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The Eye Turned Inward: Shame and the Self

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So much of one's view depends on where one stands. Freud saw the person as primarily individual and secondarily social, while Sullivan saw intrapsychic development as the internalization of the interpersonal. To exaggerate the differences between their positions, one might say that the Freudian baby is preoccupied with internal concerns, protected from maternal influence by a stimulus barrier, and is hardly capable of seeing mother as a person until s/he is quite mature; the Sullivanian baby is interactive from birth, always affected by mother on an empathic level, and limited in the sophistication of his or her involvement only by maturational factors. Each pole of observation allows a realm of understanding, and each is limited by blind spots.

Some of the most important alterations in psychoanalytic theory have been made possible by the work of Kohut, who pointed out that the infant is actively involved with mother from birth, but that when the infant looks at the mother s/he does not see that mother as we would see her, but as a reflection of the infant, the self mirrored on the face of the mother. The mother is a "selfobject," rather than an object because it is this empathic quality of responsiveness, rather than her own

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unique personal qualities, that define her for the infant—the term "selfobject" refers to a function *rather than to a person.*

Empathy takes on special meaning in Kohut's work, and provides a new way of understanding the development of the self, or what is called "narcissistic development." Hovering always in the background of self-psychology is the affect shame. Morrison, one of the most astute observers of shame from the Kohutian standpoint, states that "Just as guilt *is the central negative affect in classical (conflict/drive) theory, I suggest that* shame *occupies that position in problems of narcissism, in the psychology of the self and its deficits."*

In this chapter he takes up the case material presented in Chapter 8 on "Shaming Systems in Couples, Families, and Institutions" and demonstrates a novel and powerful way of conceptualizing the case of Samantha. Recognizing and accepting the wealth of data on the classical, intrapsychic meaning of shame, on the layers of meaning *brought out during analytic therapy, I had elected to concentrate on the interpersonal aspects of shame, noting (as might have Sullivan) that shame is usually experienced in the context of an interpersonal interaction. Morrison asks for a subtle shift in our attention from the at-the-moment effect of a shaming interaction (and how that transaction might affect personality development) toward the dynamic equilibrium of that transaction with the prior development of Samantha's self.*

The therapeutic implications of his analysis demand significant alterations in the classical stance, which sees empathic support as akin to sympathy and therefore antianalytic. Morrison is right to point out that the shame weapon works only to the degree that we have experienced failures in narcissistic development; the shaming attacks to which people are vulnerable in adult life sting fiercely when they land on a structure earlier deprived of proper empathic support. No one is completely immune to contempt or scorn; but, in the language of self psychology, shame wounds to the extent that one is the bearer of a defective self.

Donald Nathanson has served the psychotherapeutic community well by bringing together this selection of current papers on so important a subject as shame. As he has noted, given the importance of shame as an affective experience for our patients, as well as for ourselves, the absence of an extensive shame literature and the scant attention given the existing work are perplexing phenomena. In previous works (Morrison, 1983,

1984a, b) I have considered some of the historical reasons for this anomaly in psychoanalytic theory and practice. The literature on shame and shame-related subjects represents a wide diversity of theoretical orientations, including the works of Alexander, 1938; Broucek, 1982; Grinker, 1955; Hazard, 1969; Kaufman, 1974; Levin, 1967, 1971; Lewis, 1971; Lynd, 1958; Piers & Singer, 1953; Thrane, 1979; and Wurmser, 1981. Nonetheless, this volume represents the first collection of reports devoted exclusively to the study of shame, and thus addresses a deficiency in psychoanalytic literature.

In one of his contributions, Nathanson (Chapter 8) has outlined nicely many issues generated by a focus on shame. He brings to our attention the relationship between shame and embarrassment, humiliation, rage, aggression, and mortification, emphasizing the connection between shame and the *shamer*. For him, as for Levin, the threat from experienced shame is isolation, separation, and abandonment. Although he suggests that shame generates punishment "for some quality of the self," Nathanson focuses on the shame that is essentially "social," a product of interpersonal interaction necessitating the presence of a "significant other" (the shamer).

In this chapter I will suggest a complementary view of shame, one that does *not* require the presence of an external person, but that emphasizes rather the eye of the self gazing inward. Certainly, shame may occur in a social context (best characterized as humiliation or embarrassment) but it need not necessarily be so embedded. The contributions of ego psychology, with subsequent attention to the ego ideal, the self and its "ideal" configurations, and, ultimately, renewed interest in narcissism, have spurred investigation of the experience of shame (Morrison, 1983). It seems to me that the contributions of Kohut and of self psychology itself provide a framework for the optimal understanding of shame and its relationship to narcissism and the self, without necessarily invoking the presence of an external shamer. I shall review and question the relevent aspects of Kohut's writings as they relate to shame, and then will reconsider some points in Nathanson's chapter from the self psychological perspective. In particular, using this framework, I will attempt to offer a somewhat different view of the clinical material on Samantha.

SHAME AND THE WRITINGS OF KOHUT

The self, and its supraordinate position in problems of narcissism, was the principal tenet in the evolution of Kohut's work. He felt that object relations and affiliation with other persons had been overestimated in psychoanalytic theory, to the detriment of attention to the self and its states of cohesion—particularly the various transformations of narcissism. For him, object ties should not be considered a "given" of the human condition, but must be regarded as part of the matrix of the self's many needs. Thus, Kohut emphasized the "self" side of the equation of the self's interaction with its objects. Just as *guilt* is the central negative affect in classical (conflict/drive) theory, I suggest that *shame* occupies that position in problems of narcissism, in the psychology of the self and its deficits (Morrison, 1983, 1984a). Patients with fundamental narcissistic problems experience shame as the core feeling about their self and its failings. Levin (1971) differentiated internal from external shame, defining internal (primary) shame as intrapsychic, an affect reflecting punishment imposed by the superego for the fundamental self-defect seen in the self's failure to live up to an internalized ideal. In contrast, the shame experienced in neurotic conditions is external and secondary, representing failure to achieve an external, reality-derived goal. This usually results from a defensive, passive retreat from intrapsychic (e.g., oedipal) conflict. Thus, it is primary, internal (self) shaming that characterizes the experience of the narcissistic patient.

What place does shame play in Kohut's writings? For him, shame is exclusively a reflection of the self overwhelmed by its infantile and split-off grandiosity (the "vertical split"; see Kohut, 1971). He explicitly rejected the view of shame representing the ego's failure to fulfill the expectations and demands of the superego/ego ideal (1971, p. 181). This (limited) view of shame is based, I suggest, on Kohut's conception of the bipolar self, in which a "tension arc" exists between the grandiose self and the idealized parental imago, between archaic ambitions on the one hand, and ideals on the other (Kohut, 1977). Implicit in this construct of a bipolar self is the notion that a person has two chances to attain self-cohesion. If the first chance fails, through inadequate mirroring of infantile, exhibitionistic gran-

diosity (usually by the mother), a second chance is provided through empathic acceptance of the child's idealization of, and wish to merge with an omnipotent, tension-regulating object (frequently the father). Take, for instance, the case of an energetic, gregarious infant who shrieks with glee at her newfound capacity to reach for a bottle on the table. Her depressed mother responds to this commotion as if it were a personal assault, rather than as her child's skillful triumph, and turns away in distress. In the language of self psychology, repetition of this sequence reflects inadequate mirroring, and may launch developmental difficulty in cohesive self-formation. However, a year later the child, now a toddler, turns to her father with admiration, imitating his gait as they walk together. In contrast to the mother's earlier empathic failure, the father accepts his daughter's attachment to him, encourages her to walk faster, and embraces her tenderly when she cries in frustration after falling. The father's presence as an accepting, comforting figure represents the "second chance" at self-cohesion through idealization and soothing.

Kohut rejects the proposition that the bipolar self implies an inherent developmental process (i.e., from the need for mirroring to a need to idealize) but asserts, rather, that mirroring and idealization represent parallel forms of narcissistic development. He views the tendency to consider the grandiose self as more primitive than the idealized parental imago as a reflection, again, of a cultural prejudice that assigns object love supremacy over narcissism. It must be remembered that in his early work Kohut viewed narcissism as having a line of development parallel to that of object love, and later included narcissistic development as part of the normal evolution of the cohesive self. A viewpoint relating shame to failure in attaining the expectations of the ego ideal would, therefore, come perilously close to assigning the idealized parental imago (with the self's quest for objects) a developmentally higher role than that of the grandiose self.

Nevertheless, in view of our observations about shame, and our recognition of certain inconsistencies in Kohut's formulations, I believe we must do just that. Clinical experience demands that our definition of shame involve more than the self overwhelmed by archaic grandiosity—it must also account for

disappointment, failure, and deficit. Thus, Kohut's framework must accommodate failures of the self to live up to its ideals. I hope to demonstrate that the notion of an *ideal self*, and a developmental view of the idealized parental imago reflecting the self's movements toward its objects, allow us to incorporate a self-psychological perspective into our understanding of shame.

At this point in our consideration of shame in the work of Kohut, I shall turn to his construct of the *selfobject*, and how it assists in an attempt to place shame into a self psychological framework. While the selfobject does exist as a real person to whom the self is attached and from whom it is not clearly differentiated, it is not the selfobject's external, configurational qualities which are of primary importance to the evolving self (in contrast with the object-embedded oedipal transferences of more highly differentiated patients) but rather the *function* served by the selfobject. Thus, to the grandiose, exhibitionistic infant, availability of the age-appropriate mirroring function provided by the parental selfobject establishes the development of early self-cohesion. For instance, recalling our earlier vignette of the gleeful infant reaching energetically for the bottle, had the mother responded with enthusiasm to her child's effort, had she clapped her hands or smiled approvingly, she would then have provided an instance of what Kohut called the age-appropriate, mirroring selfobject function necessary to self-cohesion. It is the presence of the selfobject's responsiveness, rather than her configurational qualities, which delineate the selfobject function. The mother's actual distress and her lack of responsiveness to the infant's need for affirmation (in this vignette) reflected empathic failure, and inability to provide the appropriate mirroring selfobject function.

Similar to the toddler's need for merger with the selfobject's omnipotence and perfection is the facilitation of further "firming" of the self by parental openness to idealization. The vignette shows the father's acceptance of his daughter's need to admire his physical prowess, and his sensitivity and reassurance when she failed to emulate his gait—this represents the self-affirming presence of the idealized selfobject's function. I think this example illustrates as well the developmental movement toward the representational world of objects delineated by the idealized selfobject. While the selfobject function still predom-

inates in this example, we can see that the differentiated, configurational qualities of the father were beginning to play a significant role in the child's cognitive development. Thus, although it is premature to view the facilitating function of the mirroring selfobject in an object-relations perspective, such an approach begins to gain importance in terms of the idealized selfobject. From this perspective, the "idealized selfobject's omnipotence and perfection" reflect early movement toward internalization of, and identification with, the (external) object. However, in Kohut's writings it is not the differentiated, object-representational qualities of the selfobject that lead to self-cohesion, but rather the self-affirming functions (of mirroring and idealization) which are important (i.e., the "self" side of the selfobject equation).

We might assume that each side of the bipolar self—the grandiose self, with its exhibitionistic need for affirmation by the mirroring selfobject, and the idealized parental imago, with its availability for infantile merger with the idealized qualities of the omnipotent selfobject—would allow for the experience of shame when the appropriate selfobject function is not available to the developing self. Why, then, did Kohut maintain that only the breakthrough of unmirrored grandiosity would account for shame? I suggest that this position reflected Kohut's commitment to the centrality of the self over its objects. Similarly, as I have suggested earlier, this same commitment forced him to deny a developmental progression from grandiosity to idealization, despite the fact that he implied such a progression at several points in his writings (e.g., Kohut, 1971, pp. 133, 140). The implications of these inconsistencies suggest, I believe, that there *is* a developmental sequence from grandiosity to idealization in Kohut's writings which reflects movement from primary narcissism toward the self's progressive affiliation with its objects. I have indicated elsewhere (Morrison, 1984a) that *idealization* represents initial movement outward from the self toward appreciation of objects, and that this movement reflects, in part, *projective identification* of the *ideal self* "into" the idealized selfobject.

If this is so, failure of the selfobject to respond to the self's idealizations leads inexorably to the experience of shame, and provides an anchor for our understanding of shame within a

Kohutian framework. Thus, shame occurs, not only in response to overwhelming grandiosity, but also when the self fails to attain its ideals through unresponsiveness of the idealized parental imago to projective identification of the ego ideal, or, in the language of this chapter, of the ideal self. Had the toddler's father (in the earlier vignette) ignored rather than hugged her after she tripped and fell, she would have experienced shame and humiliation. This formulation, then, brings us closer to a self-psychological appreciation of shame which takes into account unresponsiveness over a full range of selfobject functions.

We are still faced with the question of whether shame can occur in the absence of a social context (without the presence of a shamer). I suggest that Kohut is essentially right to maintain this possibility, for the absence of age-appropriate selfobject responsiveness to the self's needs for mirroring or idealization leads to an inherent vulnerability to shame. As I have noted above, this is the core affective vulnerability of the narcissistic personality. We have seen that the idealized selfobject represents the movement of a developing self toward affiliation with objects. Nevertheless, it is the intrapsychic effect of the available selfobject "function" that remains central as the influence on self-cohesion, rather than the object's interpersonal, configurational qualities. Thus, shame may be experienced by the vulnerable self in isolation—a reflection of disavowed, overwhelming grandiosity, or of failure or deficit with regard to the ideal self. Vulnerability to shame from these self-phenomena is particularly relevent to our understanding of narcissistic personalities.

In his description of self-pathology, Kohut differentiates two elements of disintegration of the self, those of *fragmentation* and *depletion*. Self-fragmentation relates to states in which the nuclear self has attained no core cohesion, as in certain psychotic and primitive borderline conditions. On the other hand, self-depletion reflects the failures of a self in the process of attaining tenuous cohesion, seeking to make up for enfeeblement through merger with the power of an idealized selfobject. Unresponsiveness of the idealized parental imago to the self's idealizing attempts leads to self-enfeeblement and depletion anxiety with resultant feelings of failure and emptiness in terms of ideals, and to shame sensitivity.

In *The Restoration of the Self* (1977), Kohut refers to shame directly only once, when he speaks of a time

> of utter hopelessness for some, of utter lethargy, of that depression without guilt and self-directed aggression, which overtakes those who feel that they have failed and cannot remedy the failure in the time and with the energies still at their disposal. The suicides of this period are not the expression of a punitive superego, but a remedial act—the wish to wipe out the *unbearable sense of mortification and nameless shame* imposed by the ultimate *recognition of a failure* of all-encompassing magnitude. (p. 241; my emphasis)

This statement by Kohut is an eloquent description of the guiltless despair and shame experienced by those who have not been able to realize their nuclear ambitions and ideals. However, I believe that the language of shame permeates the rest of that book as well when Kohut speaks of "mortification" (p. 137, 224), "disturbed self-acceptance" (p. 94), and "dejection" (p. 97, 224). These affective references appear in observations about the self's "defeat" in realizing its goals. However, these feelings reflect the experience of shame at the self's evaluation of its own performance, at not having achieved its own ambitions and ideals. I would suggest that a certain degree of self-cohesion must have been attained for one to register shame—this is *not* an affect experienced during the process of acute fragmentation. Again, the relationship between shame and self-depletion is underscored, as well as the relationship of shame to the "guiltless despair" which accompanies both overwhelming grandiosity and the failure to attain one's ideals.

Clearly, it is the qualities of acceptance and responsiveness of the selfobject during individual development that are related to grandiosity and the sense of failure, and thus reflect the danger in rejection and abandonment by the "significant object." However, it may not be the current interpersonal unresponsiveness of an external object that determines shame, but rather the repeated developmental experiences of empathic failure during development. A selfobject unresponsive to the self's needs for mirroring or idealized merger fosters instead the development of narcissistic shame-vulnerability. Thus, shame within the framework of Kohut's writings is neither social nor interpersonal, but a manifestation of deficits of the self.

Does this mean that shame can be experienced only in conditions of narcissistic vulnerability? Our clinical experience indicates that this is not necessarily the case. As suggested elsewhere (Levin, 1971; Morrison, 1983) for neurotic individuals, those with a firmly cohesive nuclear self, shame can also be external and secondary. Shame then can reflect microfailures in meeting the aspirations and goals of the cohesive ideal self, and thus it is only the *intensity* and *magnitude* of such failures that are at issue. I have suggested earlier that the neurotic experience of shame most frequently reflects a withdrawal from oedipal and interpersonal conflict into passivity, forming one part of the guilt-shame cycle of Piers (Piers & Singer, 1953). Thus, shame may represent the temporary, reactive retreat from competition of an otherwise healthy individual, that fortunate possessor of a firmly cohesive self, troubled "only" by intrapsychic conflict.

As the final element in this attempt to "reframe" our understanding of shame in terms of Kohut's contributions, I want to address the relationship of shame to depression and to rage. We have noted that shame may be experienced as "guiltless despair" from failure to realize ambitions and ideals, reflecting depletion of the nuclear self. Such self-depletion and shame may underly clinical *depression*, and closely approximates Bibring's statement: "depression sets in whenever the fear of being inferior or defective seems to come true, whenever and in whatever way the person comes to feel that all effort was in vain, that he is definitely doomed to be a 'failure' " (Bibring, 1953, p. 25). Again, "In depression, the ego is shocked into passivity not because there is a conflict regarding the goals, but because of its incapacity to live up to the narcissistic aspirations" (p. 30). Thus, Kohut and Bibring implicitly agree that shame and depression may be closely related, especially for those patients with narcissistic pathology for whom depression most frequently reflects failures in attaining the ambitions and ideals of the nuclear self. Too often, in the psychotherapy of such patients, only the depression itself is addressed, and not the shame which may underly it.

Similarly, I suggest that shame and *rage* bear a complementary relationship to one another. We have seen that Kohut

viewed shame as a response of the self overwhelmed by unmirrored grandiosity; he considered rage to be the self's response to a lack of absolute control over an archaic environment (Kohut, 1972). Thus, outpourings of narcissistic rage reflect the experience of empathic failure by selfobjects or by the environment in meeting the self's needs for responsiveness or acceptance. I would suggest that shame and the related emotion of humiliation serve as stimuli to rage, a relationship which has been described in "shame cultures" (e.g., Singer, in Piers and Singer, 1953), and in the psychology of antisocial personalities (e.g., Gilligan, 1976). As with depression, the shame that underlies rage is frequently overlooked in psychotherapy, reflecting the tendency of shame to be hidden—in treatment, as in life.

I shall consider the psychotherapy of shame in greater detail in the next section, which will deal with issues raised in Nathanson's paper. However, at this point I want to emphasize several major therapeutic implications of the particular Kohutian perspective that I have been addressing. One major feeling that accompanies the core shame experience of narcissism is the conviction of *unacceptability*—to self, selfobject, or "significant other"—as a reflection of emptiness and of failure to achieve self-appointed, grandiose life tasks. This lack of acceptance (by self and other) relates to the deeply felt shame of the narcissistic patient, and should be a major focus in their treatment. Such feelings of unacceptability and shame are often difficult to detect because of the defenses which cover the grandiosity, defects, failures, and emptiness that generate them, but protracted "empathic immersion" in the treatment of these patients must inevitably lead to their unveiling. The discovery, examination, and working through of these painful feelings, and the ultimate realization that therapist and patient alike can accept them, constitute a major curative element in successful treatment. In achieving this goal, the therapist must be willing to face and acknowledge his or her own shame—his or her own failure to realize ambitions and ideals, his or her own grandiosity and defects. The therapist's avoidance of these feelings constitutes a major impediment to the treatment of shame, and explains in part the low profile of shame in the history of psychoanalytic writings.

SHAMING SYSTEMS, AND THE CASE OF SAMANTHA

As I have indicated earlier, Nathanson's shame is essentially social, interpersonal. "Wherever there is shame, there is a shamer . . . we have in that moment relived the exposure of some hidden 'fact' before another person." Nathanson has emphasized the interactional, relational elements of shame, as exemplified by embarrassment and humiliation. Assisted by the system of self psychology elaborated by Kohut, I have tried to show that this is not necessarily the case—that shame may result solely from comparison of the self to the deficits and failures of one's "ideal self." I would emphasize that these perspectives are not contradictory, but are *complementary* in the broadest sense at that term. However, I think that our "self" perspective on shame invites a reexamination of some of Nathanson's observations and clinical material from a different point of view.

For example, in Chapter 8, Nathanson cites the exaggerations of a "fish story" to exemplify an attempt to deny embarrassment about a poor day's fishing, to hide lack of skill, to forestall ridicule by the listener. However, I suggest that the healthy person (s/he of a "firm nuclear self") would probably feel no need to concoct a fish story on returning with an empty catch, or work hard primarily to fulfill his or her own personal goals and ideals. Rather, it is the person riddled with narcissistic vulnerability who may feel the need to create a grandiose tale about the fishing expedition, in large part from a need to fill in the gaps in self-esteem resulting from the lack of adequate selfobject responsiveness during development. Such people, struggling against the emptiness and deficits, the shame and lack of self-acceptance that accompany their self-depletion, may work and study hard in an attempt to *compensate* for the resultant failures in their ideal self, in order to make themselves worthy of response from the mirroring or idealized selfobject. No external shamer need be present ridiculing our subject in order to account for his or her shame.

In the example of 12-year-old Johnny's sandlot homerun, Nathanson invokes embarrassment and ridicule from Johnny's social network to explain his shame at overvaluing his accomplishment. However, our understanding of self-vulnerability

suggests another possibility. Supposing Johnny had grown up in a family in which his early, age-appropriate grandiosity and exhibitionism had been inadequately mirrored by an unresponsive, aloof maternal selfobject. He thus would not have been given the experience of transforming his grandiosity into appropriate and realizable ambitions. Instead, his grandiosity would have been disavowed and split off from awareness (Kohut's "vertical split") only to reappear in unmodulated form at the moment of this homerun. His resultant shame might then have occurred, not in a social context, but alone in his room as he contemplated his moment of triumph, and felt overwhelmed by the unrealistic outpouring of grandiosity which exceeded the merits of his accomplishment.

Nathanson usefully brings a "systems" perspective to bear on his view of the generation of shame in the family. However, I suggest again that his contribution is excessively "interpersonal" in its presentation of that perspective. For example, he notes that a family eager for the success of a child may treat that child as a narcissistic extension of itself. I agree with this suggestion, but I feel that it does not go far enough in elaborating the generation of narcissistic character structure in the offspring of such a family. For instance, Nathanson suggests that the resultant drop in self-esteem within the family system in response to a talented child may indeed lead to a "bitter shaming technique" used to devalue the child's actual accomplishments. However, alternative explanations are possible to account for the child's resultant narcissistic vulnerability.

Nathanson suggests that "an anxious parent makes an anxious family, as does an angry parent an angry family," emphasizing the role of affect transmission within family systems. While I agree with this observation, I would add with Kohut that a narcissistic, ashamed parent usually produces a narcissistically vulnerable child, but not exclusively through active shaming. As such a parent tends to view the child as a narcissistic extension of himself or herself, that parent will be insensitive, inattentive to the developmentally appropriate needs for affirmation of the child's exhibitionistic and merger needs. Such insensitivity to the needs of a developing self is experienced, to use Kohut's term, as "empathic failure," leading to the conviction that these needs are unacceptable, and, therefore, shame-

ful. These narcissistic needs cannot then become modified or transformed into their more adaptive mature forms, but are, rather, walled off and disavowed, to return as self-disintegration and searing shame under conditions of provocation by internal or external triggers. The concept of empathic failure indicates that active shaming within the family system need not be invoked as the only explanation of such narcissistic vulnerability in the child, but that parental narcissistic needs themselves may prevent atunement to the selfobject functions that would have provided self-cohesion in the child. In this way, failure of the intrafamilial selfobject function to meet the needs of the developing child may account for later shame sensitivity, an explanation additional to the process of active, interpersonal shaming within the family.

Nathanson begins his chapter with an account of expressions of rage in another of his patients, described by her as a "mantle of hate." Elsewhere, he discusses rage in the context of a marital quarrel, suggesting that violence may result from the feeling that "our self-esteem has been reduced beyond our ability to tolerate this new view of ourselves," as from shaming phrases hurled in anger by the partner. I agree that rage most frequently occurs in an interpersonal context, as a result of embarrassment or humiliation. However, as I suggested in the previous section of this chapter, such active shaming must interact with the narcissistic vulnerability of a fragile and weakly established self. In other words, empathic failures of the infantile selfobjects have led to feelings of shame and unacceptability. These feelings have been walled off, only to reappear when triggered by an insult or insensitivity from the current interactive environment. The resultant embarrassment or humiliation is disavowed, and becomes transformed, rather, into intense expressions of rage and hate, aimed at recreating the shame experience in the person of the perpetrator.* Thus,

*I have detailed (Morrison, 1984a; 1986) my view that this "transformation" of shame into rage and hate reflects *projective identification* of the disavowed affect "into" the other person, just as the self begins to develop affiliation with the world of objects through projective identification of the ideal self into the idealized parental imago. I shall not divert the focus from this chapter through amplification of this (admittedly controversial) suggestion, except to point out that, with Ogden (1979), I share a view of projective identification

shame and humiliation can be seen to underly most outbursts of narcissistic rage, as indicated in Nathanson's chapter.

I shall now turn to the complementary view of Samantha to exemplify the relationship of shame to the self. She was born into a family in which her mother ridiculed and demeaned her talent, and in which both parents were bitterly competitive. Her therapist (Dr. Nathanson) emphasizes that these parents actively shamed Samantha, which may indeed have been the case. However, in one incident described, it seems that the mother was insensitive to Samantha's need for mirroring affirmation, more than actually humiliating her. While engaged in sexual intimacy with Samantha, her boyfriend observed her mother's face "watching calmly." This example of inappropriate intrusiveness represents empathic failure of the grossest order as well as her mother's own shameless voyeurism, and no doubt reflects the absence of empathic attunement that must have occurred on numerous occasions during Samantha's early development. This mother seems to have taken no pleasure in her daughter's talents or strivings for autonomy, in addition to feeling them as threats to her own achievements. Thus, we can conjecture that her failures to affirm Samantha's attempts at self-expression and assertiveness represented repeated failures to provide the necessary mirroring selfobject functions required to enhance the self's development (the "glow of pride" in a child's accomplishments). In addition, this mother seems to have opposed such development through active shaming and humiliation. Apparently, Samantha's father failed too in offering the "second chance"—the opportunity for merger with calming power through idealization.

In emphasizing the family's "shaming propensity," Nathanson underscored the patient's quandry in knowing how to respond to such searing humiliation. In the language of childhood, to attack or return the shame may kill or drive away, thus increasing isolation of the self; alternatively, it may provoke further vicious retaliation. Thus, Samantha learned to suffer humiliation in silence, at least until her self-esteem was so affected that she retaliated with her "laser look" of rage. I have

as an *interactive process*, rather than solely as a formal (and confusing) mechanism of defense.

little to add to this description of Samantha's family dynamics, except to suggest that she must have experienced attacks on her assertiveness and talents as indications that her own needs and desires were unacceptable, and cause for shame. Thus, for her, defeat was not only humiliating, but also a source of self-depletion, the emptiness of a self devoid of hope, energy, and ideals. Her withdrawal from the real objects in her life represents not only a compromise in response to shame, but also a manifestation of the "guiltless despair" and depression which expresses emptiness and self-depletion, as well as shame.

So, Samantha's shame reflects withdrawal from objects with resultant isolation and feelings of abandonment, but also decreased self-esteem and self-depletion. I have discussed rage in regard to Samantha's stored-up shame, and would here like to add a comment on the related feeling of *contempt*. Nathanson mentions an ancient proverb which indicates that contempt is less bearable than anger or hate. In my view, contempt is closely related to shame and humiliation, but represents a good example of the process involved in the projective identification of shame. Contempt represents one way of handling the buildup of shame beyond a level tolerable to the maintenance of self-esteem. It is, I suggest, the process by which shame may be disavowed as a self-affect, projected into a willing external object (the scapegoat), who then *contains* the subject's shame while allowing him to maintain contact with it. How the object *processes* the contempt will determine, to a large extent, whether the subject is able to *reinternalize*, and acknowledge, his or her own shame. This is the language of our current conceptualizations of projective identification as process (Ogden, 1979; Morrison, 1986), but I think that it is also helpful in amplifying our understanding of one major manifestation of shame.

In Samantha's case, I suspect that the "laser look" and "vicious jabs of a verbal dissecting knife wielded with savage intensity and astonishing accuracy" reflected not only rage, but also the related feeling of contempt. In this way she transformed the buildup of shame (from experienced familial criticisms and "empathic failures" which triggered memories of her parents' insensitivities) into contempt, thus temporarily ridding herself of the painful self-doubts, emptiness, and failures which reflected her profound narcissistic vulnerability.

DISCUSSION

In this chapter I have considered Nathanson's contributions and discussion of shame, and his clinical examples, from a somewhat different perspective. For Nathanson, shame, with his emphasis on embarrassment and humiliation, is embedded in a social matrix. Where there is shame, there seems always to be a "shamer." Shame, to him, is always the product of active shaming by another in the person's interpersonal environment. In contrast, I have offered a complementary view, in which the shame experience is, at times, a manifestation of the self's vulnerability, a response to internal feelings of failure, deficit, and weakness which reflect narcissistic character structure. I have suggested that Kohut's self psychology provides a useful framework from which to understand this perspective, with its emphasis on the narcissistic weaknesses of self development; the central place of shame in self-defects; and the role played by selfobjects in determining the strength and cohesion of the self. The lack of selfobject responsiveness during development determines to a great extent the vulnerability of the self to its unrealized needs (for mirroring affirmation and idealizing merger), and hence to its propensity for low self-esteem, lack of self-acceptance, and shame.

I agree with Nathanson that embarrassment and humiliation reflect the social edge of shame. I have suggested (Morrison, 1984b) that "humiliation represents the strong experience of shame reflecting severe external shaming or shame anxiety at the hands of a highly cathected object (a 'significant other')." Embarrassment represents the same phenomenon at a lower level of intensity. To this list of shame-related phenomena Nathanson (quoting Wurmser, 1981) has added ridicule, put-down, contempt, and mortification; I would add to his list disgrace, remorse, and apathy. One of these—mortification—is particularly powerful; its root indicates that shame "kills." I believe that this speaks eloquently to the importance of shame as a potentially overwhelming negative affect, the source, as suggested by Kohut in the passage cited above, of some suicides of later adulthood that reflects the "guiltless despair" of unrealized ambitions and goals.

I have used this discussion of shame to express what I