



English Summaries

Shame – Interdisciplinary Perspectives

ESSAYS

LÁSZLÓ BOKOR: The therapeutic and social aspects of shame

Guilt, understood as the fear of punishment, can also be observed in animals, whereas shame is a uniquely human experience. The first human couple, Adam and Eve, felt shame because they failed to act in accordance with what was expected of them. By deviating from ideal behavior, they disappointed God and were consequently banished from Eden – ashamed, they left the Garden, covering their nakedness from His gaze. Shame represents a response to the violation of the ego ideal, while guilt arises from the transgression of the prohibitions imposed by one's internalized authority. Freud associated the psychic force that binds individuals into groups, masses, and cultures with the operations of the ego ideal. The accompanying experience of grandiosity stands in direct contrast to shame: the latter signifies a collapse of self-esteem that isolates the individual, engenders loneliness, and disrupts the balance of self-regard. On the social level, this dynamic manifests as ostracism, or as the subjective experience of being ostracized.

Shame thus serves as an organizing principle in individual, collective, and societal processes. What appears as self-esteem, self-cohesion, and affect regulation on the individual level corresponds, at the communal level, to social cohesion, attachment, shared values, ideals, and worldviews. Across these levels, grandiosity and shame delineate the two poles of a psychological spectrum. On this basis, shame can be regarded as a fundamental mental process – extending from the individual to the civilizational domain – that bridges the fields of psychoanalysis and social psychology. It therefore occupies a central position in understanding human behavior within both therapeutic and societal contexts.

Keywords: shame, ideal self, self-esteem, mass processes, community belonging

ANDRIENNE INCZE – TAMÁS TREUER: The shame of the observed body: Digital body image, identity, and shame in the light of phenomenology and psychoanalysis – theoretical models and clinical perspectives

This paper examines the contemporary transformation of shame in the context of social media, with particular attention to the virtualization of the body and identity. Drawing on theoretical frameworks from phenomenology (Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Dolezal, Fuchs, Gallagher, Ahmed), classical and contemporary psychoanalysis (Freud, Klein, Lacan, Winnicott, Kernberg, Lemma), and feminist critical theories of the body (Irigaray, Kristeva, Bordo), the study explores how the online gaze of the other – real or imagined – shapes bodily self-image and gives rise to shame as an internalized, reactive, and body-bound affect. The authors demonstrate that idealized body images produced in digital spaces – through selfies, filters, and online performances – may intensify dissociation from the lived body, generating new forms of bodily shame. The paper hypothesizes that the gaze internalized through social media may give rise to a specific, fragmented self-structure that cannot be fully accounted for by either classical neurotic or borderline models. The authors also address the collective and moral regulatory functions of shame and draw conclusions relevant to clinical practice. Particular emphasis is placed on the bodily dimension of the therapeutic relationship and the role of affective mirroring in the integration of online identity. The aim of the paper is to contribute to the rethinking of theories of bodily shame and to the development of psychotherapeutic approaches that are responsive to emerging forms of subjectivity shaped by digital culture.

Keywords: bodily shame; social media; embodiment; phenomenology; psychoanalysis

ANNA RÉZ: It makes me cringe: Vicarious shame and moral emotions

The paper examines *vicarious shame* as a distinctive moral emotion and argues that, in several important respects, it is closer to paradigmatic moral emotions such as guilt or moral indignation than primary shame. Drawing on Fabrice Teroni and Otto Bruun's criteria for distinguishing moral from non-moral emotions, the paper compares primary and secondary forms of shame along four dimensions: action tendencies, responsibility and blame, autonomy, and the role of social recognition. It is argued that vicarious shame displays more prosocial motivational patterns and a higher degree of normative autonomy than primary shame. The analysis further suggests that vicarious emotions may offer a less distorted and more impartial window onto our moral commitments. The paper concludes by highlighting the broader philosophical significance of vicarious emotions for moral psychology and moral theory.

Keywords: vicarious shame, moral emotions, shame and guilt, moral psychology, empathy, social norms

KRISZTIÁN INDRIES: Social morality and shame in the Far East. Japanese society as a culture of shame

The study examines shame from cross-cultural and psychoanalytic perspectives, focusing on social formations often described (after Ruth Benedict) as “shame cultures.” In these contexts, “losing face” can have severe social and psychological consequences, and social behavior is regulated primarily through external surveillance, communal expectations, and the imagined gaze of others. The paper contrasts shame with guilt: guilt is an internal, reflective response to violating a moral code (“I did something bad”), whereas shame targets the self as a whole, under anticipated judgment (“I am bad, and others can see it”). It compares the socio-psychodynamic functioning of shame cultures with “guilt cultures” (e.g., many Judeo-Christian Western societies). The paper explores shame taking into consideration cultural variants of the Oedipus complex, while noting that no culture and no shame-related feelings are purely one type. Finally, it discusses shame’s role in the development of empathy and moral reasoning and critically analyzes conditions under which shame becomes a repressive instrument of power, arguing that this framework deepens our understanding of collective affects and moral regulation.

Keywords: Japan, shame cultures, guilt cultures, social morality, empathy, repression

PÉTER KOVÁCS – KATALIN ANNA LACSÁN – ZSÓFIA ESPERGER: The intersubjective manifestations of shame in the psychodynamic context of oncological illness

This paper examines the psychodynamic interpretation of shame associated with oncological illness and its specific manifestations. Oncological disease, through the disruption of bodily and psychological integrity as well as experiences of loss of control and vulnerability, becomes intertwined with the effect of shame, which may develop into a stigma of unwanted deviation from normative expectations – an experience that can be further intensified by psychologizing, subjective illness narratives. Owing to its complex nature, shame is often difficult to verbalize and becomes accessible to interpretation primarily through bodily changes or relational conflicts. The paper places particular emphasis on changes affecting body image and sexuality, on the distinction between shame and guilt, and on the ways in which shame influences patients’ identity, psychological functioning, behavioral patterns, and relational dynamics through intra- and interpsychic mechanisms.

Within psychoanalytic and psychodynamic traditions, shame has most often been conceptualized primarily as an intrapsychic effect related to self-evaluation and narcissistic vulnerability, while its intersubjective organization has received comparatively less explicit attention. The novelty of the paper lies in conceptualizing shame emerging in the context of oncological illness as an affective marker of disrupted intersubjective relatedness. Special emphasis is placed on the clinical relevance of psychotherapeutic techniques, as well as on the significance of experiences constructed within the interpersonal space.

Keywords: shame, oncology, body image, stigma, intersubjectivity

VIVIEN NAGY – FANNI RÖNKÖS – ORSOLYA PAPP-ZIPERNOVSZKY: „Come back when you want a child!” Stigma and shame in the lived experiences of women with polycystic ovary syndrome

Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) is a common endocrine disorder that profoundly affects women’s physical, psychological, and social well-being. This qualitative study explores experiences of shame and stigmatization among Hungarian women living with PCOS, with particular attention to the period from the first symptoms to diagnosis and interactions within healthcare settings. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten women aged 22–34, and data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Four themes emerged: (1) adolescence and early experiences of shame; (2) the struggle for bodily control; (3) healthcare encounters marked by dismissal and objectification; and (4) reproductive stigma. Findings highlight how medical paternalism and cultural ideals of femininity — emphasizing beauty, control, and motherhood — intensify internalized shame and feelings of inadequacy. The results underline the need for empathetic, patient-centered care and broader social awareness of the psychosocial dimensions of PCOS.

Keywords: polycystic ovary syndrome; stigma; shame; femininity; reproductive health; qualitative research

EDINA TOMÁN: The shame of pleasure: A psychoanalytic–phenomenological reading of meat consumption and the animal body

The aim of this paper is to interpret the enjoyment of meat consumption and the effect of shame associated with it through psychoanalytic and phenomenological approaches. Shame is understood not merely as an individual emotion or inner conflict, but as a subjective disturbance arising in relation to the gaze of the Other, one that opens the boundaries of the self as well as its relation to ideological structures. From this perspective, shame can be understood as an affective experience in which normalized and naturalized practices – particularly the socially accepted order of meat consumption – appear open to destabilization.

The paper argues that the practice of meat consumption cannot be understood solely as a biological necessity or cultural custom but also involves ideological and power-laden dimensions that enable the hierarchization of bodies and the invisibilization of animal suffering. The experience of shame – especially when individuals are confronted with the moral and affective implications of this practice – may emerge as a form of affective disturbance in which the fragility of this order becomes perceptible, thereby opening up the possibility of a different ethical position.

Drawing on Kristeva’s theory of the abject, shame can also be understood as a sign of the destabilization of bodily boundaries and identity, particularly when, through the act of eating, the animal body is perceived as “entering” the human body. This experience invites a rethinking of the relation between the subject and the Other: the boundary between human and animal bodies becomes not merely a biological, but an ethical question. Shame thus appears not only as a destructive effect, but as a potentially

transformative experience and a bearer of ethical sensitivity and collective memory. The aim of the paper is not to advance a normative position, but to offer a phenomenological exploration of how the effect of shame may become a site for social and bodily re-connection – particularly for the rethinking of ethical relations to animal bodies rendered invisible.

Keywords: shame, meat consumption, desire, abjection, body, ethics, phenomenology, psychoanalysis

KINCŐ RITA HAJAGOS – GRÉTA KOVÁCS – ZSÓFIA SZÉKELY: “Where are you?” Faces of shame in obstetric violence

The study examines the psychodynamic intertwining of obstetric violence and shame within a critical psychological and psychoanalytical framework. The altered state of consciousness during childbirth – which involves heightened physical and emotional vulnerability and a loss of boundaries and control – makes women particularly vulnerable to relationship and power patterns. In this liminal space, obstetric violence – whether in the form of non-consensual interventions, objectifying communication, or humiliating protocols – cause deep identity damage. In light of classic theories (Broucek, Erikson, Wurmser), shame appears not only as an affective reaction, but also as a sign of the defenselessness of the self, the erosion of subjective bodily boundaries, and the impossibility of self-reflection.

In this context, shame affects not only the body but also social identity: the vulnerability experienced during childbirth activates the experience of an “inadequate self,” which often leads to silence, self-blame, and isolation. Moreover, shame often remains unspoken: it has no language, no place, and no legitimacy in public discourse. The spiral of “shame of shame” is thus sustained not only by events, but also by social invalidation – through the practices of trivialization, blame, and silence. The study argues that the key to processing obstetric trauma is the social and linguistic reinterpretation of shame. Renaming the shamed body – narrative processing, validation of experiences, and social articulation – may be a prerequisite for more empathetic, dignity-centered care. Childbirth can thus be reinterpreted: not as a scene of punishment, pain, and silencing, but as a possible space for strength, connection, and autonomy. In this way, the female body can step out of the shadow of shame – regaining its integrity and the ability to tell its story.

Keywords: obstetric violence, women’s body, liminality of childbirth, female shame, modern birth culture, intersubjectivity

GABRIELLA ÁGNES NAGY: Existential shame in Lebensborn literature

From the perspective of Heidegger and Sartre’s concept of shame, it can be interpreted as the failure of authentic existence or the gaze of the other. However, existential shame can also be related to existence itself, and thus to birth and the manner of coming into the world. The National Socialist population policy program included not only death camps, but also “baby factories,” which raise the question of existential

shame in a special way. Will Berthold's book *Baby Factory* (1958) is the first novelistic account; according to the preface, it follows the journey of a couple based on authentic sources. Max Cohen-Scali's (2012) young adult novel presents the planned possibility of a triumphant life from the perspective of the unborn baby and the growing child. Isabel Maroger's comic book *Lebensborn* (2024), on the other hand, discusses the consequences of the program from the perspective of its descendants.

I attempt to compare Tiedemann's concept of shame and Agamben's concept of the "Muslim" and apply them to the discussion of a historically significant situation that progressed from glory to shame. Not only do (social) contempt, secrecy, and concealment play a role, but also the question of the "existential right" to authentic existence, which originates at birth.

Keywords: national socialism, Lebensborn, literature, existential shame

KINGA KÁNYA: The untouchable losses of parents raising injured children. The role of shame in the structural denial of losses and its impact on the process of social marginalization

The study investigates the social construction of grief and the power dynamics of *disenfranchised loss* through the lived experiences of parents raising children living with disabilities. Drawing on qualitative research based on narrative interviews and group discussions, it demonstrates that shame operates not merely as an individual emotion but as a subtle technology of social power. Through norms embedded in emotional regulation and discourses of conformity, shame organizes and sustains the marginalization and social invisibility of parents of children living with disabilities. The absence of recognition for grief is thus revealed as not only an affective but also a structural and political phenomenon, grounded in the social logics of care, normalization, and moral regulation. The aim of the study is to situate shame as a social and political emotion within the critical analysis of *disenfranchised grief*, and to illuminate how the lack of recognition reproduces structural inequality.

Keywords: shame, disenfranchised grief, care, marginalization, power and structural processes, emotional governance

TITANILLA FIÁTH: "That every prison that men build is built with bricks of shame." Female prisoners' experiences of shame

Drawing on experiences from group sessions and ethnographic fieldwork conducted in a Hungarian women's prison since September 2024, as well as on twenty-four in-depth life story interviews carried out with incarcerated women in August 2025, the study examines the role of shame in female prisoners' life histories and in their everyday interactions within the institutional context. The narrated life events reveal how early childhood traumas—such as physical and sexual abuse, neglect, poverty, and social exclusion—and later experiences of abusive relationships and vulnerability contribute to embedding the experience of shame deeply into one's identity. The analysis also explores the stigmatization associated with women's offending and imprisonment,

showing that those who transgress traditional gender role expectations—women who are not “in need of protection,” or who are violent and use substances—tend to face harsher forms of social and institutional punishment. The research adopts an interdisciplinary approach, combining psychological and cultural anthropological perspectives, and aims to conceptualize shame not merely as an internal, intrapsychic phenomenon but as a socially mediated and continuously reproduced experience.

Keywords: female inmates, life story interview, trauma, shame experience, double deviance, reintegration

REVIEW

Mariann Ita’s review of the volume *A letépett maszk mögött: Közelkép a vallomásos költészetéről* (Behind the Torn Mask: A Close-Up Look at Confessional Poetry) edited by József Gerevich, published in 2025 by Kalligram.

OBITUARY

Anna Vincze and Mónika Takács remember the Hungarian-born French psychoanalyst Judith Dupont, the heir to Sándor Ferenczi’s estate, who died at the age of 100, in October 2025.