

Respect, Integrity and Trust: a cross-cultural interpretation of 'corruption' beyond the (conflictual) Shame & Guilt concepts

"One may also observe in one's travels to distant countries the feelings of recognition and affiliation that link every human being to every other human being"

ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1155a21-2

In an international community as ours, we face cultural specifics, and sometimes we are confronted with cultural interpretations such as collusion or corruption. Shame and Guilt are psychological concepts that have proven to be valuable guides within the cultural community in keeping anti-social behavior within certain limits. They functioned as an internal and external conscience. With the internationalization of the world, these once useful concepts might not work anymore that effective because many activities are now beyond these cultural borders. That is why we believe that instead of the psychological-psychoanalytical Shame & Guilt, the idea of a more practical oriented and socio-philosophical concept could overcome the problem to deal with anti-social behavior as corruption: Respect & Trust would likely fulfil this function. In a globalised environment, humans and especially business people and politicians need some strong guidelines, and rules of thumbs to cope with certain "communal aberrations" such as corruption. Shame & Guilt remain too personal and sometimes too culturally bound. They are not that coherent to be guides within an international framework. Respect & Trust at the other hand, though philosophically not that precisely defined either, are concepts that are familiar and useable to business people, politicians and people confronted and dealing with other cultures. In the business community, and in the game of business, respect has a certain and precise role to play. Respect & Integrity with its consequential Trust function –despite its "open definition" (some would even call it vagueness)- can be interpreted as one of the pillars of 'communication'. Consequently it forms the basis for every business transaction and cross-cultural encounter. In that sense it could well be not only a very useable concept, but function as the basis beyond pure particular cultural interpretations. Often cultures are used to justify certain practices that benefit certain groups in power. Despite its psycho-psychoanalytical usefulness as a personal or community conscience, Shame and Guilt remain within a cultural bound psychological emancipation process. Shame & Guilt are therefore often more passive or even negative interpreted (because based on a fear of loss), whereas Respect, Integrity & Trust are positively oriented. Respect & Trust are basically attitudes that unfold enormous creative power in our "civilization" process. They might even be seen as one of the driving forces of any more humane "culture".

When we have concrete upheavals in the world, we try to find solutions through action based on conceptual frameworks. With the so-called globalization of the world, different cultures or contexts influence each other. Sometimes leading to tension and frictions. With the ongoing economical and political crisis in South East Asia we face a cultural aspect in the South East, collusion or some people call it "networking", which is been considered to be at the basis of this economic crisis. In addition, this so-called networking is despised by the West, because interpreted as blatant corruption.

Our aim is not finger pointing anybody in particular, but to understand the framework that could enhance cross-cultural communication and explain why corruption does not help the community. However we will not focus on the economic reasoning behind corruption. We here will draw attention in a first part on a psychoanalytical and psychological approach of the problem through the conceptual analysis of Shame & Guilt. In a second part, we will focus on a more philosophical approach based on the concepts of Respect & Trust as a possible enhancement for overcoming the problem of corruption (despite its different cultural / contextual interpretations) ¹.

¹ David Hume distinguished three forms of behavior: interest driven, affection-driven and principle-driven. Without prematurely jumping to any conclusion, we believe that corruption trying to obtain **economic** gain definitely falls under the interest-driven behavior. We believe that the **psychological** approach could be mainly described as principle-driven; the **socio-philosophical** approach could encompass the three of them. Therefore we are inclined to choose for the last one.

It is too easy to attribute the failure of international joint ventures to the differences in cultural styles and behavior. Without any doubt cultural differences should be fully appreciated and taken seriously when business is conducted in such environment. Once we understand the Shame & Guilt concept we can find out whether and how these concepts can be applied to practical phenomena such as Corruption.

Genuine development cannot be achieved through corruption. There is no society without corruption and crime, but beyond a certain level, such “disadvantages” free-riding behavior undermines the society itself.

Every human behavior, we presume, is in a sense a reference to certain values in a certain environment. This short essay is directed to what I call ethical ideas of different cultures, ideas of responsible action, justice, and the motivation that lead people to do things that are admired or respected, whether in private or public-professional life. Our hypothesis here is that maybe some “common” features and common ground such as (mutual) respect could lead to a better understanding of each. We will try to show that these cultural interpretations of Shame & Guilt are intrinsically limited and consequently causing barriers for “cross-cultural common basics”. Feeling “ashamed” about corrupt behavior is not limited to Asian cultures only. And feeling guilty about corruption is not a Western characteristic only.

What we are looking for is some conceptual indication which could lead to some actual improvement in our interpersonal and cross-cultural communication. We believe that theory without practical action and/or implementation is fruitless, and that action without theory or framework is often mindless.

PART I

A Psychological and/or Philosophical interpretation of Corruption

The main motivation for writing this short socio-philosophical analysis is my interest in understanding the different cultures and their particular behavior towards apparently similar facts such as corruption. In trying to understand the Shame and Guilt phenomenon in the West and SE Asia, I would like to come up with some common ground that hopefully goes beyond a purely cultural interpretation of certain behavior such as corruption. *The phenomenon of “respect” goes beyond the interpretation of differentiating Eastern Shame cultures from Western Guilt cultures without denying the differentiation itself. We have chosen Shame and Guilt as two “psychological” concepts where the implication of this cultural misunderstanding grossly undermines cross-cultural communication.* In our hypothesis we believe that (philosophically speaking) *Respect (and Trust in ourselves and the other) and Integrity provide a further step in bridging multicultural communication gaps. Although the Shame & Guilt concepts can be very useful as conscience, especially within their cultural framework, they remain too personal in their approach and are bound to a narrow cultural interpretation.* This genuine interest lies in my daily activity of consulting work with different cultural backgrounds in a multicultural environment: can Shame & Guilt effectively deal with corruption or not?

Corruption in its etymological sense, is breaking, destroying, disrupting, distorting life, the community, society, and the environment. It stands in fundamental contradiction to normality, smooth growth, integrity, harmony, justice, virtue and value! We will not really analyze any of socio-economic reasons why corruption is highly ineffective, inefficient

and wasteful. We here focus on psycho-philosophical reasoning to find out how we could overcome a relativistic cross-cultural communication problem in interpreting corruption. Should be ashamed, or feel guilty? Are these feelings universal? How can respect diminish corruption?

Some cultures feel ashamed about collusion-corruption, some don't. A businessman might feel deeply guilty about bribing a particular official; another might not at all. How consistent Shame & Guilt can be in interpreting corruption. Our thesis here is that Respect and consequently Trust could be more easily applied to deal with phenomena such as corruption beyond cultural boundaries. We here assume that corruption undermines trust between its business members. It is obvious that a corrupt person cannot be trusted. Trust is a consequence of respect. Therefore we can say that genuine respect-integrity and corruption are likely incompatible.

An Ethics of Business needs more than mere norms or codes: it needs responsibility and commitment to the goals of the community and organization, as well as respect of, and care for, its community members, the employees and the environment.

“Practical framework”

We do not intend to fully analyze the value of reasonability and its criteria. Rationality or objectivity in this matter is somehow a matter of full awareness of the facts. We are quite aware of the severe limits of reason in morality in particular. We here assume that a plausible or valuable theory or conceptual framework [whether the psychological approach based on Shame & Guilt, or the more socio-philosophical approach based on Respect & Trust] should fulfill the criteria of objectivity and consistency.

Is there a difference in understanding and interpretation of corruption in different cultures and if so why? To what extent are Shame & Guilt useable measures to analyze anti-social behavior (corruption)? In order to function as a measurement we *assume* that a conceptual theoretical framework based on Shame and Guilt for example should be **consistent** and **objective**. Although we do not aim to develop an epistemological theory or a moral philosophy, we will try to explain what we mean by consistency and objectivity as criteria for a practical framework. If Shame & Guilt will comply with these two criteria in different cultures, whatever the interpretation is, we can retain the two **concepts** as valuable measurements to understand cross-cultural phenomena. Once the framework would be “clear”, we could apply these concepts to concrete phenomena such as corruption that apparently is “interpreted” and understood in a unique way in different cultures.

Objectivity or Rationality is here interpreted as common sense within a wide community –“parochiality over the widest parish²”- which helps a community to reach a certain consensus. Consequently this kind of objectivity refers to norms of and for that community. We use Rational when we talk about “what it makes sense” to do or to believe, or when we speak of the “wise choice” in a situation. We might stand to interpret ‘objectivity’ for all humanity as an objective statement might have to pass the human test. That any human being, if he had all the properties of an ideal normative judge,

² GIBBARD, Allan, *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings. The Theory of Normative Judgment*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1990, p 319

would accept it. Parochiality is than the world, and humanity is than our parish. However, in reality not all human beings might accept our claim, and our judgements might confine to a smaller community. For crucial parts of our normative thought, conversational demands will be confined to a group: perhaps to all of humanity or perhaps to some part. A judgement demanded of a group smaller than all conceivable rational beings, Gibbard calls it “parochial”³ to that group.

Consistency is simply coherence, and is weaker than objectivity. It is weaker because a person might be ideally coherent and yet be crazy, i.e. not rational. Coherence as we are using the term is a matter of formal, internal consistency in one’s beliefs and normative judgements. An ideally coherent person could accept the logical consequences of everything he accepts without falling into logical contradiction.

Objectivity and coherence will make a concept “plausible”, and could lead to consensus through cross-cultural communication beyond pure relativism. We question how far Shame & Guilt, though valuable in certain circumstances, do not really comply –cross-culturally speaking—to the criteria of objectivity (common sense) and consistency.

The next question would be how far so called objective and consistent concepts would aspire certain “universal” (is not the same as absolute) value beyond certain cultures. Basically we ask ourselves how far Shame & Guilt would be able to “value” corruption for example within or beyond pure cultural interpretation. Or are the concepts of Respect & Trust more viable to overcome these moral questions which every manager encounters when he/she works in different cultures.

No full system will suit us. Likely an “open” framework will function better than a more closed system. *We might have to learn to press our moral inquiries with more restricted rational aspirations.* In morality as in physics, we can try out many different ways of looking at things, confront inconsistencies, and learn a steady way of conceiving things through these changes of view. *Cross-cultural communication and understanding will definitely refine our framework.* As we do so, we improve our moral understanding and our normative judgements on phenomena as corruption. We believe that good concepts must win reflective conviction. When we think hard together, the concepts must convince us to see most of our broadly moral impulses as guides with limits. In that sense they must be able to provide us with a certain consensus within that community. Further we believe that they should work in action. They must be in touch with ordinary ways of thinking, and must coordinate moral discussion. Both the psychological and socio-philosophical approaches have their shortcomings.

PART II

Shame and Guilt cultures: a psychological approach

³ In a way “parochialism” is somewhere between universalism and relativism.

Most cultures in Asia are considered as so called shame cultures which rely principally on shame as an external sanction for assuring conformity to the cultural norms. The reliance on a sense of guilt or “conscience” as an internal sanction is on the other hand interpreted as “Western”. Some (western) studies of the fifties would describe shame cultures as “static”, and guided by “crowd psychology” in contrast to the so called “Protestant Ethic” developed by Max Weber early this century⁴.

The prevailing criterion for distinguishing shame and guilt cultures has been the distinction between external and internal sanctions⁵. If a culture depends primarily on external sanctions, it is considered to be a shame culture, whereas if it depends on internal sanctions it is a guilt culture.

If the criterion for distinction Shame & Guilt is “clear” (i.e. objective and consistent) and if the criterion could falsify a phenomena as Corruption (either from an internal or external point of view), we can conclude that the criterion fulfills the value of measurement. In that sense we could plausibly analyze corruption, beyond a pure cross-cultural and relativist interpretation. If the criterion is not “clear”, it will be difficult for any person make use of a plausible measurement to understand corruption in an international environment, whether in an Asian or non-Western society, or in a Western country.

(A) Consistency of the Shame & Guilt concepts.

The concept of **shame**⁶ is notoriously associated with the notion of losing or saving face. It is the fear of active punishment by the community, up to social expulsion, which implies the shame anxiety. “Face” stands for appearance against ‘reality’ and the outer versus the inner. Hence many westerns would interpret shame based on the concept of losing face as hypocrite because its value depends on a superfluous external environment, independent of a good or bad action. Such a western interpretation would imply that practices such as corruption are accepted as long as the external environment does not make it too obvious and therefore embarrassing. The Asian would be less interested in the intrinsic value of good behavior but rather in a perceived good behavior by his/her peers and community. Collusion and corruption are not ontologically or ethically judged or justified by Asian cultures but are considered either part or not part of certain community behavior or “(given) values”. Rational justification is definitely a western approach.

Therefore the Asian “must” is a merely hypothetical category (to use Kant’s distinction) as a ‘must’ that is relative merely to what the agent wants to do. Along this reasoning the shame system is convicted of basic egoism, and is considered immaturely heteronomous, in the sense that it supposedly pins the individual’s sense of what should be done merely on to expectations of what others will think of him or her. Shame in that sense merely depends on the ‘judgement’ and prejudices of the community. This is in contrast with the categorical imperative which according to Kant does not need any specific community approval or disapproval. The value lies in the so called intrinsic obligation or duty of the act itself, still according to Kant.

⁴ PIERS, G & M.B. SINGER, Shame and Guilt. A Psychoanalytic and a Cultural Study, Illinois, Charles Thomas Publ, 1953, p.45-86

⁵ Sanctions are defined by Margareth MEAD as “ mechanisms by which conformity is obtained, by which desired behaviour is induced and undesired behaviour prevented”.

⁶ We here don’t distinguish the different kinds of shame, spiritual or physical shame, or moral and natural shame. We agree with Gabrielle Taylor that most of them share the same structure, hereunder explained.

This Kantian interpretation considers losing face, resulting in a feeling of shame, as egoistic and consequently it cannot be considered as a moral “category” (i.e. belong to the community/society) though community is the apparent measure for feeling shame.

Does this mean that the so-called Shame (such as the Asian) cultures are less “moral” than the Western (Guilt) cultures? Does this lead to the fact that Corruption is not amoral in Asian cultures? Does it mean that Corruption is not judged negatively as long the external environment will not embarrass the corrupting and corrupted members? Does that lead to cultural clashes where Asian leaders blame Western countries that their guilt driven cultures are very ethnocentric and often colonial inspired when judging Asian “habits”? In other words, could the Shame & Guilt concepts be objective and consistent concepts to measure and judge corruption beyond pure cultural borders?

Interesting are the findings of Leighton and Kluckhohn in their study on Navaho Indians⁷ where they relate the existence of shame to environmental factors: “Shame naturally develops as a major sanction in societies where almost identical fears are shaped and in which there is so little privacy and such constant face-to-face relationships among people who really count in each other’s lives that small peccadillos cannot be hidden. In the circumstances of Navaho life a pose of omnipotence on the part of parents would be speedily and almost daily exposed⁸.” Shame (‘I would feel very uncomfortable if anyone saw me deviating from accepted norms’) plays the psychological role in these highly populated communities in the same way as ‘conscience’ or ‘guilt’ (‘I am unworthy for I am not living up to the high standards represented by my parents’) has in western (Christian) tradition. However it is interesting to find out that there exists a basic similarity between the value systems of the Navaho Indians and the western Northern American culture: hard work, desire for property and possession, self-denial of personal pleasures and a strict morality rank.

People have an immediate sense of their own honour and **respect** for other people’s honour. They can feel indignation or other forms of anger when honour is violated, in their own case or someone else’s. These are shared sentiments with similar objects, and they serve to bind people together in a community of feeling.

Shame however is not that external as usually thought and therefore not hypothetical either. As a matter of fact, the other towards whom we can feel shame could be quite easily internalized⁹. Instead of an external judge we here “face” an internal judge (which should be distinguished from consciousness). The other does not need to be a particular individual or representative of some socially identified group. The other may be interpreted in ethical terms. The internalized other could indeed well be abstracted and generalized and idealized. He/She can provide the focus of real social expectations, of how I shall live in one way rather than another, of how my actions and reactions will alter my relations to the world about me. This was the case with Ajax the warrior from the old Greek Homer: he couldn’t go on living because he identified himself with the standards of excellence represented by his father’s honours which apparently he couldn’t fulfil. He

⁷ LEIGHTON, D & C KLUCKHOHN, Children of the People. The Navaho Individual and his development, Cambridge, Harvard Univ, 1947, p 106.

⁸ The only respects in which the value system of the western community seems to differ from the Indian system of value is that it tends to limit the sense of moral responsibility to the individual’s (own) actions, and to esteem personal achievement as a culturally approved ideal.

⁹ WILLIAMS, Bernard, Shame and Necessity, Oxford, Oxford Press, 1995, p 84

considered that he had no way of living that anyone he respected would respect. What grounded his own identity, his sense of himself as someone who could live in some social circumstances and not others, and what mediated between himself and the world, was his sense of shame. He being a warrior under heroic code, balanced that identity on a narrow base of personal achievement. This is a clear example of an internalized form of shame where not so much the outside world but his own self-respect “forbids” him to continue to live without ‘obeying’ the high standards of his father. Yet this behaviour is still rooted in shame rather than guilt.

Ajax’ membership of the group –which constitutes an honour group- is determined by the relation in which individuals stand to each other. The heroes of Homer’s Iliad form an honour group. They expect certain types of behaviour of themselves and others, and judge themselves and others accordingly. The “public” in this case constitutes an honourgroup. And self-respect and public respect here stand and fall together.

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. 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. Lost honour could equal lost status, and as in Ajax’ case, it is the internal “conscience” who judges himself. In that sense, corruption, assuming that such behaviour would be an act against the honour group, could be negatively judged and therefore one could be ashamed about such collusive behaviour. However, because the application of an external or internal judge –conscience- is limited to the honour group or a certain culture, no yardstick, based on shame, can be used beyond the borders of that culture.

In addition, we can conclude that Shame is not only purely external and therefore not consistent proven. In addition the distinction between so-called Western and non-Western cultures based on the presence or absence of Shame is difficult to hold as the analysis of the Navajo Indians show us.

Guilt could be interpreted as the painful tension generated whenever the emotionally highly charged barrier erected by the Super-Ego (Ueber-Ich) is being touched or transgressed. The transgressors against which this barrier has been erected are Id impulses that range from aggression to destruction, including sexual impulses, particularly those related to incestuous drives. Most psychologists believe that the most important anxiety contingent to the feeling of guilt is the castration anxiety after which the entire punishment complex is named: the Oedipus complex¹⁰. Oversimplified we could state that no one develops a sense of guilt without a punitive parent image, it being a historical reality or a projective imagination. There is no agreement at all on whether the Oedipus complex as described by Freud in *Totem und Taboo*, and therefore the sense of guilt, is a universal concept or not.

Guilt, unlike shame, is linked to the more legal interpretation. A person is guilty if he/she breaks a law, which may be of human or divine origin. As consequence, he/she is liable

¹⁰ In Freud’s *Totem und Taboo* he states that “the sense of guilt of mankind as a whole, which is the ultimate source of religion and morality, was acquired in the beginnings of history through the Oedipus complex”. The child takes both parents and especially one as an object of his erotic wishes. Usually he follows in the stimulus given by his parents, whose tenderness has very clearly the character of an sexual manifestation, though inhibited so far as its goal is concerned.

to punishment or maybe he/she may be forgiven. In both cases, he/she accepts not only that he/she has done something which is forbidden. He must accept also that it is forbidden, and therefore accept the authority of whoever or whatever forbids it. And here we run into problems interpreting cross-culturally bribing for example. In some non-western countries, such a behaviour is not considered as "bad" or breaking a rule or taboo. And therefore the person shouldn't feel guilty in case of exposure. In the West, one shouldn't bribe under any circumstances, and therefore one accepts that it is wrong to bribe. That person feels (and is) guilty as he thinks of himself of having violated some taboos, some (unwritten) rules, which implies he has done something forbidden¹¹.

Social conformity achieved through guilt will be essentially one of submission. Shame can be brought to the individual more readily in the process of comparing and competing with the peers. Social conformity achieved through shame will be essentially one of identification.

Shame arises out of a tension between the Ego and the Ego-Ideal, in contrast with Guilt which represents a clash between the Ego and the Super-Ego¹². Whereas guilt is generated whenever a boundary (set by the Super-Ego) is touched and transgressed, shame occurs when a goal (presented by the Ego-Ideal) is not being reached. It thus indicates a real shortcoming¹³.

Guilt anxiety accompanies transgression; shame failure. As a result of this non-achievement, shame easily leads to feelings of *inferiority* and timidity¹⁴. *A lack of self-respect often characterizes shame*. Stated positively: shame may be expressed in attempts to reconstruct or improve oneself. We would like to draw attention to the fact that in some cases guilt could lead to shame and vice versa¹⁵. The fear for shame can be contaminated into a feeling of guilt.

We note however that Guilt, the dread of losing love, is not purely individual but refers to a social anxiety as well. According to Freud, people habitually permit themselves to do any bad deed, that procures them with something they want, if only they are sure that no authority will discover it or make them suffer for it¹⁶. The authority is internalized by the development of a Super-Ego. The confusion arises when a person tries to bribe somebody else because he wants to get the material benefit without working 'honestly'

¹¹ It is interesting to keep in mind that taboos exercise great authority which is often strong enough to survive to some extent and for some time any rational rejection or falsification. Taboos will naturally carry varying degrees of weight, depending on the cultural or religious environment. In some communities, religious rules can be quite oppressive, though initially well meant to give social order in that community. Rationally speaking, every individual has to find the equilibrium between these community rules/taboo (which function as basic laws of nature) and its own freedom to choose (and consequently struggling to free oneself from them). "Causing harm to this or that other person" should be the basic yardstick on which one can base oneself to judge a community rule/taboo as proper or not.

¹² FREUD, S, Das Ich und das Es, Gesammelte Werke, London, Vol 13, p 262.

¹³ DE SILVA, Padmasiri, Buddhist and Freudian Psychology, SUP, 1978, p16. The Id is to a great extent the 'influence' of heredity, the Super-Ego is essentially the influence of what is taken over from other people, whereas the Ego is from the individual's own experience.

¹⁴ JACOBY, Mario, Scham-Angst und Selbstwertgefuehl. Ihre Bedeutung in der Psychotherapie, Freiburg, Walter-Verlag, 1991, 221p

¹⁵ PIERCE, O.C., p 18-19: "Take a male individual in whom sexual impulses mobilizing the Oedipal conflict arouse a (conscious or unconscious) sense of guilt. To avoid this conflict and its painful concomitant guilt anxiety, he either inhibits his sexuality entirely or permits only pregenital outlets or equivalents. Such behaviour will bring him into sharp conflict with the accepted and expected behaviour of his chronological or social peers. The resulting anxiety has clearly the character of shame. However, the shame tension in turn will be so painful that it would lead to overcompensatory behaviour of say Don Juanism. This brings him back into the tabooed Oedipal sphere, giving rise to the feeling of guilt. Thus we have here a cycle with a dynamic polarity of the two forms of anxiety."

¹⁶ FREUD, S, Civilization and its Discontents, London, 1957, p107-108.

for it, he would only feel guilty (assuming that his/her culture does discourage corruptive behavior) if an external authority (Super-Ego in Freudian terms) would “catch” him/her. So the clear distinction between an internal and an external authority blurs since Guilt in this case is not purely dependent on an internal but also on an external Super-Ego authority. Similarly Shame can be internalized. So the internal and external authority criteria (of S&G) are far from “clear”.

(B) The effectiveness (in action) of the ‘moral’ power of Shame & Guilt

It is obvious that Guilt is related to ethical and moral principles which (in the German language one calls it Schuldgefuehle) often have been influenced by religion in this context . The complex question of Good and Bad appears when one feels ‘guilt’

The guilt-ridden person or community introjects and expels; the shame-driven one identifies and compares. Whereas the shame-driven might be propelled beyond his natural limitations and break, the guilt-ridden as a rule will not even reach his potentialities. Historically, the West started its fast development after the so called Copernican Revolution where it almost “ejected his divine fear” and embraced the ratio which was promised to lead to “Enlightment”. The highly patriarchal, feudal and hierarchical society before the Reformation put a high emphasis on guilt. Guilt before God was an accepted and practically unalterable fact; everyone was essentially equal in this. Humiliation before God was part of the essence of human existence and no matter of shame. With the Reformation the emphasis is put on self-responsibility (Luther’s Freiheit eines Christenmenschen) and immanent consciousness above a transcendental god. Capitalism and technology have intensified this trend of “internalizing guilt”.

Nowadays we also face the darker sides of this rationalized epoche¹⁷. The Eastern cultures have broken out of their initial limitations and are catching up with the west: their shame inclination certainly has helped.

However, as said above, we believe that such ‘closed’ interpretation of shame foregoes the reality of communication, and as we have seen, it is only part of reality. *Most therapists know that only in an atmosphere of (mutual) respect without narcissistic expectations or ambitions a shame-ridden patient (and for that purpose it could be a community as well) can learn to divorce himself from his over-exacting Ego-Ideals.*

Piers’ conception of shame as the anxiety aroused by failure to live up to internalized parental ideals under the unconscious threat of abandonment and of guilt as the anxiety aroused by transgression of internalized parental prohibitions under the unconscious threat of mutilation, offers a very promising criterion for distinguishing “unconscious” shame from “unconscious” guilt within the individual. Attempts to psychoanalyse cultures do not live up to the standards of evidence and controlled inference maintained in the psychoanalysis of individuals, but they come into direct conflict with historical and cultural explanations of the same data.

¹⁷ In SINGER, M , O.c., p72 from FREUD, S. Civilisation and its Discontents,

The phenomenon of guilt could become a serious obstacle in the evolution of a culture. Freud even suggests that the unconscious sense of guilt is found in the development of a “cultural superego” which sets up increasingly severe ethical ideals and standards, particularly against aggression. Under the burden of unconscious guilt produced by this civilising trend and the additional temptation of modern weapons, mankind, Freud suggests, may be on the verge of neurotic self-destruction.

It is clear that some authors, averse of psychoanalytical interpretation, believe that shame requires a sophisticated type of self-conscience. A person feeling shame could become quite self-aware and self-critical¹⁸. Again, there is no clear “objective” explanation of the shame concept.

The most primitive expectations of shame are connected with seeing and being seen¹⁹. Guilt on the other hand as has been suggested, is rooted in hearing, the sound in oneself of the voice of judgement. It is the moral sentiment of the world. Shame is related to embarrassment, it is not just the desire to hide, or to hide my face, but the desire to disappear, not to be there. But shame is not necessarily a reaction to a moral conflict. With guilt, the thought that if I disappeared, it would come with me. Guilt is closely related to the conceptions of morality, and to insist on its particular importance is to insist on those conceptions. Shame is a psychological concept trying to identify ourselves, whereas guilt is more a moral concept which is internalized through community rules and therefore most likely subconsciously present in our behaviour.

The distinction between moral and non-moral is not always that easily to draw when we reflect on our own experiences. We can feel both guilt and shame towards the same action. In a moment of cowardice, we let someone down; we feel guilty because we have let him/her down, ashamed because we have contemptibly fallen short of what we might have hoped of ourselves. The action stands between the inner world of disposition, feeling, and decision and an outer world of harm and wrong. What I have done points in one direction towards what has happened to others (i.e. guilt), in another direction to what I am (i.e. shame).

The structures of shame contain the possibility of controlling and learning from guilt, because they give a conception of one’s own ethical identity, in relation to which guilt can make sense. Shame can understand guilt, but guilt cannot understand itself. The latter usually is sub – or unconscious and ‘studied’ in psychoanalysis. In contrast to guilt, shame embodies conceptions of what one is and how one is related to others²⁰.

Shame could follow public opinion and can express inner personal conviction. Of course we acknowledge that both concepts Shame & Guilt could and should be distinguished. But the distinction is not always that clearly cut and even shame could play a more important role in understanding ourselves, both in the East (where shame is part of daily life) and the West. *It becomes quite obvious that the classification of cultures into shame and guilt cultures will have to be substantially changed once we abandon criterion of the internal-external sanction as shown above. The main challenge is not so much classification but communication and understanding of each other through respect. Shame and guilt cannot be that easily distinguished into Eastern and Western cultures with its attributes and interpretations.*

Consequently it will be difficult to clearly “judge” corruption from either a Shame perspective as part of an Asian cultural characteristic or a Western Guilt interpretation.

¹⁸ TAYLOR, Gabriella, Pride, Shame and Guilt, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1985, p 67

¹⁹ JACOBI, M, o.c., p 101.

²⁰ WILLIAMS, B, Q.c. , p 94

Our own identity does not only involve certain community codes, but also a reference to internalized standards which could arouse feelings of shame. If the meaning of shame is not solely derived from the codes of a certain community, but can also be fed by an internal measure, then this will have drastic consequences for the perception of the “individual” within a certain community. Shame does not merely follow ‘public opinion’, but can also express inner personal conviction²¹. The Asian statement that the individual derives its meaning (only) from the society/community in which he/she lives is hereby falsified. The very idea of there being a shame culture, a coherent system for the regulation of conduct, becomes questionable since the internal “code” could escape these community regulations. Shame could refer both to an external “code” as well as to an internal one which brings more responsibility to the individual.

Irrational feelings of guilt could threaten to undermine our sense of self-worth, particularly in so far as such guilt involves self-condemnation, initially in the light of a specific act but ultimately embracing the whole of one’s being. On the other hand, to feel guilty can have a creative and reparative function in leading a person to seek rectification of his/her transgressions²².

PART III

Mechanisms and relationship between Shame/Guilt and Respect/Integrity

We will now try to elaborate on the relationship between the Shame/Guilt concepts and the Respect/Integrity concepts. Shame and Guilt basically lie on the level of “falling short of” and “fear of loss”. We describe these concepts in a ‘negative’ way, meaning a fear of. Whereas Respect (resulting in Compassion) and Integrity are defined positively, meaning characteristics of a mature mind leading to wisdom with full compassion and comprehension. Respect and Integrity are interpreted here as transcending suffering of a possible pathological atmosphere or “negative” emotional background in which Shame and Guilt basically reside²³.

As argued above, both Shame and Guilt could involve an internalized figure whom one respects, though Shame could obviously also involve in its most current definition an external figure (i.e. Community codes or social expectations). In addition Shame and Guilt are both characterized by fear of. We will argue here that based on this fear of loss there is a logical relationship between Guilt (and to a lesser degree Shame) and Compassion, and between Shame/Guilt and Respect.

In the case of **Guilt**, the attitude of the internalized figure is anger and the reaction is fear of anger, which could be interpreted as the fear of loss of love (of the mother) as the Oedype complex clearly shows us. This anxiety could be interpreted as an attachment, namely not to lose what we long for: love. Stated positively, we could argue that emancipation to a more “mature mind” could convert this primitive fear of loss (of love)

²¹ By passing through emotions a sense of who one is and what one hopes to be, it mediates between act, character, and consequence, and also between ethical standards and the rest of life. Whatever it is working on, shame requires an internalized other, who is designated merely as a representative of a independently identified social group, and whose reactions the agent can respect.

²² OAKLY, Justin, Morality and Emotions, London, Routledge, 1993, 68-69

²³ We admit that Shame & Guilt definitely can play an existential role to guide “proper” behavior, according to the values we believe in and act upon.

into a positive attitude of love and trust. This attitude of loving and trusting could be called respect and in its more active form 'compassion'. Compassion gives without the fear of losing. Compassion is not really detached from the receiving love, but on the other hand gives love. The consequence could be that this action creates "getting back love", and as such receiving love. Of course, this kind of attitude is only possible once the human has reached a more mature level. A child by definition has to go through this fear of loss of love of his/her mother. A child is naturally attached and in need for the (love of) the mother. In spiritual terms we could almost speak of transcending the conflict of (fearing to lose the love of) and reaching the stage of unconditional love. Again, practically speaking we are trying to propose a viable and practical framework for communication in a mature way. We believe that Respect (and consequently Compassion) rather than Guilt could serve that purpose.

It is also interesting that when the conception of guilt is refined beyond a certain point and forgets its primitive materials of anger and fear, guilt comes to be represented simply as an attitude of respect for an abstract law.

In the case of **Shame**, the root lies not only in the nakedness, but more in the exposure of being at a disadvantage, or more generally a "loss of power". The sense of Shame is a reaction of the subject to the consciousness of loss of power. In that sense shame is an "emotion of self-protection" as Gabrielle Taylor expresses. The subject feels an inadequacy, failure or a loss of power. The reasoning could go that far that the subject would feel inadequate or ashamed if for example he/she were to be admired by the wrong people.

Shame with an external or internal agent could lead to an experience of external *necessity* (either a divine necessity or an obligation to the community rules), or to internal necessity which relates to self-respect. Also for guilt guided by an internalized "necessity" (though different in character than shame) we long for self-respect in the most positively defined case. The 'necessity'²⁴, either internally expressed through self-respect or self-confidence, or externally through embodiment of the social or divine expectations, leads to a certain ethos (of perceived "justice").

Whenever a person experiences shame then we expect him to experience an injury to his self-respect. At the other hand, a loss of self-respect goes hand in hand with a loss of the capacity for feeling shame. When unable to feel ashamed, that person likely doesn't have any self-respect. Hence why shame, though most often passively interpreted, can play a useful norm, because shame retains a sense of value. Again, these values are provided by the "honour-group" or reference cultural group. Respect and self-respect can go further than these cultural values (possibly causing shame whenever crossed) in that sense that one can respect any human, whether or not he/she belongs to that particular culture. *But it is exactly this potential of a more "universal" respectful attitude towards humans that possibly can enhance communication between cultures, "among humans"*. Shame resides too much within certain cultural values and (honour) rules.

Some authors provide a more sociological interpretation of Shame and Guilt²⁵. Here Shame and Guilt are not even distinguished as two complete different phenomena. Their

²⁴ WILLIAMS, O.C., p 103

²⁵ GOUDSBLOM,

basic thesis is that Guilt is based and related to two Institutions, the State and the Church. Hence why a Guilt culture has been considered more a western characteristic because of its connection to Judeo-Christianity. That might be true, but by not clearly distinguishing Guilt from Shame, it will be hard to use both concepts as clear measurement.

The Shame & Guilt concept are not “objective” measurements (fully and clearly accepted by all the different community members in the world) because they remain too personal and “subjective” and sometimes pathological inclined. We admit that guilt, to a certain extent, could function as “tacit consciousness”. However, our analysis has shown that even this intuitive consciousness has difficulties to express itself, to conform of what we describe as “reasonably clear” or “rational”. That is why S&G are ‘unclear’ measurements to clarify cross-cultural understanding. Both concepts are neither ‘consistent’ and only necessity “unifies” them and links them to Respect. Corruption might shame one person, but leaves another completely untouched (even within the same “parochial” community). As long as a person remain within the framework of “fear” (i.e. Shame & Guilt), one couldn’t expect an attitude of respect [unless out of “fear of / for”]. Only when a person will be able to overcome his/her fear, one can reach (indirectly) commitment and will be able to actively respond.

Respect and Integrity : a socio-philosophical approach beyond S&G

Both Shame and Guilt are more passive compared to Respect and Trust. One is usually overwhelmed by this emotion of shame and guilt as something “imposed” to us (though as the consequence of some act or non-act of ourselves). Shame is passive also in that it leaves the person helpless. In guilt, the person who has transgressed what is forbidden, will almost have no other choice than passively “receiving” punishment or forgiveness.

To overcome Shame and Guilt, you will need self-respect and self-confidence as a basis. Integrity is a main characteristic of Respect which will enable a person to trust and have compassion. We don’t believe to find, nor do we intend to, a comprehensive set of moral rules, based on the concept of Respect. We rather sense respect as a basis for creative approach in tackling issues as corruption. Respect might go beyond the limitations of Shame & Guilt once applied to practical issues such as Corruption. Respect, and especially self-respect are considered “one of the most important human goods”, according to John Rawls²⁶.

There is definitely a strong and direct relationship between respect, integrity and trust. Maybe we could start with integrity as the fundament. Etymologically, the latin “integritas” refers to wholeness: the person of integrity is not corrupt, he is autonomous and takes responsibility for his choices or actions. In that sense, that person possesses certain moral virtues; he respects himself and the other. Acting with integrity means that the person should act as his values dictate.

²⁶ RAWLS, John, A theory of Justice, Oxford, OUP, 1973, p440

Integrity may diverge from shame, though in a pure shame-culture integrity and shame could coincide²⁷. A soldier may lose honour according to the code but keep his integrity because the code does not seem to him to incorporate any important values at all. Unlike the member of the honour group, the soldier dissociates himself from the values of this group. It is possible, though not likely, that somebody bribing could feel ashamed (because that particular community doesn't accept such behaviour) but keep his integrity, because bribery might not be a breaching of his own moral values. Unlikely, because in most cases, humans consider corruption as harmful to somebody in the community. A person of integrity need not be a morally good person. However, if the person with integrity is to have a sane view of himself and the life he wants to lead, he cannot ignore the evidence of himself and his life on others and their reactions to him. He must therefore give some recognition to others as persons of their own. That is what we call **respect for the other**. A person of integrity cannot be a moral solipsist, for he will recognise that others too, in so far as they act with integrity, act on reasons which they regard as justificatory²⁸. A person respects himself in so far as he acts with integrity. Usually integrity contains characteristics as honesty (in contrast to corruption).

In addition the Respect, Integrity & Trust concepts have proven to work in a practical-pragmatical business environment. Respect is in that sense "fundamental" that we as human beings want to be recognised by, respected by others. Being connected and recognised by others request self-respect and respect to the others. Fukuyama even calls this drive to be respected, and to be recognised in his dignity, one of the "chief motors of the entire human historical process"²⁹. Shame & Guilt on the other hand are not only fully conceptual consistent, but not really useable either in a multi-cultural environment, dealing with problems of corruption e.g.

Trust (as a feature of **Respect** for) different cultural groups and you end up with different opinions. Whom a person includes in his community of judgement, then, may help settle what other normative judgements he accepts. In that sense we have no real rational choice but accepting and trusting our "own" cultural norms as given. However, more than Shame & Guilt, *Respect and Trust* could function as the basis of inter-change (philosophical or economical) and will consequently play a constitutive role in communication with others.

(A) Consistency

Trying to emancipate 'human kind' by overcoming the conflicts of shame and guilt. Or as Freud once stated: "Wo das Id Ich werde". The aim of the '*emancipation*' could be to become as conscious as possible and to enhance the **personal integrity and self-respect** by diminishing wherever possible the conflicts leading to shame and guilt. That does not mean that we consider shame and guilt as pure pathological or negative phenomena. As stated above, they serve some psychological purposes. But *to enhance cross-cultural communication, we should go beyond the conflict-ridden concepts of shame and guilt. Personal Integrity and self-respect, where our consciousness intrinsically transcends an internalized shame and/or feeling of guilt, would be a better guide to overcome cross-cultural barriers in communication.*

²⁷ TAYLOR, G., *o.c.*, p 110-112

²⁸ *ibidem*, p 128-130

²⁹ FUKUYAMA, Francis, *Trust. The social virtues and the creation of prosperity*, London, Hamish Hamilton, 1995, p 7.

Shame cultures might stick too easily in the non healthy inferiority connotation, and guilt cultures might be dwarfed into non-open moralistic bickering and policies to “hide away ” their own inner conflicts.

Again, a certain emancipation and progress/process will be needed to move from so called Shame & Guilt cultures (of which the distinction as we have tried to show cannot be easily held) to “more mature” cultures where respect, compassion and trust will be the guiding (success) factor. Striking is the similarity between individual psychological growth processes and our comparison with cultures. Of course, we will always be characterized by ‘imperfections’ and limited by the “circumstances of life”. Likely we will always have to “face”/recognize the existence of unconscious motivations³⁰ and beliefs which could occasionally erupt into feelings of shame and/or guilt. But we also own the therapeutic ability, despite our limitations, to strengthen and to become (more) aware of our skill to express and communicate. This in return will enhance respect and trust in ourselves (in the first instance) and in the other. A similar reasoning can be applied to cultures and communities (which are formed by individuals).

The aim of psycho-analysis is not to tell the person what is good or bad, or what is right and wrong in a specific context, but to give the patient’s ego freedom to decide one way or another. The medical aim, still according to Freud and his followers, is in certain substance a spiritual aim. It is to help the individual become an agent and cease being a patient, it is to liberate not to indoctrinate³¹. The end goal could be an increase of self-knowledge. Again, it is obvious that in the best scenario when the patient reaches a level of self-knowledge, Shame and Guilt (of which the patient apparently has be “cured”) will disappear. Therefore the Shame & Guilt concepts are only useful for guiding the person in possibly avoiding corruptive behavior as long as the internal and external sanctions function as a deterrent. Of course we share the aim of ‘spiritual awakening’ through therapeutic increase of one’s consciousness. Creating an awareness with the aim to free ourselves of fear and “pathological” or too personal craving and emotions.

Integrity directly related to respect, is here understood as the opposite of corruption. In a literal sense: corruption as we have described above is a destruction or dissolution of the constitution which makes a thing what it is. That which is corrupt falls apart one way or another, and cannot flourish in the longer term³².

The Latin roots of respect contain a certain distance. Respect requires taking distance of oneself in order to better “understand” the other.

Respect³³ is a feeling or attitude towards others that, among other things, prompts a person to try to rely on honest persuasion in his dealings with them. It urges the person to try to treat others in ways they themselves will find legitimate. If we switch off the respect, we feel a kind of loss. Tolerance is a scheme to achieve mutual respect in the case of disagreement.

³⁰ NUSSBAUM, M.C., The Therapy of Desire. Theory and Practice in Hellenic Ethics, Princeton, Princeton Univ Press, 1993, p.497

³¹ DE SILVA, P., o.c., p 180-182

³² We here refer to Part II for a more economic analysis of the destructive power of corruption.

³³ Respect in a sense is a feeling and as a feeling it tends both towards action and towards expression. It tends to protect the other person; it makes strong demands, and consequently we enter moral inquiry.

People have an immediate sense of their own honour and respect for other people's honour; they can feel indignation or other forms of anger when honour is violated, in their own case or someone else's. These are shared sentiments with similar objects, And they serve to bind people together in a community of feeling.

Respect, Integrity, and Trust are easier to understand as a (moral) norm (in cross-cultural terms) to refute Corruption than the (cross-cultural) "unclear" Shame & Guilt concepts. As analyzed, Shame & Guilt will not provide a real framework to rectify or refute corruption from different cultural points of view. Shame and Guilt are not that consistent and Respect and Integrity (though more broadly defined) seems to be more "suitable" to provide a cross-cultural interpretation. Respect is open to reworking: the social arrangements they latch onto will depend in part on what is familiar, and to what people around us say and how they react. Again, we do not claim to work out a full moral theory based on respect, but we believe that some practical concepts as respect are quite useful in understanding and interpreting cultural biased phenomena as corruption.

Respect is tied closely to dignity. Some carry themselves with dignity, in contrast to corrupt people who do not seem to earn any 'dignified' respect of the community members unless 'respect out of fear'. Morality is respect for human dignity, and "to speak that way is to accord humanity a special position. We claim protections for that position and extend that position to everyone"³⁴. Corruption is definitely not a dignified behavior, and therefore will not result in any respect from the members of the community.

(B) Effectiveness of the R&T concepts

We don't want to go in detail to prove the economic effectiveness of the Respect and Trust concept³⁵. But it is obvious that almost every business deal is based on trust, which is derived from a minimum level of respect towards the counterparty. Many concrete examples could be shown where the lack of respect and trust did lead to broken promises, even bankruptcies.

Whereas Shame & Guilt, caused by fear of / for, is usually the result of a thinking process (conscious or unconscious), Respect and Trust is an active attitude. The psycho-analytic approach to diminish Shame and Guilt is too much focused on either "liberating" the (Freudian) sexual primary energy, or "repaying" some harmful action instead of "transforming" them. Liberation or making free without detaching from the craving of these (un-)conscious sexually linked desires and energy, would only substitute Shame and/or Guilt into one another or into another libidinal emotion. Shame and Guilt could be interpreted as a disturbance of an equilibrium, either as consequence

³⁴ GIBBARD, Allan, *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings. A Theory of Normative Judgement*. Oxford, Clarendon 1990, p267

³⁵ We refer to a variety of authors who have written about Trust, Respect and Integrity in business. The whole Business Ethics literature is referring to this.

of an internal or external judgment. Genuine Shame and Guilt emotions have a useful function. They are signals that one has crossed and disturbed. We should remind the reader that evaluations such as shame and guilt refer to “data” perceived by a localised and historical person. These “data” may not need to be automatically accepted as given, but may need to be reassessed. That is why a critical and active attitude is needed to deal with behaviour of any kind.

The measure of immoral (or should we say amoral) behavior, such as corruption, is the degree to which it is dominated by craving for the material wealth which brings corruption. A form of personality integration will be needed: Respect.

To have self-respect and respect for others, one must have a degree of integrity; without some integrity there would be no self to respect. The person who has self-respect will not tolerate certain types of behaviour such as destructive bribing on her own part, nor certain types of treatment offered to him by others, such as being bribed.

Shame could be interpreted in some cases as a loss, or lack of self-respect, by having allowed such behaviour (in contrast to his values). Guilt is, in contrast of shame where there is an experience of the failure of the worthy self, felt as the emergence of a worse self. Guilt is not so much an injury to his self-respect, but the loss of that self-respect. A person feeling guilt sees a threat to his integrity.

The attitude of Respect and Trust however could be a first step into transferring these instinctive energies into a more creative and less attached state. An attitude in which harmony prevails, not only within the person (expressed by integrity, and in self-respect and self-esteem), but also towards the other person(s), characterized by trust and compassion. This attitude makes a person aware of him/herself and the environment. This fundamental attitude of respect leads to compassion and trusting and is not focused on the thinking process itself. It is in the silence of this attitude that one ‘understands’, respects, and trusts oneself and the other.

We admit that we hang on to a general (and open-ended) picture of human life, its needs and possibilities (based among others on mutual respect and trust rather than shame and guilt), but at every stage immersing itself in concrete circumstances of history and culture. We emphasize on the development of the inner self and the value of self-analysis. Within this (self) development, we don’t see any ‘value’ for any corruptive (i.e. destructive) behavior.

Within an atmosphere of respect and trust, the emergence of conflicting perspectives and values needs to be recognized as a source of potential breakthroughs and richer solutions. Both on an individual, organizational as well as on a cross-cultural level. Respect and Trust are therefore critical at this stage since they form the basis of cross-cultural communication.

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