not correct, then, that for feeling guilt the thought that directly or indirectly I am harming another must be involved. The crucial thought here is just that what I am doing is forbidden. It is quite natural, of course, that what is so ingrained in us as being forbidden should concern our behaviour towards others, for it is in

[3] Sigmund Freud, 'Determinism, Belief in Chance and Superstition—Some Points of View', in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, ed. J. Strachey (Ernst Benn, London, 1966), p. 244.

this area that early childhood restrictions are most likely to be found, that 'moral training' has its central place. But it is not the only area and hence not what delimits the appropriateness of the guilt-response. What is important for guilt is just that some form of action or abstention should present itself as obligatory to the agent, but the content of the demand is not restricted. In this respect guilt does not differ from shame. In either case it is of course possible that his feelings of guilt or feelings of shame may be judged irrational, but this is not to deny that he feels one or the other of these emotions.

2

In the legal context, to be found guilty is to be found liable to punishment. Guilt and such liability are conceptually connected. Similarly, if a person feels guilty she thinks she has put herself into a position where punishment is due. In acting contrary to the authority's command she has offended that authority and so will expect retribution. This thought must again be distinguished from the thought that some reparation is expected of her. This latter thought connects with the content of the command, rather than with the fact that she has disobeyed it. Consequently, although a common thought in cases of guilt, it is not a feature in all of them. The offence may be thought too great for any form of reparation to be thought possible. There was nothing for Oedipus to repair when he realized that his crimes were those of parricide and incest.

A person is guilty if he has done something which constitutes breaking the law. His guilt is thus localized: given that he has at one time broken one law it does not follow that he has also broken others, or that he will go on breaking the law. What he is punished, or possibly forgiven for is the breaking of whatever is the law in question. Punishment is for what he has done and not for what he is. Both guilt and punishment concentrate on the deed or the omission. Similarly, feelings of guilt are localized in a way in which feelings of shame are not localized; they concern themselves with the wrong done, not with the kind of person one thinks one is. This difference is brought out quite well by a distinction drawn by some sociologists between

'primary' and 'secondary' deviance.[4] 'Primary deviance' applies to those cases where a person accepts that he has done wrong but does not think of this wrong-doing as affecting his overall standing as a person. What he has done remains, in his own view, alien to what he really is. The secondary deviant, however, now sees himself not just as a man who at some point, for instance, committed a burglary, but rather sees himself as a burglar. What he has done is not alien to himself but on the contrary expresses what he really is. This second view is appropriate to shame, the former to guilt—though of course neither feeling is a necessary consequence of taking the relevant view, for in either case the individual may remain indifferent or become reconciled to the state of affairs.

If feelings of guilt concentrate on the deed or the omission then the thought that some repayment is due is in place here as it is not in the case of shame. If I have done wrong then there is some way in which I can 'make up' for it, if only by suffering punishment. But how can I possibly make up for what I now see I am? There are no steps that suggest themselves here. There is nothing to be done, and it is best to withdraw and not to be seen. This is the typical reaction when feeling shame. Neither punishment nor forgiveness can here perform a function.

If repayment and punishment are appropriate to guilt but not to shame, then it is natural to assume that guilt is related to responsibility in a way in which shame is not. Normally we are held responsible for what we do in a way in which we are not held responsible for what we are. What we do or fail to do can be set against a background which may at least mitigate the guilt by pleas of ignorance, lack of intention or unfortunate circumstances. Excuses of this sort are irrelevant in the case of shame, for the occasion of shame may be something one could not conceivably do anything about, such as having poor parents or growing old. Similarly, one would suppose, feelings of guilt but not feelings of shame are based on the agent's thinking himself responsible for what he has done. It is indeed true to say that when feeling guilty but not when feeling shame I must

[4] e.g. Edwin Lemert, 'Primary and Secondary Deviation' (1951), in Cressey and Ward, *Delinquency, Crime and Social Process* (Harper and Row, N.Y., 1969). I am grateful to Jeremy Waldron for drawing my attention to this literature.

think myself responsible for the relevant state of affairs, but this is true only given the widest possible reading of 'responsibility'. I may but need not think of myself as having intentionally or negligently done or omitted to do what I feel guilty about; I may but need not think that I could and should have acted otherwise and so am blameworthy in the accepted sense. Normally, perhaps, I do think myself blameworthy in this sense when feeling guilty, but not necessarily so: while driving my car I knock down and kill a child whom I could not have seen or, once seen, have avoided. I have not been negligent but have taken all possible care, and I know that this is the case. But I have done a terrible thing, and my seeing it as such is enough for me to suffer from guilt. It is of course possible that although I know I have not been negligent I do not quite believe it, and so after all think myself negligent and therefore blameworthy. But this is not the only possible explanation. However little I could have helped the accident, nevertheless I brought it about. In this minimal sense of 'responsible' I am responsible for it. Responsibility of this sort was quite sufficient for the self-condemnation of Oedipus: he had violated the taboos of parricide and incest, and ignorance of what he was doing is quite irrelevant to his feelings of guilt. Causal responsibility is the type that is sufficient for guilt, and that much is also necessary. If I feel guilty about my privileged position in society due to circumstances of birth then I see myself as an agent causally involved: it is *my* birth which has brought about the state of affairs which is my privileged position. The case is quite different if I feel shame about the circumstances of my birth: my agency or otherwise is here irrelevant, it is enough that I think of it as in some way deflating my status. This difference between these two emotions is illustrated by the fact that the deed of another (my child, my compatriot) may make me feel shame but not guilt. Guilt itself cannot be vicarious,[5] and feelings of guilt similarly cannot arise from the deeds or omissions of others. The relationship between myself and, for example, my children is enough for their misdeeds or failures to cause me shame, but it is not enough to cause me feelings of guilt. My son's misdeeds may by me be taken to show my own failure as a parent, but

[5] Cp. Joel Feinberg, *Doing and Deserving* (OUP, 1970), Ch. IX, p. 231.

I am not causally responsible for these particular deeds. His own agency has broken whatever causal chain there may be between his defective upbringing and his present behaviour. So I cannot feel guilty about his particular behaviour on this occasion, though I may, of course, feel guilty about my own treatment of and attitude towards him which, in my view, may have contributed to making him the sort of person he now is. It is therefore true that, as one would expect, responsibility, like punishment, is essentially linked with guilt and not with shame. It is because of the agent's thought that he is directly instrumental in bringing about some forbidden state of affairs that he thinks of himself as 'owing payment', as being liable to retribution. But this is a thought which is irrelevant to him who feels shame.

It is also because he thinks himself responsible in this sense that we can account for the effect the deed or state of affairs has on him. The thought involved here is not so much: 'I have done this terrible thing *to him*;' but is rather: '*I* have done this terrible thing to him.' Guilt is a burden he has to carry, he cannot disown it, it must leave its mark upon him. Earlier I suggested as appropriate to the person who feels guilty that he regard what he has brought about as somehow alien to himself, as not being part of what he really is. If he feels guilty about his privileged position then he sees this as the stain on, say, an otherwise admirable communist. It mars but does not destroy the whole. If, on the other hand, he feels shame about his priviledged position then he thinks of it as threatening his status as a communist altogether. Similarly, if I feel guilty about my wasted life then I think I have failed to make use of the gifts and capacities I possess, I have not developed what I really am but have led a life that is alien to the 'real' me. But if I feel shame about the way I have lived my life then I see it as being just the sort of life a person of my sort would lead; neither is worth very much. When feeling guilty, therefore, the view I take of myself is entirely different from the view I take of myself when feeling shame: in the latter case I see myself as being all of a piece, what I have just done, I now see, fits only too well what I really am. But when feeling guilty I think of myself as having brought about a forbidden state of affairs and thereby in this respect disfigured a self which otherwise remains the same.

3

It is because the agent at the time of feeling guilt thinks of himself as the person (causally) responsible for the relevant state of affairs that he sees the disfigurement in himself as brought about by himself. So, if at all possible, he should do something about it. He cannot wipe it out, for what is done is done. But by paying in some way he can make up for it. One form the payment may take is that he accepts retribution. It is from this debit and credit point of view that the notion of punishment as restoring the balance makes its point. Whatever one may think of the virtues and defects of the theory that punishment is a means of restoring the balance, of making it possible for the individual to retake his place in society, this notion of punishment or repayment is essential to the guilty person's view of the situation. There are naturally degrees of feeling guilt, and the thought that he owes payment may on many occasions not be particularly persuasive or lasting. He may manage to live with himself quite happily and to regard the disfigurement as minor enough to be ignored. In serious cases, however, it cannot be ignored, and in such circumstances there are roughly three options available to him who suffers from guilt.

i. Firstly, he may make repayment as best he can and regard the matter as closed.
ii. Secondly, perhaps not thinking the first solution within his reach, he may adjust himself to the alteration in himself by now continuing in a way consistent with it, by making the disfigurement disappear by disfiguring himself still further.
iii. Finally, he may just continue to suffer the guilt with possibly serious consequences to himself.

The first solution can take different forms. The 'repayment' may consist in just accepting whatever the punishment may be, or it may consist in a more positive attempt on the agent's part to repair the damage his action may have caused to others. Either way, but particularly in the second case, this solution is the most straightforward and the best for all concerned. It is socially acceptable as the person concerned will have made amends, and is satisfactory for the person himself as he will

have rid himself of an unpleasant and possibly destructive state. The other options may lead to total wickedness or madness respectively.

Macbeth affords a clear example of a case fitting the second solution: he sees his first murder, that of Duncan, as leaving a terrible stain upon him. Immediately after the murder he cannot say 'amen'. 'But wherefore could I not say "amen"?' he asks, and adds '"Amen" stuck in my throat.' Lady Macbeth, at this point intensely practical, warns him:

> These deeds must not be thought
> After these ways: so, it will make us mad. (II. ii.)

Macbeth eventually takes her advice and remains quite sane. He acclimatizes himself to the alteration within him by behaving in ways which makes the alteration no longer appear as something alien to the person he is, but makes it appear rather as the norm: driven by overriding ambition, going in for murder is just what Macbeth does. In acting as he does he avoids the threat of shame. When we first meet him he is still a man of honour who takes seriously the relevant code which prescribes how a king and guest ought, or at any rate ought not, to be treated:

> . . . He's here in double trust:
> First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,
> Strong both against the deed; then, as his host . . . (I. vii.)

As a man of honour he must see the murder of his king and guest as disgraceful. But once he has done the deed he changes his point of view. Ignoring obligations to king and guest is part of the man who ruthlessly pursues his aim. From this new point of view it is not the murder he sees as degrading; it is rather the giving up of his ambition which would be cowardly and weak. During his initial period of doubt Lady Macbeth treats him as a moral coward and turns the murder of Duncan into a test of courage:

> . . . Art thou afeard
> To be the same in thine own act and valour
> As thou art in desire? Would'st thou have that
> Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,

> And live a coward in thine own esteem,
> Letting 'I dare not' wait upon 'I would',
> Like the poor cat i' th'adage?' (I. vii.)

The ploy works. What Macbeth now sees as the shameful course is the giving up of his ambition; to abstain from murdering Duncan would be weakness and failure. So he now lives by a new code according to which 'honour' consists in ruthlessly pursuing one's aim at whatever cost to those who happen to be in the way. Bradley has a point when he says that the murder of Duncan is done, 'one may almost say, as if it were an appalling duty'.[6] In a perverted way Macbeth is trying to maintain his integrity.

Lady Macbeth herself is an example fitting the last of the three possibilities given: she is unable to follow her own advice and comes to see her part in the murder as a disfigurement of herself she cannot live with. She was wrong when initially she believed a little water would be enough to clean her. She obsessively washes her hands, but no amount of washing will get rid of the blood. So she suffers the fate she herself predicts for those in her position and goes mad. In her madness she tries to dissociate herself from that part of herself that was accomplice to a murder. What one cannot live with one has to get rid of. Lady Macbeth pursues this course consistently enough by finally committing suicide. Dissociation is a feature of unbearable guilt (normally restricted to cases of murder), and is a consequence of the agent's view that the doer of the terrible deed is alien to his real self. In literature it is therefore not uncommon for the murderer to experience himself as being somehow two selves. Jonas, in Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewit*, for example, has just murdered a blackmailer and is now on his way home. He is terrified of entering his room. He is supposed to have been in his room all the time while in fact he was otherwise engaged. He knows perfectly well, of course, that at the moment he is on his way to London and not in his own room at all. But it seems as if he had left the 'good' self behind while the 'bad' self went about its business. He sees himself 'as it were, a part of the room', and he is afraid not so much *for* himself as *of* himself. Dickens says of him that 'he became in a manner his own ghost

[6] A. C. Bradley, *Shakespeare Tragedy* (Macmillan, 1929), Lecture 9, p. 358.

and phantom, and was at once the haunting spirit and the haunted man.'[7]

Macbeth, with his perverted integrity, also and consequently perverts the dissociation: he does not try and dissociate himself from the doer of the terrible deed for this is now not what he sees as alien. He dissociates himself rather from the good and honourable. His murder of Banquo, under whom 'his genius is rebuk'd', would then be seen as Macbeth killing what represents the better side of his nature.

The split experienced in such extreme cases of guilt is comprehensible in the light of the two features mentioned earlier: the agent has brought about something which is yet alien to himself. If he can neither restore himself to his unblemished self nor adjust himself to the altered one, then there seems no alternative for him but to see himself as two distinguishable selves. No doubt some compromise is possible, as psychoanalytic theory suggests: he may conceal from himself the kind of disfigurement it is and persuade himself that it is of a nature which, though bad enough is at least bearable to live with. In 'Dostoevsky and Parricide', Freud suggests that Dostoevsky's feelings of guilt arose from his wish to kill his father. 'As often happens with neurotics, Dostoevsky's burden of guilt had taken tangible shape as a burden of debt.' On this view, Dostoevsky sees his guilt as relating to his gambling whereas it in fact relates to his thoughts about his father. It goes without saying that being an obsessive gambler is better at any rate than being a parricide. One need not accept the whole of that theory to agree that it is plausible that some such replacement should sometimes occur. Equally plausible in the light of the need of the guilty to dissociate themselves from the doer of the deed is Auden's theory about the function of the detective story.[8] The detective story, needless to say, is escape literature, and the fantasy it allows the reader to indulge in is that guilt in the shape of the murderer is uncovered in someone other than himself, thereby proving his innocence.

> The magic formula is an innocence which is discovered to contain guilt; then a suspicion of being the guilty one; and finally a real innocence from which the guilty other has been expelled, a cure effected, not by me or my neighbors, but by the miraculous intervention of a genius from outside who removes guilt by giving knowledge of guilt. (The detective story subscribes, in fact, to the Socratic daydream: 'Sin is ignorance'.)

The satisfaction the detective story therefore provides is the illusion of being dissociated from the murderer, and so it is suitable, perhaps addictive, reading for those who suffer from a sense of sin. No such possibility of escape is provided for those who are prey to recurrent feelings of shame. Dissociation from, or repression of, the alien doer of the deed is not here available precisely because the doer of the deed is not seen as alien but on the contrary as bringing out into the open what the agent really is. For the same reason it is impossible for the person who feels shame to do as Macbeth does and alter himself in such a way that the doer of the deed is no longer alien; all he can do in this respect is to revise his picture of himself and try to reconcile himself to that.

4

If feeling guilty involved no more than the thought that the agent had harmed another then there would be no reason to regard guilt as an emotion of self-assessment. But this is the class of emotions to which it belongs. From this point of view it is quite different from remorse, an emotion with which it is often linked under the heading 'moral emotions'. The important feature of guilt is that the thought of the guilty concentrates on herself as the doer of the deed. Having brought about what is forbidden she has harmed herself. She has put herself into a position where repayment from her is due, but the point of the payment is not, or is only incidentally, that a moral wrong should be righted. This, the righting of a moral wrong,

[7] Charles Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, Ch. XLVII. Richard III takes a similar view of himself when, on the eve of the battle of Bosworth, the ghosts of all those for whose deaths he is responsible appear to him:

> What do I fear? Myself? There's none else by.
> Richard loves Richard; that is, I am I.
> Is there a murderer here? No. Yes. I am. . . .
> All several sins . . .
> Throng to the bar, crying all guilty! guilty! (V. iii. 182–99.)

[8] W. H. Auden, 'The Guilty Vicarage', in *The Dyer's Hand* (Faber & Faber, 1975), p. 158.

may well be the form the repayment takes, but from the point of view of the guilty person this is only a means towards the end: that she should be rid of the burden, that she should be able again to live with herself. The painfulness of the guilt-feelings is therefore explained as the uneasiness the person concerned feels about herself. That they so often express themselves as a worry about how to put right an injustice done to others is natural but not essential to the case; it is due to the fact that so often what we regard as the wrong done is an action harming others, so that repairing the harm is necessary to restore the balance. That, in the agent's view, reparation is required is due to her conception of herself as disfigured and the consequent need to do something about it. The greater the supposed disfigurement the greater, of course, such a need—and the more unlikely, perhaps, that the agent should think adequate payment is possible. Hence the self-torments the guilty sometimes let themselves in for.

The thought in remorse, by contrast, concentrates on the deed rather than on the agent as he who has done the deed. Remorse, the *OED* tells us, is a feeling of compunction, or deep regret, for a sin or wrong committed. This is acceptable in so far as it brings out one way in which remorse differs from regret: remorse is felt about a sin or moral wrong whereas regret is felt about what is in some way undesirable, but not particularly morally so. But it would be a mistake to conclude that remorse is regret which operates over a narrower, viz., moral, area. The two emotions differ also in other central respects.[9] Regret but not remorse can be felt about an event for which the agent does not take herself to be even just causally responsible. I may regret the passing of the summer; Hamlet regretted that circumstances had forced him into a position where he had to act against his own nature. He could not, seeing the situation in this way, have felt remorse. Remorse is always felt about an event which the agent sees as an action of hers. It is therefore not surprising that the person who feels remorse and the person who feels regret should view differently the relevant past event. If she feels remorse then she wants to

[9] For a more detailed discussion of some of these points see Amélie Rorty, 'Agent-Regret', *Explaining Emotions*, pp. 489–506. The Hamlet example is hers.

undo the action and its consequences which cause the remorse, but when feeling regret she need not think that she would undo the action if she could. She may regret an action (sacking an employee) which overall she still considers necessary and beneficial (as leading to the more productive employment of labour). It is possible also to regret an action but accept it as the thing to do under the same description: she regrets sacking the employee because the girl was so easily crushed, but she had to be sacked, nevertheless, because she was so inefficient. Perhaps regret always implies acceptance of what has been done. It had to be done although there were unfortunate or disagreeable aspects to the deed. Remorse, on the other hand, never implies acceptance. It is impossible to feel remorse and yet believe that overall it was right to act as one did. The aspect of the action which causes remorse, or the description under which the remorseful agent sees her action, is regarded by her as outweighing any possible good that may have come of it. Agamemnon, for example, whatever else he may have felt about having caused his daughter to be sacrificed, could not have felt remorse about his action while continuing to think that her sacrifice was necessary for the Greek fleet to be able to sail, and that this was the overriding good. He could have felt regret, though unless this is qualified (deep, bitter) it would seem a rather inadequate reaction under the circumstances.

These differences between the emotions are reflected in their respective connection with action. No action need follow from regret, or even need be expected to follow. This is not surprising if the agent may think that all things considered she did the right thing, or did what had to be done. But we do expect some sort of action from her who feels remorse, though of course we may expect in vain. She wants to undo what she has done, and although it is evidently impossible to do just that, she would normally be expected to try and do something towards repairing the damage she takes herself to have brought about. If she takes no such steps the claim that she feels remorse would be suspect.

The person feeling remorse is tied to her action as the person feeling regret is not. She must do something about it, or it will continue to worry her. But at the same time there is a sense in which she remains detached as she cannot do when feeling either guilt or shame. Remorse is not an emotion of self-assessment,

the concentration of thought is here not on the self, on its disfigurement or lowly standing, but is on her actions and their consequences. It is more outward-looking than either of the other two. Guilt and remorse may be experienced about the same event. Macbeth initially feels remorse as well as guilt, he wishes the deed could be undone: 'Wake Duncan with thy knocking: I wish thou could'st.' This is different from his guilt-reaction; his inability to say 'amen' indicates that he is now marked as an outsider who has broken his relationship with God. As the beliefs involved in the emotions are different, it is equally possible to feel the one but not the other. While Agamemnon could not have felt remorse under the circumstances I have described, he could have felt guilt, for that an action is thought to be necessary under given circumstances does not interfere with the adverse effect which having done the deed may have on the agent. Jonas, while burdened with guilt, feels no remorse at all, for he does not wish to be back in the situation where he was plagued by a blackmailer:

> Still he was not sorry. No. He had hated the man too much, and had been bent, too desperately and too long, on setting himself free. If the thing could have come over again, he would have done it again . . . . There was no more penitence or remorse within him now than there had been while the deed was brewing.
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> (*Martin Chuzzlewit*, Ch. XLVII.)

It is equally possible that a person should experience remorse but not guilt, where the agent does not see herself burdened or stained by her wrongdoing. The wrong done need not present itself to her who feels remorse as forbidden, she need not think of herself as having disobeyed a categoric demand. Not every action a person sees as morally undesirable and would like to undo need be seen by her as leaving a stain.[10]

Remorse, guilt, and shame are usually classed together as 'moral emotions'. But remorse seems to be 'moral' in a sense

[10] Jane Austen's Emma Woodhouse, after the disastrous party on Boxhill, feels humiliated and remorseful, but she feels no guilt. She thinks of herself as being perfect in her behaviour to others, and it is humiliating to be shown that sometimes she is nothing of the sort. But she is also kind and feels sorry to have hurt Miss Bates's feelings. In order to undo the harm she has done she is prepared to undergo the tedium of a morning visit. She does not think of herself as having neglected a duty or left an obligation unfulfilled, but she thinks of herself as having failed to live up to the standards she has set for herself.

in which neither of the others is. Shame, I suggested, may suitably be labelled a 'moral emotion' because of its connection with self-respect, but what a particular agent considers necessary to retain his self-respect may itself not be moral at all. It may be morally irrelevant as when, for example, he regards some physical defect as a threat to his self-respect. Or it may itself be morally wrong, as would presumably be some of the expectations which the arrogant or conceited need to see fulfilled if the basis for their self-respect is not to be undermined. In the case of the guilty, the content of what the agent sees as forbidden or obligatory can hardly seem morally irrelevant, at least to him. But it need not be the case that what he sees in these terms is in fact wrong or evil. In particular, neither of these emotions is moral in the sense of being other-regarding, for the agent's chief concern is for himself. Remorse, on the other hand, seems to be moral in just this sense; though perhaps not necessarily, at least standardly the agent is here concerned with the effect of what he does on others. As it concentrates on the action rather than the actor it also seems the healthier emotion, for in turning the agent away from himself he is less threatened by the possibility of self-preoccupation and self-indulgence.

Sometimes remorse is thought to be of value for the additional reason, that it is only through remorse that the guilty can be redeemed, so that remorse is the means whereby the guilty can regain his former position. The Bible emphasizes that repentance is necessary for God's forgiveness, and it may be that analogously in a non-Christian context remorse is necessary for the guilty to be re-established. This is the view held by Scheler. He regards remorse as the emotion of salvation. On his theory guilt and remorse are related to each other as 'promptings of conscience'. Guilt, it seems, is potentially merely destructive: the man who feels guilty recognizes that he has acted against his conscience, and this recognition will not let him rest and will create a tension within himself. Such torments are in themselves sterile. On the other hand, recognition of guilt is a necessary first step towards salvation; if a person ignores his wrongdoing then we have a case of 'hardening of heart' and nothing fruitful can come of that. It is in remorse that the agent takes a positive attitude towards the situation and himself. It

constitutes a 'change of heart', or a totally new attitude, and through it the agent can regain his powers and rebuild himself. Scheler therefore does not stress so much that remorse is outgoing and other-regarding, but sees it rather as that which heals the self and enables it to lead a new life.[11] This does not mean, however, that on this view the thoughts involved in remorse must concentrate on the self, that remorse, too, is an emotion of self-assessment. The healing-process of the self may on the contrary be possible only if the agent looks outward at the world, rather than inward at himself.

On Scheler's view remorse is wholly constructive and guilt is merely destructive. He has made this true by definition: whatever is destructive in the person's attitude and behaviour counts as guilt; whatever constructive counts as remorse. Both points are debatable. There are possible cases of remorse where that emotion seems as destructive and possibly self-indulgent as guilt may be. Far from prompting repair work and bringing about a new and hopeful attitude towards the future, it may just torment the sufferer. A person can make the most of remorse by insisting on seeing what he has done under a description which strikes him as unalterable. A dutiful niece may, after the death of her aunt, feel remorse not because she did not give her the time and care that were needed, but because she did not do so for the right reasons. At the time it suited her to live with her aunt and look after her although her affections were not particularly engaged. What she wants to but cannot undo is her behaviour under the description 'suiting my own purposes' and substitute for it 'devoting myself lovingly and unselfishly to my aunt'. So remorse continues to gnaw at her. Nor does it seem to be the case that, conversely, guilt must always be destructive. In the following quotation Melanie Klein puts a different view:

> The irrevocable fact that none of us is ever entirely free from guilt has very valuable aspects because it implies the never fully exhausted wish to make reparation and to create in whatever way we can. All social services benefit by this urge. In extreme cases, feelings of guilt drive people towards sacrificing themselves completely to a cause or to their fellow beings, and may lead to fanaticism . . . ('Our Adult World and its Roots in Infancy', Tavistock Publications, 1959.)

[11] Max Scheler, 'Reue und Wiedergeburt', in: *Vom Ewigen im Menschen, Ges. Werke*, Band V (Bern, 1954). He describes remorse as from the moral point of view 'eine Form der Selbstheilung der Seele', and as from the religious point of view 'der natürliche Akt, den Gott der Seele verlieh, um zu Ihm zurückzukehren.' (p. 33.)

Scheler's view seems too extreme. It is a more plausible suggestion that, rather than being in this respect so sharply contrasted, both guilt and remorse may be either constructive or destructive, depending on the agent and his view of the situation. There is always the possibility of this view being distorted; like shame, or indeed like any emotion, remorse may be wrongly directed and quite irrational. Feeling remorse no doubt has its value, but this does not mean that it must always be constructive.

But while not acceptable as it stands, Scheler's view nevertheless directs attention to the way in which guilt and remorse both differ from and are related to each other. Earlier I distinguished features which are essential to feeling guilt from those which may quite understandably but still mistakenly be taken to be essential. The person feeling guilt believes that she has done something forbidden and that in doing what is forbidden she has disfigured and so harmed herself. This is the identificatory belief. She may or may not also believe that what she did was harmful to either others or herself. The first, essential, type of harm is the direct consequence of the deed being forbidden; the second, non-essential type of harm is contingent on the nature of whatever it may be the agent sees as forbidden. That may be, for instance, violating another's rights, or it may be neglecting her talents. In the latter case, therefore, the person is harmed under two descriptions, that she has done what is wrong, and that she has not developed her talents. In this case doing the latter also happens to constitute the former, but the specific way in which she thinks she has harmed herself is distinguishable from the harm that is the stain of guilt. Secondly and consequentially, it is central to guilt that the agent sees herself in a position where repayment is due, but not that she thinks she must repair and so in some way undo the damage she has caused. This may or may not be the form in which she thinks she might be able to make up for what she has done.

The two features just rejected as being not essential to guilt are so partly because they need not be present in all cases of it.

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But even where the person feeling guilt believes that she has harmed another and believes that she should now repair this damage, her thoughts are not primarily on this aspect of the situation, they are primarily on herself. In this sense, too, the thought of damage caused and so to be repaired is inessential. In feeling remorse, on the other hand, it is precisely these thoughts which are the agent's identificatory beliefs, i.e., when feeling remorse the agent believes that she has done harm which she ought to try and repair.

This account agrees with Scheler's in so far as remorse is also constructive. It differs from Scheler's in that guilt need not be wholly destructive; it will be constructive on those occasions when the person feeling guilty believes that repairing the damage is the form her repayment should take. But she, unlike the person feeling remorse, will not regard her repair work as an end in itself. She will see it rather as a means towards self-rehabilitation. There are therefore occasions when the person feeling guilt may do or think she ought to do exactly the same as the person feeling remorse, and it may be impossible for anyone, including the person concerned, to tell whether she is prompted by feelings of guilt or by remorse.

Remorse, though being constructive in that it implies the view that repair-work is due, need not therefore be constructive on all relevant occasions. The remorseful niece is a case in point. But what she feels seems to be a mixture of both guilt and remorse. In so far as she thinks that she has done damage which she ought to do something about, she feels remorse. But as the damage is caused by the (in her view) non-altruistic reasons for action rather than by her actual behaviour her thoughts also concentrate on the disfigurement of herself as a moral agent, and so there are also guilt feelings. That there can be such hybrid cases is explained by the possibility of a partial overlap of the beliefs involved in these two emotions.

Remorse may be constructive and yet not other-regarding: the repair work the agent thinks should be done may be to mend the damage she has caused herself. This seems at least a possibility; wasting one's talents, spoiling one's chances in life through drug-taking or alcohol may well be a matter for remorse. On the other hand, as the identificatory belief is not directly about the self, remorse, unlike guilt and shame is at

least a candidate for other-regarding thought and behaviour. It is, perhaps rightly, thought to be in practice standardly other-regarding. If this is correct, then the reason may be that where a person has caused harm to herself of a nature which can prompt remorse rather than regret, then the harm is likely to be sufficiently serious to concentrate her thought on herself to the exclusion of other possible objects. The person would then in such circumstances be more likely to feel guilt rather than remorse. But whether or not this is so, it is clear that here is a basis for regarding remorse as a 'moral' emotion which is totally lacking in shame and guilt.

On Scheler's account remorse presupposes guilt, for the role of remorse is specifically to heal and re-establish the guilty. While it seemed wrong to restrict the operation of remorse in this way (a person may feel remorse about something he has done and feel no guilt), where the two are linked Scheler's emphasis on the constructiveness of remorse may have a significance not yet allowed for. The point concerns forgiveness. The agent who feels guilty believes that through his wrongdoing he has spoilt his relationship with the god disobeyed or the person harmed. The recipient of the wrong (provided he shares this view of the situation) is now in a position where he may either forgive or withhold forgiveness. For him to forgive is for him to recognize the wrong done to him but to re-accept the agent in spite of it, to re-establish the relationship. But if he so re-establishes the relationship without there being a 'change of heart' on the agent's part then it seems it is not genuine forgiveness he offers, but condonation.[12] For in re-accepting the unrepentant agent he would seem to think little of the wrong done and so compromise his own values. If so, then to be genuinely forgiven and thereby to be re-established in the previous relationship the agent must be sincere in wishing the deed undone, he must, it seems, feel remorse. Nor is the need for remorse restricted to this case: it may be that the agent, if he is to live with himself again, will have to forgive himself, and if genuine forgiveness must be preceded by remorse, then remorse is required on all such occasions as well. Kolnai, in his paper

[12] For a discussion of condoning versus forgiving see Aurel Kolnai, 'Forgiveness', in *Proceedings of the Aristotelean Society*, 1973–4. Kolnai concedes, somewhat grudgingly, that remorse is not necessarily required for genuine forgiveness.

on 'Forgiveness', suggests that forgiveness granted to ourselves is a fairly dubious concept, 'if only because a person cannot "wrong" himself, i.e. infringe his own rights' (106). Kolnai, like Rawls, connects guilt with principles of right, and this itself seemed dubious. It is, however, not this point that matters here. If it is true that forgiveness is necessary to restore a spoilt relationship then the agent himself will have to forgive himself, for *qua* doer of the relevant deed he has alienated himself from himself, and this would seem to be the most important relationship of all to restore. So in all (serious) cases of guilt, for the person concerned to re-establish himself, to regard himself again as a whole and so to live at peace with himself, self-forgiveness is necessary. 'You must learn to forgive yourself' seems in such circumstances very sensible advice. And if genuine forgiveness requires remorse, then so will self-forgiveness. On this view of forgiveness it is true that, as Scheler says, remorse has a very specific constructive function.

The view that genuine forgiveness requires remorse is too extreme to be acceptable as it stands. Whether forgiveness of a wrong is genuine or is a case of condonation will depend on the circumstances of individual cases. It seems quite possible for a generous person to forgive a wrongdoer who does not show much sign of a change of heart without thereby being indifferent to whatever wrong he may have committed. Whether forgiveness in these circumstances is wise or foolish is of course a different question. But in the case of self-forgiveness such generosity would hardly be in place; it would suspiciously look like being indulgent towards oneself and making matters too easy for oneself. Maybe in the case of self-forgiveness such charity is always a form of condonation, and if so remorse retains something of the importance Scheler ascribes to it. It would remain at least one means of reconciling the agent to himself.[13]

[13] But not, I think, the only means. e.g. in the last chapter of *Crime and Punishment* Dostoevsky hints at a heading process which is differently based: Raskolnikoff, now a prisoner in Siberia, does not feel remorse. 'He did not repent of his deeds', he merely thought he had made mistakes, and in particular that he had been feeble to confess. Yet there is a change in his attitude, the beginning of a healing process: 'They were both worn and ill, but in those white and worn faces already beamed the dawn of a restored future, and full resurrection to a new life.' His fellow-convicts begin to look kindly upon him, for the first time he is accepted. But this renewal is due not to remorse but to love.

Remorse was initially introduced to provide a contrast to guilt, and to the emotions of self-assessment in general. As a moral emotion it has in common with guilt and shame only the feature that it requires a sense of value on the part of the agent, an awareness, more or less developed, of moral distinctions, of what is right or wrong, honourable or disgraceful. In other respects it differs from them just because it is not an emotion of self-assessment. In feeling remorse a person's thoughts are not primarily upon himself, it is not the agent himself who occupies the centre of the stage. He is not seen by some audience, nor judged by some authority. The person who feels remorse sees himself as a responsible moral agent, and so sees whatever wrong he has done as an action (or omission) of his about the consequences of which he ought, if possible, to do something. Both guilt and shame are more passive by comparison. In neither of these cases need the person concerned see the occasion for the emotion as an action of his. Shame is passive also in that it leaves the agent helpless. In guilt, the thought that by having done what is forbidden he is now in a position where punishment or forgiveness is appropriate gives him initially the passive role of a possible recipient of the actions of another, rather than that of an active agent. And he may not conceive of himself as a possible active agent at all, for he may be resigned to the view that he who violates a taboo just has to accept whatever retribution is due to him. In so far as the perceived stain on the self gives him a motive for repair work it is only incidental if it is of the same sort as that prompted by remorse.